

Subject: Sermon Recap -- Rejecting Deception I 1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Dear Church Family,

Wow. What a great word from the Apostle Paul this week. For those interested in the teaching notes and accompanying discipleship materials please go [\[HERE\]](#).

Summary: The sermon explored Paul's warning to the Corinthian church against self-deception and the displacement of Christ as the exclusive foundation of faith. Drawing from 1 Corinthians 3:16-23, we examined the ways in which human wisdom, cultural philosophies, and personal pride war against the gospel -- and why Christ alone is sufficient for every individual and every generation of the church. The implications for our spiritual lives are significant: where we place our trust, what we allow to shape our worldview, and how highly we value the church all reflect the degree to which Christ truly holds authority in our hearts.

Takeaways:

1. Self-deception is a real and present danger. Paul's charge -- "let no one deceive himself" -- is a direct and personal warning. Our wants can masquerade as needs, our feelings can override Scripture, and cultural consensus can be mistaken for truth. Honest, prayerful reflection on what is truly shaping our thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes is not optional for the maturing believer.
2. The church belongs to Christ, not to us. God holds a high view of His church -- it is holy, set apart by Him and for Him, and the corporate dwelling place of His presence and power. We are not building it for ourselves. We are privileged participants in building it for His glory.
3. Man's wisdom is finite; God's wisdom is eternal. Whether the challenge comes from moral relativism, expressive individualism, secular humanism, or any other modern tower of Babel, every philosophy that places human reason above God's Word shares the same fatal flaw -- it trusts the creature over the Creator. Christ is Lord of all, and as His heirs, everything we need is found in Him.

As you go into this week, consider where deception may have quietly taken root -- in your priorities, your sources of truth, or your view of the church. Bring those areas before the Lord and ask Him to reestablish Christ as the uncontested foundation of your life. The victory Paul describes in these closing verses is not distant or theoretical -- it is yours in Christ, right now.

In His Grace,

Pastor Jim

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Rejecting Deception

I. Introduction: Corrupting THE Foundation

- Foundation Destroyers, Foundation Displacers, Foundation Distractors

II. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: A Powerful Reminder – Take 2

- We are to see and value God's church as He does.

Additional Scripture References: Ex 34:14; Mt 16:18; Heb 10:25; Esther 4:13-14

III. 1 Corinthians 3:18-20: A Timely Warning

- Do NOT deceive yourself
- The vast chasm between God's and man's wisdom
- Some of the many not-good consequential effects of deception
- Modern Day Towers of Babel (partial list) include Islam, Moral Relativism, Expressive Individualism, Secular Humanism, Scientism, Critical Theory, AI (as authority)

Additional Scripture References: Col 3:2

IV. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23: All Things Belong to Christ's Heirs

- The futility of following man is 100% as is the victory of following Christ.

Additional Scripture References: Col 1:16-17

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Rejecting Deception

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

V. Introduction: Corrupting THE Foundation

1. Some number in the Corinthian church have incorporated some add-ons or otherwise changed the foundation of their faith. While offering a bit of insight, Paul's lack of specificity regarding what underlying Biblical precepts were being argued over is a blessing by omission. Instead of focusing on the one, two, or even ten things the local body was fighting over and how that applies to us, we are able to apply Paul's teaching to any church in any day.

Paul's simple, straight-forward lesson is that Christ and Him crucified (the gospel) is THE exclusive foundation for life. No other is sufficient to reconcile us in relationship with our Lord.

2. Yet, like many today, the Corinthians knew this and they still struggled to live a maturing life of faith. They, like we, had an enemy and his world system to contend with. They suffered with pride and selfishness obstructing their spiritual vision. They wallowed in complacency birthed in their comfortability and worldly pressures.

- A. In addition to asking God to give us spiritual discernment in these areas, I thought it helpful to offer a framework for the things commonly warring against Christ, our foundation. The framework includes:

- I. Foundation Destroyers
- II. Foundation Displacers
- III. Foundation Distractors

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FOUNDATION DESTROYERS

- Different Jesus
- Different Gospel
- Rejection of Faith Essentials (e.g., specifically the primary essentials such as the resurrection of Christ, the deity of Christ, the gospel, salvation is by grace, salvation is by Christ alone, one God, monotheism, the Trinity. There are important secondary essentials as well)

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FOUNDATION DISPLACERS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Human Leaders | • Unbiblical Lived Experiences |
| • Emotion-Ruled Life | • Extra-Biblical Revelations |
| • Politics | • Prosperity Gospel |
| • Group Identity (e.g., denomination) | • Spiritual Gifts – Ignoring or overemphasizing them. |
| • Human Wisdom | |

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FOUNDATION DISTRACTORS

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Preferences | • Legalism |
| • Yearning for Approval/Fear of Rejection | • Majoring in the minor or secondary things |
| • Popularity | • Programs |
| • Busyness w/o Discipleship | • Materialism |
| • Career & Success | • A “Need” for Personal autonomy |
| • Lack of Grace | |

Paul is teaching that victory is found in Christ alone. [And the choice to follow Him or not has great consequences for both the individual and His church.](#)

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VI. [1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#): A Powerful Reminder – Take 2

1. The ‘you’ in these verses is plural. [Paul is speaking deep truths into the church.](#)

- A. The authentic church is holy – set aside by Him for Him.
- B. While the Lord dwells in us individually, we read here the authentic church is also the dwelling place of God. *It is the place where we, together, experience the presence and power of Christ corporately. [AI]*
- C. Scripture tells us the God is a jealous God. – Exodus 34:14
- D. We are also told that God will build His church and even the gates of hell will not prevail against it. – Mt 16:18
- E. The LORD tells us to NOT forsake gathering together...*that is, His bride is so precious, transformative, and otherwise important that our sharing life together is to be a paramount priority.* – Heb 10:25
- F. In v17 here in 1 Corinthians 3, we also see that God will destroy those that defile His temple...*and we note this destruction includes any, whether from inside or outside the church.*
- 2. Paul is revealing and inviting both the Corinthians and us into God's high view of the church. *Do you see the church as God does? Do we value the church as God does and tells us to? Folks, while we are the church and Jesus blesses us through it, it is not ours to build around OR for ourselves; it is Christ's church and we are privileged to be a part of building it for His glory. 'Will we' is the question every church of every generation, including ours, faces.*

- A. This thought of “will we” reminded me of Mordecai's words to Esther in **Esther 4:13-14**:

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And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who

knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?” - Esther 4:13–14

3. God has a decidedly high view of His church. *To the degree, we do NOT, I suggest we prayerfully reconsider our position.*

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VII. 1 Corinthians 3:18-20: A Timely Warning

1. Let no one deceive himself. *Let that thought tumble around for a moment.* Let no one deceive himself.

2. Paul's emphasis here is:

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- A. God's wisdom is timeless, powerful, true, and life giving.
while

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- B. Man-wisdom is finite, fleeting, fragile, and futile.

3. So again, consider Paul's words 'Let no one deceive himself.' *In the quietness of the moment perhaps we can acknowledge that we, like the Corinthians, are prone to do just that.* Perhaps we can consider what about ourselves, our interests, our priorities, and our wants and self-declared needs leads us to destructive thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes. *These are the thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes of our heart sidelining or ignoring Jesus.*

4. Our thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes are either birthed in and reflect the world and the father of lies himself, Satan **OR** Jesus. *Let no one deceive himself.* Deception translates into:

- A. Our wants becoming 'needs';
- B. *Me-itis and I-itis. In my wisdom, I am convinced I am right;*
- C. In desiring to belong, we mistake cultural consensus as truth;
- D. *We marinate in the echo chamber of podcasts, social media, and other information sources saying that which excites and validates us;*
- E. Rejecting truth in favor of that which feels like self-autonomy and worldly freedom in the mistaken appearance of control and authority;

- F. Our minimizing or sidelining God's grace, love, justice, and requirements;
 - G. Our telling God who He is in character, purpose, and will;
 - H. Our feelings trump Scripture; and
 - I. Knowing of God without knowing God. In this, many come to know much of God's word without applying/obeying it.
5. Maybe you have heard, thought, or even bought into some of the volumes of deceptions floating around?! Words like:
- A. Faith is personal – keep it to yourself;
 - B. There are many ways to heaven;
 - C. Christians need to stop judging others;
 - D. We just need to love one another – meaning affirm one another;
 - E. The church is full of hypocrites – with “I won't consider God” being the implication;
 - F. Christianity is old and not relevant for today;
 - G. A good God would never _____ or would _____ ;
 - H. Christians are intolerant;
 - I. We all have our own truth;
 - J. The church is irrelevant today;
 - K. Science has proving Christianity is wrong and unnecessary;
 - L. Christianity is about rules; and
 - M. Jesus loves me the way I am...to which I say, He loves you so much He won't leave you the way you are.

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In the end, deception is about denying Christ the authority that is rightly His. This authority defines truth, our identity, morality, and reality itself.

If, in our wisdom, we deny Christ's authority, we seek to make the world and God fit what seems best to us. In contrast, if Christ holds authority in our lives, the foundation of our worldview and lived experience is truth, the gospel of grace.

A final thought on deception...while deception has led to some rejecting Christ outright, one of its most insidious impacts is

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silence. When a professed Christian stops seeking, proclaiming, modeling, and discipling Christ, silence has given Satan a great victory.

6. V19: For it is written...to follow God is wise and to follow man is foolish. Indeed, **Colossians 3:2** tells us of our greatest weapon against deception; get our eyes (and hearts) up on Jesus.
7. Before we go to our final verses today, let's take a few minutes to consider the modern day 'Towers of Babel'. These are some of the more prevalent world philosophies that war against the wisdom of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and His word.

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Modern Day Towers of Babel

Islam - denies the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and the crucifixion/resurrection as Christianity understands them. It rejects the bible as God's authoritative word. Islam is attractive to many as it holds to a salvation achieved through submission and good works weighed by God, not grace through faith in a substitutionary atonement. The practice of Sharia Law denies that all of mankind is made in God's image and therefore has inestimable value; the result is the diminishing of the individual along with women and other people groups.

Moral Relativism - Moral truth is not fixed nor universal, but relative to culture, era, or individual perspective - "true for you, not for me."

Expressive Individualism (AKA 'Me-itis and I-itis')- living your truth OR that the highest good is discovering, expressing, and living out your authentic inner self, unconstrained by external authority.

Secular Humanism - The belief that human reason, science, and shared human values are sufficient to determine meaning, morality, and progress. God is NOWHERE in this.

Scientism - Only science is the path to truth.

Critical Theory (AKA 'Woke 1') - Society is formed through structures of power and group based identity (race, class, gender, sexuality) and these structures can only be seen through the lens of justice and oppression. *Therein your value, worth, and identity are wrapped up in the group(s) to which you belong.* Elements of this can quickly move into political structures such as Marxism. In here, there is NO God or a HIJACKED & CORRUPTED God

AI: Tool or Authority? – AI can converse, reason, seem to empathize, remember context, and respond in strikingly human ways. *Because of that, many people have already started treating still-infant-and-rapidly-maturing AI as an authority on truth, spirituality, morality, and wisdom — rather than for what it is, a tool.*

That's the warning: AI could become the cultural embodiment of a worldview...*a worldview where our lived truth, spirituality, and morality is built on a machine foundation and NOT the foundation of the Gospel.*

The open question is which worldview. *Will it deepen the self-idolatry already present in our culture's obsession with a "living your truth" Tower of Babel built on man-wisdom? Or will it go further — will a machine built by man take on god-like authority in people's hearts?*

Our passage points to a breath-taking third possibility: *AI becomes a tool serving human flourishing under God's authority.*

Put simply — will this worldview be built on man's wisdom, or on God's?

In the end, these and other philosophies share many common threads with the four primary interwoven threads being (1) *at war against Christ* and (2) foolishness in trusting man-wisdom over Gods, *and (3-4) unnecessary hopelessness and/or fear.*

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VIII. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23: All Things Belong to Christ's Heirs

1. Don't follow any man, including men that are rightly dividing and living out God's word. *For man's way, no matter how seemingly insightful and attractive is futile.* Instead, follow Jesus.
2. Paul's closing of Chapter 3 is a restatement of an essential truth...Christ is all we need.
3. Brothers and sisters, the cross of Jesus Christ marks the turning point in human history. *Having been alienated from mankind, Jesus came as man, died for our sin, and, in rising again, defeated death.* Then, in His infinite glorious wisdom, He invited us to share His victory...*a victory over what one commentator¹ called "the ultimate tyrannies of human existence", including (1) the world, (2) life, (3) death, (4) the present, and (5) the future.*
4. In **Colossians 1:16-17**, we find that all things were created by, through, and for Him. *You see, just a Paul is writing here in 1 Corinthians, Jesus IS LORD of all.* What this means for you and me is, that as His heirs, all things belong to us, His children. *And in this truth, we find our reconciliation with God and the living out His promise of the eternal, abundant life only He offers.*

[Prayer]

¹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 154.

5-Day Devotional

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Rejecting Deception

Day 1: The Foundation That Cannot Be Shaken

Reading: 1 Cor 3:16-17

Devotional: The church is not a building, a program, or a personality. It is the dwelling place of the living God. Paul reminds us that we are holy, set apart by Him and for Him. This means our lives, both individually and corporately, are not ours to arrange as we see fit. When we drift from Christ as our exclusive foundation, we do not simply make a mistake; we invite destruction.

Ask yourself today whether the choices shaping your life are building on Christ or quietly displacing Him. The foundation matters eternally.

Day 2: Let No One Deceive Himself

Reading: 1 Cor 3:18; Jer 17:9

Devotional: Paul's warning is direct and personal. Deception rarely arrives loudly. It creeps in through preferences dressed as convictions, feelings mistaken for truth, and cultural consensus mistaken for wisdom. Jeremiah reminds us that the human heart is capable of extraordinary self-deception. Our wants quietly become needs. Our comfort quietly becomes authority. Our silence quietly becomes surrender. The most dangerous lies we believe are often the ones we tell ourselves.

Pause today and honestly examine one area of your life where your feelings or preferences may have quietly edged out the authority of Christ. Bring it before Him in prayer.

Day 3: God's Wisdom Against the World's Philosophies

Reading: 1 Cor 3:19-20; Col 2:8

Devotional: Every generation faces its own towers of Babel, man-made systems of thought promising meaning, identity, and flourishing apart from God. Paul declares plainly that the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. Colossians warns us not to be taken captive by hollow philosophies built on human tradition rather than on Christ. Whether the deception comes through moral relativism, expressive individualism, or any other cultural framework, the thread is always the same: trust man, not God.

Today, identify one philosophy or cultural message you have absorbed uncritically. Hold it up against Scripture and ask whether it builds on Christ or competes with Him.

Day 4: Silence Is Not Neutrality**Reading: Mt 5:14-16; Esther 4:13-14**

Devotional: One of deception's most effective tools is not outright rejection of Christ but the slow silencing of His people. When a professed believer stops seeking, proclaiming, modeling, and discipling Christ, that silence hands Satan a significant victory.

Mordecai's words to Esther ring across centuries with unmistakable clarity: relief will come from another place, but will you be part of it?

Jesus calls His people the light of the world, not a light hidden under a basket. You were placed in this moment, in this community, for a reason. The question is not whether God will work. The question is whether you will.

Day 5: Heirs of Everything in Christ Reading: 1 Cor 3:21-23; Col 1:16-17; Ro 8:17

Devotional: Paul closes with a breathtaking declaration. All things belong to those who belong to Christ. Death, life, the present, the future, none of these hold ultimate tyranny over the one who is in Him. Colossians reminds us that all things were created by, through, and for Christ. Romans confirms that we are His heirs.

This is not a call to passivity but to confidence. You do not need to grasp for identity, security, or meaning from a world that cannot ultimately provide them. They already belong to you in Christ. Live today from that inheritance, not in pursuit of it.

Small Group Study Guide

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Rejecting Deception

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to see and understand His word as you discuss the sermon.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. The authentic church is holy, set apart by God and for God, and is the corporate dwelling place of His presence and power.
2. God holds a remarkably high view of His church, and we are called to align our view of the church with His.
3. Self-deception is one of the most dangerous and subtle threats to a maturing life of faith.
4. Man's wisdom is finite, fleeting, fragile, and futile. God's wisdom is timeless, powerful, true, and life-giving.
5. Modern worldviews and philosophies share two common threads: they are at war with Christ, and they trust human wisdom over God's.
6. As heirs of Christ, all things belong to us in Him. He is all we need, and He is Lord of all.

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. Think about a time when you believed something was true only to later realize you had been deceived. What did that experience teach you about how deception works?
2. Before hearing this sermon, how would you have described your personal view of the church? How does it compare to the high view God expresses in Scripture?
3. The sermon presents three categories of threats to Christ as our foundation: Foundation Destroyers, Foundation Displacers, and Foundation Distractors. Looking at that framework, which category do you think is the most dangerous, and why? Which do you think your church or community is most vulnerable to right now?

4. Paul writes, "Let no one deceive himself." The sermon identifies several forms this self-deception takes, including our wants becoming needs, feelings trumping Scripture, and knowing about God without truly knowing God. Which of these forms of deception do you think is most common in your own life or in the broader culture around you?
5. The sermon states: "Deception is about denying Christ the authority that is rightly His. This authority defines truth, our identity, morality, and reality itself." In practical, everyday terms, what does it look like to give Christ genuine authority over your identity and your sense of what is true?
6. The sermon mentions that one of deception's most insidious impacts is silence, where a professing Christian stops seeking, proclaiming, modeling, and discipling Christ. Where do you see this kind of silence operating in your own life or in the church at large? What makes it so easy to drift into?
7. Of the modern worldviews discussed, including Moral Relativism, Expressive Individualism, Secular Humanism, Scientism, Critical Theory, and AI as authority, which do you think poses the greatest challenge to your faith community and why? How do you see these philosophies showing up in everyday conversations, media, or culture?
8. The sermon draws a parallel between Mordecai's words to Esther and the call placed on the church today. In what ways do you sense that your church, or you personally, have been placed in your current moment "for such a time as this?" What does faithfulness look like in response to that calling?
9. Paul closes by declaring that all things belong to those who are in Christ, and that Christ is all we need. How does this truth practically change the way you approach anxiety about the future, fear of death, or the pressures of daily life?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. **Examine Your Foundation-** Take 15 to 20 minutes this week in quiet reflection. Ask yourself honestly: what am I actually building on right now? Bring your answer to God in prayer and ask Him to reveal any area where something other than Christ has displaced or distracted from His rightful place.
2. **Audit Your Information Diet-** For one week, pay attention to the podcasts, social media accounts, news sources, and voices you turn to most often. Ask whether those sources are shaping your thinking more than Scripture is. Share what you discover with someone in your group.

3. **Break the Silence-** Identify one person in your life with whom you have been silent about your faith. Pray for one opportunity this week to speak, model, or share something of Christ with that person, even in a small way.
4. **Elevate Your View of the Church-** The sermon challenges us to value the church the way God does. This week, do one specific thing that reflects a high view of the church, whether that is prioritizing gathering, encouraging another member, serving in a practical way, or praying intentionally for your local body.
5. **Study the Foundation-** Using the framework from the sermon, pick one item from the Foundation Destroyers list and spend time this week studying what Scripture says about it. Come prepared to share one thing you learned with your group.

Closing Reflection and Prayer:

- Close your time by reading Colossians 3:2 together as a group, reflecting on its meaning as a weapon against deception. Then spend a few minutes in prayer, asking God to fix your eyes and hearts on Jesus, to guard your church from deception, and to give each member the courage to live and speak as faithful heirs of Christ in this present moment.

Discussion Questions

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Rejecting Deception

1. Paul warns against self-deception, yet it is by definition something we do not easily recognize in ourselves -- what practices or habits do you have in place that help you identify when your own desires, pride, or cultural influences are quietly displacing Christ as your foundation?
2. The sermon distinguishes between Foundation Destroyers, Foundation Displacers, and Foundation Distractors -- which of these three categories do you find most personally threatening to your faith, and why is that category particularly difficult to guard against?
3. Paul speaks of the church as the holy dwelling place of God, and Mordecai challenged Esther to consider that she may have been placed in her position for a specific divine purpose -- in what ways do you think your church generation is being called to stand firm or speak up, and what is the cost of remaining silent?
4. The sermon describes deception as ultimately about denying Christ the authority that is rightly His -- in what areas of your life, even subtly, do you find yourself defining truth, identity, or morality on your own terms rather than submitting those things to Christ?
5. Among the modern-day towers of Babel listed -- including Moral Relativism, Expressive Individualism, Secular Humanism, and others -- which do you believe poses the greatest challenge to the church today, and how should followers of Christ engage with it thoughtfully and faithfully?
6. The sermon states that one of deception's most insidious impacts is silence, where a professing Christian stops seeking, proclaiming, modeling, and discipling Christ -- what do you think are the most common reasons believers go silent, and how can a community of faith help restore that voice?
7. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 3:21-23 presents Christ's victory over the ultimate tyrannies of human existence, including the world, life, death, the present, and the future -- which of these five tyrannies do you find most difficult to surrender to Christ's lordship, and what does trusting Him in that area actually look like in daily life?
8. The sermon raises the question of whether artificial intelligence will become a tool that serves human flourishing under God's authority or a new tower of Babel where

humanity builds wisdom apart from Him -- how should the church be thinking about and responding to this development with both wisdom and discernment?

9. Paul's warning that God will destroy those who defile His temple applies to threats from both inside and outside the church -- what does it look like for a congregation to take seriously the responsibility of guarding the health and holiness of the church without becoming self-righteous or exclusionary?
10. The sermon closes with the truth that as heirs of Christ, all things belong to His children, and that reconciliation and abundant life are found in Him alone -- how does genuinely believing this truth change the way you approach your relationships, your ambitions, and your fears on an ordinary day?

Dinner Conversation Starters

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Rejecting Deception

1. What Is Our Foundation?

Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ and the gospel are the only true foundation for life. What are some things people sometimes build their identity or hope on instead of Jesus?

2. Spotting Deception

The sermon warned that deception often sounds reasonable, popular, or comforting. What is one message we hear in the world that sounds good but may not line up with God's Word?

3. Valuing the Church

God has a high view of His church, calling it holy and precious. Why do you think gathering with and serving the church matters so much to God?

4. God's Wisdom vs. Human Wisdom

Paul contrasts God's wisdom with the world's wisdom. Can you think of a time when following God's way seemed harder but was actually wiser?

5. Following Jesus, Not People

Paul warns against putting too much trust in human leaders, personalities, or opinions. How can we appreciate good teachers or leaders while still making sure we are ultimately following Jesus?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Rejecting Deception

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Jesus Is the Boss of What Is True**: At this age, kids are learning from parents, teachers, friends, videos, and games. Help them understand that not everything they hear is true, and Jesus teaches us what is right and good.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What would Jesus want us to do if someone is mean to us?
 - b. Is it always easy to do what Jesus says?
 - c. Who can help us know what is true when we feel confused?
2. **Feelings Are Real, But They Are Not Always the Leader**: Young children often act quickly from emotions. Teach them that feelings matter, but they should not be in charge—Jesus should lead our choices.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Is it wrong to feel angry or sad?
 - b. What should we do before we act when we feel angry?
 - c. How can we ask Jesus to help us make a good choice?
3. **Choose Friends and Shows That Help You Love God**: Kids this age are influenced by cartoons, YouTube-style videos, games, and peer behavior. Help them begin asking whether something helps or hurts their heart toward God.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Did that show/game teach something good or something wrong?
- b. How did it make you want to act afterward?
- c. What kinds of things help us remember Jesus?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Don't Believe Something Just Because "Everyone Says It"**: Kids in this stage feel growing pressure to fit in with friends, teams, classmates, and online trends. Teach them that popularity does not make something true.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Why is it hard to disagree when a group is doing something wrong?
 - b. What does God say about how we treat people?
 - c. What could you say or do if your friends are being unkind?
2. **Your Identity Comes from Christ, Not the Group**: Children are beginning to define themselves by sports, grades, friend groups, hobbies, appearance, or online approval. Remind them that their deepest identity is being made by God and loved by Christ.¹⁹

Discussion Questions:

- a. Why does being included feel so important?
- b. Does being left out change your value to God?
- c. How can knowing Jesus loves you help when others exclude you?

3. **Be Careful What You Let Teach You:** Digital spaces are constantly teaching children what to value, believe, and desire. Help them see that games, influencers, videos, and AI tools can be useful, but they should never become their authority.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Does God say happiness is the most important thing?
- b. Can something feel good but still be wrong?
- c. How can we check if something lines up with God's Word?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Test Every Message Against God's Word:** Preteens and teens are exposed to strong cultural messages about identity, sexuality, success, politics, morality, and personal freedom. Teach them to ask, "Does this agree with Jesus?"

Discussion Questions:

- a. What sounds appealing about "living your own truth"?
- b. What problems happen if everyone defines truth for themselves?
- c. What does it mean to let Jesus define who we are?

2. **Don't Let Digital Voices Disciple You:** Social media, podcasts, YouTube, TikTok, gaming communities, and AI chatbots can become powerful "teachers." Help teens understand the difference between a tool and an authority.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What voices influence you most during the week?
- b. How can you tell whether a voice is leading you toward Jesus or away from Him?
- c. What boundaries might help keep digital tools from becoming spiritual authorities?

3. **Feelings Matter, But Scripture Leads:** Teens often hear that their feelings are the truest thing about them. The sermon challenged the idea that feelings should trump Scripture.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Are feelings always a reliable guide?
- b. Why might God's commands sometimes conflict with what we want?
- c. Can God's way be loving even when it feels difficult?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.

- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Rejecting Deception

1. Build Your Identity on Christ, Not the Crowd

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 3:11 — “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
- Galatians 2:20
- Colossians 3:3

Application: Your identity is not ultimately found in your friend group, personality type, sexuality, political tribe, achievements, appearance, relationship status, or online image. If Jesus is your foundation, He defines who you are before anyone else does.

Scenario: You feel pressure to reshape yourself so a group will accept you—changing your opinions, humor, values, or boundaries so you do not feel left out.

Discussion: Where are you most tempted to let other people define your worth instead of Christ?

2. Test “My Truth” Against God’s Truth

Bible References:

- John 14:6 — “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”
- Proverbs 14:12
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Application: Gen Z often hears, “Live your truth.” But Scripture teaches that truth is not something we create; truth is found in God. Feelings are real, but they are not always reliable. God’s Word must shape what we believe, choose, and celebrate.

Scenario: A friend says, “That may be true for you, but it’s not true for me,” when discussing morality, relationships, sexuality, or faith.

Discussion: How can you respond with kindness while still believing that God’s truth is real for everyone?

3. Don't Let Digital Voices Disciple You

Bible References:

- Romans 12:2 — “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”
- Psalm 1:1-2
- Colossians 2:8

Application: Your feed is forming you. Influencers, podcasts, memes, algorithms, music, shows, group chats, and AI tools are constantly teaching you what to love, hate, desire, and believe. Christians must ask: “Is this shaping me toward Jesus or away from Him?”

Scenario: You realize you spend hours consuming content that makes you more anxious, lustful, angry, cynical, jealous, or distant from God.

Discussion: What digital voice has the most influence over your thinking right now, and does it lead you closer to Christ?

4. Use AI as a Tool, Not an Authority

Bible References:

- James 1:5 — “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God.”
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Isaiah 55:8-9

Application: AI can be useful for learning, organizing, and creating, but it must never replace God's wisdom, Scripture, prayer, wise counsel, or the local church. AI can provide information, but it cannot be your Lord, shepherd, conscience, or source of truth.

Scenario: You ask AI for moral, spiritual, or relationship advice and feel tempted to trust its answer more than Scripture, parents, pastors, or mature Christians.

Discussion: What boundaries should Christians have when using AI for advice about faith, relationships, or life decisions?

These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.