

1 Corinthians 3:1-23 God's Temple has no celebrities

Introduction

The Corinthians were a church full of problems. Our purpose in reading this letter is to learn from their mistakes-- we want to be strong and to excel in the areas in which they struggled. Previously we have seen the Corinthians were marked by divisions and pride as they gathered around different leaders-- Paul, Apollos, Cephas (Peter), and still another group which rejected all apostolic authority and claimed direct allegiance to Jesus.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-23

1. In verses 1-4 Paul highlights another failing of the Corinthians. He says they are 'of the flesh' and still 'baby Christians'. What do you think this means? What might be 'typical' of a Christian who is 'of the flesh'?
2. In verses 5-9 Paul uses a farming metaphor to give a more mature view of Christian leaders. How would you describe that more mature view?
3. Do you observe today some Christian leaders or speakers who seem to 'celebrities' -- either in their own eyes or in the eyes of others? If so, what can we do about that, and what can they do about that?
4. At the end of verse 9, and moving into verses 10-17, Paul changes from a farming metaphor to a building metaphor. At the same time, he shifts from talking about Apollos, himself and other leaders, to talking about 'each one' of us. What is it that each one of us is doing in this metaphor? What is the point of the metaphor?
5. Since we are all parts of the temple, our building contribution includes our own lives. What do you do in your own life to build God's temple? How do you ensure good quality workmanship?
6. Apart from your own relationship with God, what parts of God's temple building are you contributing to, or would you like to contribute to? How do you / might you go about this?
7. Part of Paul's teaching here involves an accountability for our what we build and how we build. What does the passage actually say about this? What exactly might this mean?
8. Verses 18-23 call us to have a realistic view of ourselves before God, which ultimately means that we share God's view of ourselves. What encouragement does Paul give to both the Corinthians and ourselves in this regard?

Prayer

What matters for prayer arise for you out of this study? Pray about them as a group.

For further reflection

9. How do you know that you are building on a good foundation (v10-11)?
10. What are the characteristics of 'good building' in v12-15? What might this actually look like for you?
11. How might you guard yourself against "the cult of personality" and an unbalanced view of Christian leaders?