

We Build One Thing

Sunday, July 20, 2025

Start with Application Testimony

- **Last week's exhortation:** Determine to be faithful in this season of your life. Seek the Lord and Godly counsel to find out what that would look like.

INTRO

- **We are going verse-by-verse, in a topical study through I & II Corinthians**
 - **Current Topic:** Church Relationship - The holy work of being the Body of Christ.
 - Church relationship is something we should each value more than we probably do. Our modern culture has taught us that relationships are disposable - even those in the church. But they aren't. When we neglect church relationships or treat them as disposable (or replaceable), we harm ourselves, we harm others (including people we may never meet) and we harm the reputation of Jesus in the eyes of the world. Church relationships are hard and require a lot of humility, perseverance, and mercy. But they also result in some of Christ's greatest blessings and sources of help in times of need.
 - Beyond all this, love and unity within the church is not optional - it is commanded by Jesus. If we are submitted to Him, then we must do the hard work of relationship as His Body here on the Earth.
 - To start this new topic, we are picking up in 1 Corinthians 3. We had covered 1 Corinthians 1-2 when we first began our study of the

Corinthian letters with the topic of “Christ Alone.” Here is a quick recap of those first two chapters:

- 1 Corinthians 1: Paul told the church to stop fighting over which leader was best and reminded them that God’s power came through Jesus dying on the cross, not through human wisdom.
- 1 Corinthians 2: Paul explained that he didn’t use fancy words to teach them, but shared God’s truth through the Holy Spirit, who helped people understand what God was really like.

READ

1 Corinthians 3 CSB

¹ For my part, brothers and sisters, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, ³ because you are still worldly. For since there is envy and strife among you, are you not worldly and behaving like mere humans? ⁴ For whenever someone says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not acting like mere humans? ⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, and each has the role the Lord has given. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God’s coworkers. You are God’s field, God’s building. ¹⁰ According to God’s grace that was given to me, I have laid a foundation as a skilled master builder, and another builds on it. But each one is to be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than what has been laid down. That

foundation is Jesus Christ.¹² If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw,¹³ each one's work will become obvious. For the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work.¹⁴ If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward.¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will experience loss, but he himself will be saved—but only as through fire.¹⁶ Don't you yourselves know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you?¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is holy, and that is what you are.¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become a fool so that he can become wise.¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, since it is written, **He catches the wise in their craftiness**;²⁰ and again, **The Lord knows that the reasonings of the wise are futile**.²¹ So let no one boast in human leaders, for everything is yours—²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come—everything is yours,²³ and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

EXAMINE

#1 | Disunity in the Church reveals a lack of maturity in Christ

1. **The inability or unwillingness to do the work of relationship, reveals that a person has not been growing in Christ.**
 - a. 1 Corinthians 3:1,3 “...I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ... since there is envy and strife among you...”
 - i. Immature Christians fail to see that their allegiance to Christ comes with a mandate to pursue unity with other believers. (Consider Eph 4:10-13)

2. Disunity in the church prevents spiritual growth and maturity

- a. 1 Corinthians 3:2–3 *“I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, because you are still worldly...”*
 - i. Often we are stuck in our personal spiritual growth, and even our closeness to God, because we haven’t done the hard work of relationship with our brothers and sisters in the church.

#2 | There is only one Church – we are all part of the same effort

1. We need to stop thinking of churches as separate groups or streams. Jesus has only one Church.

- a. 1 Corinthians 3:11 *“For no one can lay any foundation other than what has been laid down. That foundation is Jesus Christ.”*
 - i. This means we can’t build different things and we can’t build our own thing.
 - 1. What we are building belongs to Christ – or it isn’t a church at all.

2. We are not in competition with one another, because there is no competition.

- a. 1 Corinthians 3:6–9 *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth... neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth... we are God’s coworkers. You are God’s field, God’s building.”*
 - i. The church belongs to God, not to different leaders or factions.
 - 1. We shouldn’t expect God to build the church while we work against one another.

2. God blesses our work when we work in unity towards the shared goal of the Gospel.

#3 | We are accountable to God for what we do with the Body of Christ

1. What we do or don't do in the church isn't secret – God will hold us accountable.

- a. 1 Corinthians 3:10–13 “...each one is to be careful how he builds on it... If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become obvious. For the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work.”
 - i. We must ask ourselves, what are we building and why?
 - ii. Do we want to be received into heaven, only to realize we've wasted our lives on things that don't matter?
 1. Paul knew that the only thing worth bringing to Christ at judgment was how he served his fellow believers (1 Thess. 2:19).

2. We need to fear the Lord in the way we approach church relationship.

- a. 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 “Don't you yourselves know that you are God's temple... If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is holy, and that is what you are.”
 - i. The “you” in this passage is plural. Paul is saying that together we are God's Temple, not just each of us individually.
 1. We must soberly consider the way we “show up” in the church.

2. God has a great and deep love for His Church. We must share that love and remember that God will not overlook the harm we do to one another.

3. **Healthy church relationship requires humility and real appreciation for what we have in Christ.**

- a. 1 Corinthians 3:18–23 *“Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become a fool so that he can become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God... for everything is yours—whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come—everything is yours, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.”*
- i. If we do not love one another, it reveals at least that we have not understood the love of God. (Consider 1 John 4:20–21)
 1. But when we love one another, the love of Christ is made real in our lives. (1 John 4:11–12)

REFLECT

Let’s take a moment to pray

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our attention and lead our conversation, helping us see and understand what He wants us to apply in our lives.

APPLY

Process the passage together with these questions:

- What are some ways we might unintentionally build the wrong kind of “church”? (Ref. 1 Cor 3:10–13)

- Have you ever felt like you were “competing” in church rather than contributing to a shared mission? What helped shift your perspective?
- How can we take personal responsibility for helping build a stronger, more unified Church family?

Where we want to “land the plane”

- The Church isn’t a collection of separate efforts – it’s one Body, built on one foundation: Jesus. When we divide, compete, or neglect our role in the Church, it shows a lack of spiritual maturity and love. God sees how we treat His people, and we will give an account. So let’s mature in Christ, work together, and build with care – because this isn’t ours; it’s His.

Exhortation for the Week

- Press in to church relationships and ministry. Determine to get uncomfortable and intentional in your church relationships.

FOOTNOTES

1. **Apollos and Paul** were given their ministries by Christ (Eph. 4:11). They were the means, not the cause, whereby the Corinthians believed (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4–5). God alone produced results. God made the seed grow (3:6). Therefore God alone should get the credit (v. 7). As servants, Paul and Apollos were not competing against each other but were complementing each other’s ministries (v. 8). Their purpose was to bring the church to maturity, to Christlikeness (Eph. 4:12–13). In accord with their faithfulness to that task would come their reward (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2–5). For though a minister served the church he was basically responsible to God. Paul and Apollos were fellow workers who belonged to God and worked for Him in His field, the church (3:9). *David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary:*

*An Exposition of the Scriptures, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2
(Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 511.*