

1 Corinthians

Verse by Verse



**Letter to a
Problematic
Church**



1 Corinthians 3

Letter to a Problematic Church



Introduction

The Text of
1 Corinthians 3

Conclusions

Introduction to 1 Corinthians 3



**Previously in
1 Corinthians**

**What's in
1 Corinthians 3?**

Key Verses



Previously in 1 Corinthians

- So far Paul has brought up two main problems in Corinth.
 1. Divisions in the church.
 2. Admiration of worldly wisdom.

Divisions

**Worldly
Wisdom**

Divisions

- The Corinthians believers tended to favor one Christian leader over another.
- As a result they divided into factions, each promoting their favorite apostle or teacher.
- This was leading to unhealthy rivalries and arguments among them.



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Divisions

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Worldly Wisdom

- The Corinthians were also overly impressed by human abilities. This made the divisions worse.
- Personal appearance, a talent for public speaking and the marks of great learning were all highly prized.
- Style over substance and charisma over content were how leaders were judged in Corinth.



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Divisions

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Introduction to 1 Corinthians 3



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What's in 1 Corinthians 3?

- For the most part Paul brings up more of the same.
- Divisions and the need to reject worldly wisdom will both be addressed.
- He will point us to right ways to look at the church and the workers God assigns to it.

Introduction to 1 Corinthians 3



**Previously in
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**What's in
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Key Verses



Key Verses:
1 Corinthians 3:19-20
(ESV)

19 For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,” 20 and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

Introduction to 1 Corinthians 3



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**Divisions
3:1-4**

**Servants
3:5-9**

**God's
Building
3:10-15**

**God's Temple
3:16-17**

**Godly Wisdom
3:18-23**



Divisions 3:1-4

But I, brothers, could not address you as **spiritual people**, but as **people of the flesh**, as **infants in Christ**. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For while there is **jealousy and strife** among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? 4 For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

The Need
for Maturity

Jealously
and Strife

The Need for Maturity

- In Chapter 2, Paul made a stark distinction between believers in Christ and unbelievers.
- This contrast clearly distinguished between the saved and the lost.
- Now he makes a more subtle distinction.
- There are many in Corinth that he would call believers, but who seem to be refusing to grow.

**The Spirit
and the
Flesh**

The Spirit and the Flesh

Hebrews
5:12-14

Those who walk after the flesh are those who live on the purely human level.

Natural human instincts seem to be in control.

The spiritual person sees the need to often suppress their natural desires or reactions with the goal of obedience to God.

The Spirit takes greater control over our personalities as we intentionally submit to God's will.

Hebrews 5:12-14 (ESV)

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

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Jealousy and Strife

Galatians
5:16-21

- Jealousy and strife were clear marks of immaturity in the Corinthian church.
- In Galatians, Paul mentions the same two problems, as well as rivalries, dissensions and divisions, when he lists several "works of the flesh."

Galatians 5:16, 19-21

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh ...

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, **strife, jealousy**, fits of anger, **rivalries, dissensions, divisions**, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

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The Need
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The Text of 1 Corinthians 3



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3:10-15**

**God's Temple
3:16-17**

**Godly Wisdom
3:18-23**



Servants 3:5-9

**Servants in
God's field**

5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? **Servants** through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers. **You are God's field, *God's building*.**

Servants in God's field

- The Greek word Paul uses is *diakonoι*.
- This is a very general word for a person employed in the service of another.
- It is also used as a title for a person in leadership in the church such as Phoebe in Romans 16.

Workers on
God's Farm

Workers on God's Farm

- The illustration of workers in a field is intended to keep the Corinthians from thinking too much of any given leader in the church.
- Paul planted, Apollos watered, and so on.
- Church leaders are merely laborers on God's farm.
- As with farming and the raising of a crop, the laborer can only do so much.
- No farm worker can ever take full credit for the crop's ability to grow.

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God's Building 3:10-15

**Solid
Construction**

10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Solid Construction

Paul likens himself to a skilled master builder, one who brings all his experience and knowledge to the work and assigns tasks to individual workmen. The Greek word gives us the English 'architect' and it is obvious, most of all to the architect himself, that he cannot do everything and that he depends on the skill, the craftsmanship, the sheer hard labour of many other fellow-workers.

- David Prior, Bible Teacher based in London



**Colossians
2:6-7**

Colossians 2:6-7 (ESV)

6 Therefore, as **you received Christ Jesus the Lord**, so walk in him, 7 **rooted** and **built up in him and established in the faith**, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

In this passage Paul also combines ideas from both agriculture and construction - as in 1 Cor 3.

That is just kind of fun. =)

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God's Temple 3:16-17

16 Do you not know that **you** are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in **you**? 17 **If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.** For God's temple is holy, and **you** are that temple.

The Plural
You

Destroying
God's Temple

The Plural You

- Each time Paul says "you" in these verses, the form is plural.
- This indicates he is talking to all of the Corinthians at once.
- All of them together constitute one (singular) temple of God - a picture of the church.
- In Chapter 6, Paul will refer to the body of each believer as "a temple of the Holy Spirit," but that is not what he is talking about here.



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- God cares for the church with highest level of attention and compassion for it.
- When Christ stopped Paul (Saul) on the road to Damascus, he asked **"Why are you persecuting me?"** Paul might have thought he was only after the church.
- False teachers within the church or persecutors from outside it, put themselves at risk of the judgment of God.



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Godly Wisdom 3:18-23

18 Let no one deceive himself. **If anyone among you thinks that he is wise** in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For **it is written**, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,” 20 and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” 21 So let no one boast in men. **For all things are yours,** 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, 23 and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Romans
1:21-23

It is
written

All things
are yours

Romans 1:21-23

21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Godly Wisdom 3:18-23

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Romans
1:21-23

It is
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It is written

- Our key verses highlight one of Paul's favorite phrases. Jesus liked it too.
- They both use it when they are about to quote Scripture.
- A quick search of the ESV has it appearing 26 times in the Gospels and 31 times in the letters of Paul.
- In this case, Paul links back to Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11.

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All things are yours

Verses 21–23 then give the ultimate rationale as to why believers should not quarrel with each other—there is no spiritual blessing someone else has which they cannot have access to as well, either now or in the future.



Craig Blomberg,
Denver Seminary

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**God's
Wisdom**

**The Spirit and
the Flesh**

**From
D. A. Carson**

**Promoting
Unity in the
Church**



**God's Wisdom
is ultimately seen in Jesus.**
(We said this last week.)

Key Verses

The Big Story of the Bible centers on the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ.

In other words, all of history, from Creation to the coming New Creation, points either forward or backward to the cross.

Jesus Christ crucified for us is the story that gives meaning to all other stories, the event that gives meaning to all other events.

Only in Christ can we see how to make sense of history, our own lives, and the seemingly random events all around us.

Godly
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Godly Wisdom

(We looked at these verses
a couple weeks back.)

The wisdom of God is not the same
thing as the wisdom of the world.

The wisdom of God centers on the
cross of Christ.

Proverbs 9:10

Colossians 2:1-3

James 3:16-18

Colossians 2:1-3

1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and ... for all who have not seen me face to face,
2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,
3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.



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James 3:16-18 (ESV)

16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.



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Proverbs 9:10 (ESV)

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wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One
is insight.



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**From
D. A. Carson**

**Promoting
Unity in the
Church**



The Spirit and the Flesh

**Hebrews
5:12-14
(again)**

Now that we belong to Jesus Christ it is important that we are determined to grow.

From this chapter we learn that mere years of being a Christian will not do the job. It wasn't enough for the church in Corinth.

There has to also be an intentional focus on trying to learn and do God's will.

Hebrews 5:12-14 (ESV)

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The ways of destroying the church are many and colorful. Raw factionalism will do it. Rank heresy will do it. Taking your eyes off the cross and letting other, more peripheral matters dominate the agenda will do it—admittedly more slowly than frank heresy, but just as effectively on the long haul ... Gossip, prayerlessness, bitterness, sustained biblical illiteracy, self-promotion, materialism—all of these things, and many more, can destroy a church. And to do so is dangerous: “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple” (1 Cor. 3:17). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.



D. A. Carson,
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

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- **Map of Ancient Mediterranean:**



Promoting Unity in the Church **Ephesians 4:1-2 (ESV)**

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

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Verse by Verse



**Letter to a
Problematic
Church**

