

LESSON 3
WRONG DIVISION
1 CORINTHIANS 3:1—4:21



1 List as many different church denominations as you can think of.

2 How did we end up with so many different kinds of churches?



Read 1 Corinthians 3:1—4:21 and the following notes:

☐ 3:6 ☐ 3:10, 11 ☐ 3:10–17 ☐ 3:13–15 ☐ 4:1, 2 ☐ 4:6, 7 ☐ 4:15

3 What situation in the church was Paul addressing (3:1–4)?

4 What were some of the reasons for this situation (1:3, 4)?

5 Why was this troubling to Paul (3:1–9)?

6 How did Paul address this problem? (See 3:8–10; 4:6, 7.)

7 Why do you think Paul placed such an emphasis on his lifestyle and apostle-ship in this passage of Scripture?



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 spiritual leaders, 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 your church, be appreciative of differences. Thank God if you are in a church where your needs are being met and you are growing in Christ. But remember the simple truth that there is only one foundation, Jesus Christ, and that all we have or do comes from him. Watch out for the natural tendency to take sides.

8 What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the “foundation” (3:11)? How do we build on this foundation?



9 What kinds of things are “gold, silver, jewels”? What kinds of things are “wood, hay, or straw” (3:12)?

10 In your experience, what are some of the main causes of divisions and splits in churches?

11 When can appreciation for a leader become a problem?

12 In your church, what are some of the potential (or existing) causes of division?

13 What are some ways to promote unity in your church, either to prevent divisions or to help heal the ones that exist?

14 Ask God to use you to promote unity in your church. Write a one- or two-sentence statement that expresses your determination to do so.



15 Write down the names of the leaders in your church (or other spiritual leaders you follow) for whom you will pray this week. Ask God to use them and to protect them from the temptations of power and pride.

A Discuss the relationship between faith and deeds in the Christian life. What incentives are found in this passage for being a wise builder? What are you building on the foundation of Jesus Christ?

B How will we be rewarded in heaven for our obedience and faithfulness (3:8, 13–15)?

C What would it have been like to have been an apostle? How does God call you to similar experiences?

D Why did Paul urge people to live as he lived? How would you want people to imitate you?

MORE
for studying
other themes
in this section