

Men's Sunday Night
The Book of 1 Corinthians
Christian Conduct
Lesson 3 - 1 Corinthians 3:1-23
"The Local Church"

British Bible teacher Dr. G. Campbell Morgan had four sons, all who became ministers. Someone asked one of the grandsons if he also would become a minister, and he replied, "No, I plan to work for a living." What is a pastor supposed to do? What really is "the work of the ministry"? If we don't know, we will never know how to evaluate the minister's work.

In chapter 3 Paul deals with the ministry of the Gospel and tells us what a minister of the Gospel is and does, and how the church should look upon him and his work. It is sad that we have such extremes today: some churches "idolize" their ministers and make gods out of them, while other fellowships "resist" their ministers and refuse to respect them. The word "minister" here is the same word from which we get our word "deacon," and it means "a servant." For eighteen months Paul was Christ's servant in Corinth, feeding people the Word, disciplining them, encouraging them, and helping them win others.

If there were problems in the church, it was not Paul's fault, it was their fault for being such immature Christians. They were babes in Christ and could not receive the solid meat of the Word. He had to feed them with milk like a nurse. Just like little children they argued and divided into cliques, following human leaders.

A true pastor must be a servant. He must have a servant's mind and be willing to put Christ first, others second, and himself last. We are to have the **J.O.Y.** of the Lord in our lives. (**J**esus first, **O**thers second, and **Y**ourself last). This is not always easy to do. We must pray for our spiritual leaders, that God will give them grace and strength to be servants to others.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-8. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul spoke to the Corinthians as their spiritual father. He had a pure and genuine concern for their welfare and spiritual growth, but he saw the young church being split into factions according to personalities and leadership styles. Because people were taking such pride in the groups they belonged to, the church was divided. It's good and normal to appreciate gifted people and to follow your favorite teachers, but when that appreciation leads to feelings of superiority, arrogance or pride, the church is weakened and the Lord is saddened. As you look around at other groups, both inside and outside the church, be appreciative of differences. But remember the simple truth that there is only one foundation, Jesus Christ, and that all we have or do comes from Him.

1. What situation in the church was Paul addressing?
2. What traits did the Corinthians have that made them worldly?
3. What does it mean to plant and water God's Word in others?
4. What are some practical ways that you are able to plant and water God's Word in others?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:9-15. Pray and answer the following questions:

The Corinthian's were worldly and quarrelsome because they misunderstood both the message and the messengers of the cross. In chapters 1 and 2, Paul focused on the message and the true wisdom from God. Now he looks at God's messengers. As he does so, Paul reminds the Corinthians and us of our true identity in Christ and how this should shape all Christian

ministries. This study will lead to a proper perspective on the place of our ministry in the overall work of God.

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

6. In what ways can we build on the foundation that God has laid?

7. God will test the quality of our work like fire tests the quality of building materials. What kinds of work will withstand that test?

8. According to Paul, what is every Christian's responsibility in the building project? Describe the different kinds of building materials, how they will be tested, and what the result will be.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-23. Pray and answer the following questions:

9. In what ways can Christians be influenced by the wisdom of the world?

10. What does it mean that a Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit?

11. Note the warning in verse 17. How should this affect our attitudes and actions toward other Christian groups and individuals with whom we may not agree with?

12. How does Paul stress the fact that differences among Christian leaders should bring unity instead of division?

13. What are some proofs of the fact that God's Spirit lives in every Christian?

Summing Up this Weeks Study

When the Word of God is not set up as a supreme authority, division is inevitable. Such happens even in evangelical churches, when pastors and other leaders begin substituting their own ideas for the truths of Scripture. The substitution is seldom intentional, but it will always happen when the Bible is neglected. A Bible that is not studied carefully cannot be followed carefully. And where it is not followed there will be division, because there will be no common ground for beliefs and practices. When the truth of Scripture is not the sole authority, men's varied opinions become the authority. *John MacArthur*

Life Application

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion.