

## Having the Right Foundation is Vital

### 1 Corinthians 3

Group <sup>1</sup>	C	V	Description
Foundations for Living	3	1-4	Paul's original message presented as unto Spiritual infants
		5-9	Each minister builds on the previous, and not to himself
		10-15	The quality of each man's work will be revealed over time
		16-17	Christians are the temple of God
		18-23	Foundation must be on Christ, not men

### Reflections

Paul now addresses the misplaced loyalty that some of the Corinthians have been promoting, which he mentioned in the first chapter.

### Questions

1. How does Paul describe the spiritual condition of the Corinthians when he was establishing the church there? V1
2. How does Paul describe the nature of his teaching while he lived there and why? Has their condition changed? V2-3a
3. Why does Paul say that they are still fleshly? What evidence does he give? V3b-4
4. What does Paul teach regarding men like himself and Apollos? V5
5. How does Paul illustrate each man's ministry and who does he give credit to for anything that comes from their efforts? V6-7
6. What then does Paul say about each ministers role and reward? V8
7. What was Paul trying to help the Corinthians understand by describing himself and Apollos as God's fellow workers and the Corinthians as God's field, God's building? V9
8. Paul changes metaphors from agriculture to construction. How does Paul describe himself and other that followed him in establishing the church in Corinth? V10
9. Why is this principle of ministry important? V11
10. What does Paul teach regarding the natures and substance of each minister's teaching and ministry? V12-13
11. What are the possible outcomes from each minister's teaching and ministry for himself and those who he ministers to? V14-15
12. How are we to view our beings—spiritually and physically? V16-17
13. What does Paul warn against regarding wisdom? v18
14. How does God view the wisdom of the world? V19-20
15. How then does Paul tell the Corinthians, and now us as readers, to view God's ministers and everything else in the world? V21-23

<sup>1</sup> (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

## Having the Right Foundation is Vital

### Conclusion

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#### ***There and Then: Here and Now***

Answer the questions below as you reflect on your own life and this part of our study<sup>2</sup>: *my LOG vs others SPECK. Here are some possible responses I've identified from the text that might apply to anyone.*

S - Are there *sins* for me to avoid or confess?

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P - Are there *promises* from God for me to claim?

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E - Are there *examples* for me to follow or avoid?

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C - Are there *commands* for me to obey?

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K - How has this passage increased my *knowledge* about God / Jesus / Holy Spirit?

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<sup>2</sup> *Navigator Bible Study Handbook* (The Navigators), with additions & Matthew 7:1-5.

## Having the Right Foundation is Vital

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### Response to Questions

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1. Paul described the people of the new church in Corinth as men of flesh, infants in Christ. They didn't have a personal history of God's dealings with men like others.
2. Paul describes his teaching style as a mother who feeds her infant milk first before solid food because they weren't yet able to receive or comprehend the meatier matters concerning God. Sadly the Corinthians still hadn't matured in their thinking.
3. There are quarrels among them and jealousy, just like "mere men". They had taken to dividing into factions, each following after their favorite teacher.
4. They are each servants of the Lord and each given opportunities from the Lord as He gave them opportunity. There is nothing special about them *per se* other than being faithful men of God.
5. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth." He continues to make clear that he and Apollos were only doing what God had given them to do but ultimately God was the one who was causing the growth to occur, not them. In fact without God, nothing that Paul, Apollos, or anyone else does will amount to anything apart from God's participation.
6. They are one in terms of ministry, all being servants of the Lord, but each is rewarded "according to his own labor." Just like Jesus spoke of the sower who faithfully sows God's word and the different soils responding accordingly (see Matthew 13; Mark 4; and Luke 8).

Matthew 13:18-23 NASB "Hear then the parable of the sower. 19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. 20 "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23 "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

7. Paul was trying to help the Corinthians understand that everything and everyone belongs to God by using the possessive "'s".
8. Paul was the master builder because he laid the foundation or planted the church. He was only able to do this because of God's grace. Those who come after him are building on the foundation that Paul laid. Each one must be careful how they build on it. In other words, each minister needs to make sure that they are teaching faithfully the truths contained in God's word, which is all about JESUS.
9. No other foundation but the foundation of Jesus can be laid for a church.
10. The nature and substance of each minister's teaching and ministry will be proven over time and through trials.
11. If the people he ministers to remain faithful, he will be rewarded. If they don't remain faithful, he will suffer a loss, yet he will still be saved but as having been tested by fire. The

## Having the Right Foundation is Vital

reward is not clearly defined in the text, so it would be wrong to apply a personal opinion to something that God will give to His faithful servants as He deems appropriate.

12. Since everything is God's and as Christian God's Spirit dwells in us, we are to view ourselves as God's dwelling place—spiritually and physically. How well you preserve and protect your spiritual and physical beings will be rewarded or disciplined by God.
13. Paul warns that we shouldn't think that we are wise according to the standards of this world. This goes back to the wisdom he referred to in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. In fact, they need to be seen as foolish by worldly standards because of their belief in God and His Son Jesus in order to become truly wise.
14. God will prove worldly wisdom as being deceptive and useless and it foolish to pursue it.
15. We shouldn't place such great emphasis on individual men, like Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, but we should make sure to focus on Jesus, because of the line of succession and possession that runs from God to Jesus to us.

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**Key Words:** New Testament, Letters, 1 Corinthians, Saul/Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Jesus, Ministry, Testing, Wisdom, Discipleship

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## Bibliography

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