

GAMMA 2017

STUDY 3

1 Cor 3

- 1. Why did Paul have to chastise the Corinthians as being “infants in Christ”?**
 - a. In what way were they acting in a worldly or spiritually immature fashion?**
 - b. Discuss how easily we too might have fallen into such a situation?**

Paul finds the Corinthians stuck at the “milk” stage. They are not growing in their understanding and application of the Word of God generally, and of the gospel in particular. Thus in matters of the Spirit they were really novices or infants in the sense of being immature or not fully developed or better still far from being fully developed. They could only actually apply basic biblical truths and no more. One lesson to take in here is spiritual maturity is never measured by the depth of biblical knowledge alone but in its application. Their jealousy and strife revealed a glaring failure to apply these basic truths in their lives. Additionally although infants cannot really be chided for not being really mature enough, the Corinthians were accountable for their own state of immaturity hence the need for Paul to chastise them in this regard.

The other metaphor Paul uses to chastise them was in verse 3b when they were acting as “mere men”—not of men and women who possess the Spirit of the living God. They have the HS but they act as if they have not. They act in a fashion reminiscent of their past worldly existence before they met Christ and were transformed from a mere human existence into a people filled with the HS.

b. This passage is commonly misconstrued as talking about a group of Christians who have gone back to a life style indistinguishable from their previous lifestyle in terms of a hedonistic life style of partying and living just to become wealthy. In many ways this was a church who had all the trappings of apparent spirituality, ie they had lots spiritual gifts, they had a regular worship, they struggled with deep theological and ethical issues (chapter 8-10). Their worldliness was in the manner in which they were deeply divided against each other harbouring jealousy and strife.

Thus in the context of Corinthians spiritual maturity would necessarily be coming to grips with the message of the cross (1 Cor. 2,) a growing ability to take in more and more Christian truth (3:2). It will also show itself in a large hearted attitude that avoids conflict, splits and jealousy, and refuses to sink

into narrow factionalism. In other words, how mature we are is reflected in how we get along in church.

c. Discuss personal experiences of having given into jealousy and disharmony within the church context

2. Discuss from the passage 5 reason Paul gives that make it inappropriate for us to place all our loyalties or allegiances upon human leaders or pastors?

- i. They are servants just like you are so they do not deserve the position that we have placed them upon. They do not deserve the pedestal on which we have placed them on. They are just doing a job. Vv 5a*
- ii. They are servants whose very position and jobs were actually designated by God. He gave the opportunity to each of these leaders it was never their own effort or sparkling brilliance vv 5b*
- iii. God is the one who is responsible for our spiritual growth so He is the one to whom we must owe all loyalty. Our fidelity to Him is of paramount importance as it is He who has graciously worked within our lives. So it is wrong to give credit to pledge loyalty to mere human leaders who do not deserve the level of allegiance to which we are giving them. Vv 6-7*
- iv. Furthermore, even the leaders are working toward one purpose toward the harvest so it would hardly be logical to divide along allegiances to the individual leaders when their effort and aims were all toward a common identical aim. verse 8*
- v. We belong to God. The metaphor here is the field and building which ever it is, it belongs to God. V9*

a. Can you share examples or experiences of this happening in the history of your church?

b. Why is this particularly damaging to the church?

It divides the church and thus makes it ineffective for achieving its tasks of furthering the Kingdom of God. It saps the energy of the leadership who will have to be involved in the conflict resolution and mediation between parties.

It embitters individuals who inevitably be hurt in the process of the conflict. This bitterness will make resolution of the strife difficult and

often may cause members to break away from the church. The personal hurt will leave the persons involved more vulnerable to sin as they seek to retaliate or fail to forgive. Guilt and personal struggle with one's spirituality often will follow. This conflict destroys the morale of the church as the loving trusting environment in which it is supposed to exist with the help of the HS will have evaporated in the heat of the contentions. Even members not involved with the conflict will have to be pressured to make decisions or take sides and some may even be stumbled spiritually.

3. What advice does Paul give to leaders as to how they should endeavour to build up the church -Look at verse 10-15.

- 1. The foundation already laid that is the work and word of Jesus Christ. They therefore should not be laying the work on any other foundation. We must never teach or guide any person to accept any person other than Christ and Christ alone for our salvation.*
- 2. The work that they do must be durable and that means it must be done in accordance to the foundation, built on the ministry and power of the Word which is based on Christ' death for us. It is not a work that concentrates on ways and means and methods of enticing people to church but on the power of the gospel itself to save and the Word to build up His Church. The work we do must be done solely for the glory of God and never based on a desire for position or pride. Work done for Christ will last. The actual results of our work will often not be known until judgement day*

4. Looking at the context of the passage so far can you tell in verse 16, who is the temple of God? And what is God's attitude toward that temple? What should be our attitude toward that temple.

The temple here refers to the Church of Jesus Christ collectively based on the context. God considers this Church as sacred as His Spirit fills the church collectively. He regards the Church as precious despite all its short comings thus we too should regard the Church in the same way with reverence and respect.

5. We can either build up the temple or contribute towards its destruction. In practical terms can you share amongst your group how we can do in each case?

We contribute to its destruction by immature divisiveness like the Corinthians. Pledging our loyalty to men and not God. Building with material that will not

last, working in Church with motives other than glorifying God and relying on methods other than the saving work and word of Jesus. Allow sharing freely for each member's contribution.

Case History

Look at the latest publication of a group of Church leaders convicted of criminal breach of trust in Singapore (Appendix 1).

- a. Can you discuss whether you disagree with the court or agree with the courts in this matter?*
- b. Were the leaders right in using the funds for the leaders' wife without the explicit knowledge of the church members? Even though they eventually returned said amounts? What if your own church leaders have done the same thing would you agree?*
- c. How could they have avoided the entire fiasco?*
- d. How does 1 Cor 3 relate to the case?*