

“Proper Ecclesiology Informs Unity”

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

For the week of September 20, 2020

The Set-Up

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul looks at the growing problem that the church at Corinth seems to have a bunch of Christians living like they are not Christians. We began chapter 3 last week where Paul addresses the climate of the church through the terms “infant” (verse 2) and “merely human” (verse 4). These terms tell us that while the church identified as believers, their actions were something entirely different. They were not focused with their Godly mission and were instead focused on their own interests. Paul exhorts them to move past the infant stages of their relationship with God and calls them to live in the power given to them through the Holy Spirit for the purpose of proclaiming Christ.

With this background, Paul then identifies expectations of both church leaders and the church as a whole. While many in the church choose to align with a specific teacher or leader, Paul reminds them that only Christ is worthy of their praise. He goes on to expose the lie that any leader or foundation can nurture the church. Finally, he concludes by calling out foolish thinking within the church and gives a correct teaching on Godly wisdom.

Chapter 3 ties together with Paul’s exhortation throughout 1 Corinthians to live like a new creation in Christ. We are not merely human, but we are transformed ambassadors of the gospel message. In Christ, we have great power to proclaim the gospel message. It will not benefit us or others to remain on the sidelines in division. Instead we must be engaged to tell others the life-changing gospel.

What is Ecclesiology?

Ecclesiology is the study of the church. It comes from two Greek words meaning “assembly” and “word.” The church is the assembly of believers who belong to God. Ecclesiology is critical to understand God’s purpose for believers in the world today. Ecclesiology helps us to understand the role of the church and our role in the church. With this in mind, answer the following questions:

What is the church? How does Romans 16:5 identify the church?

What is the purpose of the church (Acts 2:42)?

How has belonging to RiverLakes Community Church impacted your life and the life of your family?

Plant, Water, Grow

Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-8

How would you define the following verbs in this passage?

- “Planted” – What is involved in this?
- “Watered” – What are ways to “water?”
- “Growth” – Is it required for others to plant and water before God can give growth? Why or why not?

How does Paul's explanation show us the role of God, leaders, and the church? How does Paul's explanation help you in understanding your role within the church?

Fellow Workers, God's Field, God's Building

Read 1 Corinthians 3:9

Now look at verse 9 and give your meaning to the following:

- “God's fellow workers” – How does this promote unity?
- “God's field” – How were the Corinthians “God's field?” Are you a part of “God's field” today? How so?
- “God's building” – Is this referring to a specific building or something else? Read 2 Corinthians 6:16 and Ephesians 2:21 to help in your answer.

Jesus is the Foundation

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Jesus is the foundation of the church. What does that mean in today's world?

What are good signs that a church is built with Jesus as the foundation? What are bad signs that this is not occurring?

Review the key elements of the gospel. In fact, write them below:

Now, how does the gospel show us a better foundation for our lives?

Although those who have believed in Jesus have already been justified by faith (Romans 5:1) and will not face condemnation on the final day (John 5:24; Romans 8:1, 33), God will still judge their works. Let's look at "judging" and "reward."

What does it mean that God will judge their works (Read Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10)?

How will a believer be rewarded (Read Matthew 6:1-6, 16, 18; 10:41-42)?

God's Temple

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

According to verses 16-17, what is the temple? How does the truth that in Christ we are the temple of God draw us together as the church?

Do verses 10-17 apply only to Christian teachers or to every Christian? Do all, or only some, have responsibilities for building the church? Explain your reasoning.

Pray

Utilize the C.A.T.S. model for prayer in your group this week.

Confession – This means agreeing with God about the things that you have done wrong. It's a time to express sorrow about what you said, thought, or done that is not pleasing to Him. Ask God to forgive you for these things, and then believe that He does so freely. Confessing your sins helps to remove any barrier in your communication with Him (1 John 1:9).

Adoration – Means worship. It means to adore and praise God. Praise Him for who He is and for all that He has done for you. God delights in your praise (Psalm 148).

Thanksgiving – This means being thankful to God for everything. His love, protection, and provision are just a few things for which to thank Him.

Supplication – This involves praying for your needs and the needs of others.