

## DIVISIONS AND PERSONALITIES IN THE CHURCH 1 Corinthians 3:1-23

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with Ra McLaughlin

### INTRODUCTION

One of the things that separates good leaders from celebrities is that celebrities often believe their press. They think more of themselves than they should. Leaders, however, know their limits and understand that they are not all that others think they are or want them to be.

At Corinth, Paul faced a problem with celebrities. The Christians at Corinth were dividing the church by pledging their loyalties to different celebrities. Each group claimed to be better than the others, and party spirits began to grow in the church. One of the celebrities was Paul himself – some believers at Corinth actually claimed to be his followers.

Paul, however, was a good leader. He knew better than to believe those who wanted to make him a celebrity, and insisted that believers should follow only one person: Christ himself.

### THE WORLDLY PRACTICE OF DIVISIONS

The apostle first complained that the Corinthian believers did not behave like people taught by the Holy Spirit. Although they were believers, they acted like unbelievers by quarreling and being jealous.

1. Paul began this portion of his letter with a conciliatory address: **brothers** (see also 1:10,11,26; 2:1; 4:6; 7:24,29; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6,20,26,39; 15:1,31,50,58; 16:15). In Paul's epistles, as elsewhere in Greek writings, this terminology included the women of the congregation. The term "brother" expressed Paul's sense of the familial unity that all Christians should enjoy with each other. He was about to rebuke the Corinthians harshly, but he wanted them to know that his words derived from strong affection for them. He chastised them because he loved them. This address also reminded the Corinthians that they were all brethren of one another, and that they should have been united rather than divided (see 1:11).

In this passage Paul remembered his earlier time with the Corinthians, the time when he had first brought them the gospel. Then, he had not treated them **as spiritual but as worldly** because they were **mere infants in Christ**. When men and women first become believers, they begin lifelong journeys toward spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 14:20; 2 Cor. 6:13; Eph. 4:14-17; Heb. 5:11-14). New believers often think and live much as they did before they believed in Christ. In this sense they are "**worldly**" ("of flesh")

NASB). The Holy Spirit of God lived in the Corinthian believers, but the Spirit's sanctifying work had not progressed very far when Paul had first ministered to them. At that time the Corinthians could not receive much in the way of the Spirit's matters because they were spiritual **infants in Christ**.

**2-3a.** Paul continued the analogy between the Christian life and physical growth. He said that earlier he had given the Corinthians **milk, not solid food**. Just as newborn infants choke on solid food, the Corinthians were unable to take the solid food of Christian teaching (compare Hebrews 5:12-14). The Corinthian believers had first received only the simple, introductory teachings of the Christian faith because they had not been **ready** for deeper, more difficult matters. This had been an understandable and appropriate condition for them at the time.

The difficulty for Paul was that the Corinthians were **still not ready**. Though they should have abandoned carnal thinking and practices long ago, they remained culpably immature in their faith. As a result, they were **still worldly**, acting like unbelievers. While unbelievers have the excuse that they lack the Holy Spirit, the Corinthians behaved like unbelievers even though they possessed the Holy Spirit.

**3b.** Next, Paul proved (**for**) his accusation that the Corinthians were worldly and immature. He offered as evidence the fact that the church was full of **jealousy and quarreling**. As Paul demonstrated in earlier portions of this epistle, wisdom from the Spirit and factious behavior in the church are incompatible. Jealousy and quarreling contradict the goals of the gospel (1:9; 12:12). The Corinthians had divided themselves into quarreling parties, and employed the pretenses of human arrogance and worldly wisdom to fight each other. Paul's accusation was right. The Corinthians' behavior revealed that they lived by the principles of the world rather than by the teaching of the Spirit. They acted **like mere men**, not like men in Christ who had the Holy Spirit.

By referring to **quarreling** Paul began to bring his argument full circle, reminding the Corinthians that so far he had aimed his whole discourse at correcting the false views that had caused their divisions (compare 1:11). He did not forget boasting (1:31), but this time spoke of boasting's sister **jealousy**.

**4.** To specify his complaint even further (**for**), the apostle quoted the claims of factions within the church: "**I follow Paul ... I follow Apollos**." Apparently, these words struck deeply into Paul's heart — he had already recalled them before in this letter (1:12-13), and would again do so later (3:22; 4:6). Earlier, Paul had argued that such divisions were unthinkable for a variety of reasons (1:13-17). Here he described them as worldly.

By resorting to such contentious practices as church celebrities, the Corinthians behaved just like the unbelievers around them. In Christ they were called to fellowship (1:9; 12:12). By quarreling and dividing, they lived as **mere men**, as men who did not have the Spirit or the gospel. They were striving against the goals of the gospel and of Christ.

## THE PROPER ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERS

The Corinthians displayed their immaturity by forming loyalties to certain human leaders in the church. Paul attacked this practice by reminding them of the true nature of leadership in the church. He described leadership using two metaphors, portraying the church as a plant in need of planting and tending (3:5-9), and as a building in need of builders (3:10-15).

5. Paul began his discussion of church leadership by strongly asserting that both he and **Apollos** (and all other leaders) were **servants**. Jesus said something similar when he insisted that the greatest in his kingdom must be the least (Matt. 18:1-4; 20:26-27; 23:10-12; Luke 22:26; Mark 9:35; 10:43-44). Unlike worldly leaders who seek positions of power so that they may be served, Christian leaders are the servants of all. As God's servants, church leaders serve their responsibilities **as the Lord has assigned**. Worldly leaders seek to force their own ways on others. Christian leaders should seek only to serve the will of God.

By identifying himself and Apollos as servants, Paul reminded his readers that Christ was the true Lord. To celebrate a mere servant rather than the Lord would be utter foolishness. The Corinthians should not have taken pride in their human leaders because their human leaders had no authority or power of their own (compare 1:13). The powerful gospel and preaching which had converted the Corinthians belonged to God alone (1:24; 2:4).

6. Employing an agricultural metaphor, Paul identified the services that he and Apollos had provided in the Corinthian church. Paul **planted the seed** by initially bringing the gospel to the believers in Corinth. Apollos, in turn, **watered** the seed that Paul had brought. Apollos evidently taught the Corinthians after Paul did. The reason for these analogies is evident: one cannot say that either Paul or Apollos was more important to the church at Corinth. Without a sower, there would have been nothing to water. Without someone to tend the growing seed, it may as well not have been planted.

Beyond this, Paul also designated God's role in the process. Paul and Apollos simply served the Lord (3:5) who **made it grow**, and their human leadership accomplished nothing apart from the Spirit's power. Further, Paul and Apollos only planted and watered because God told them to do so (**assigned**, 1:5). The blessings of salvation on the church at Corinth came through the power and will of God himself.

Because the church's blessings could not be attributed in any way to its leaders, the Corinthians had no basis for preserving loyalty to any particular leader, and therefore no basis for their divisions. The good they received through Paul and Apollos should have contributed to their loyalty to God, not to their loyalty to his appointed servants.

7. On the basis of this analogy, Paul concluded (**so**) that neither the sower nor the one watering was **anything** — both were incidental. Paul and Apollos were nothing compared to God because God is the one **who makes things grow**. The importance the Corinthians placed on human leaders proved their failure to understand that God deserves all the credit for the blessings believers receive. Human leaders are not to be the focus of loyalties in the church. They are only instruments God uses to grow his church.

8. Carrying the analogy one step further, Paul argued that the planter and the one watering have **one purpose**: seeing the church grow and bear fruit. Paul's and Apollos' tasks were not at odds, nor were Paul and Apollos themselves. They would never have disputed over credit for the work done in Corinth because each expected to be rewarded **according to his own labor**. Paul and Apollos were unified. They did not oppose each other as the Corinthians had boasted, but served the same Lord. The Corinthians' divisions presumably had been based on perceived conflicts between the leaders. Since no such conflicts existed, there existed no basis for the Corinthians' divisions and quarrels.

9. To support (**for**) the claims he made from his analogy, Paul summarized his view by stating that he and Apollos were **God's fellow workers**. The meaning of this expression is somewhat ambiguous ("fellow workers *with* God," "fellow workers *for* God," or "fellow workers *from* God"). The preceding context strongly suggests that Paul meant that he and Apollos were fellow workers *for* God. They formed a team, working together in God's service. Each one needed the other in order to fulfill the goal, and the goal was of divine design, not human. The Corinthian church, therefore, was **God's field**, not theirs. God had called both Paul and Apollos to serve there. God himself was the church's ultimate leader, and its allegiance belonged to him alone.

Paul closed this verse by renaming the Corinthians "**God's building**," again speaking of the church as God's possession under God's leadership. Both metaphors illustrated the fact that God was building a unified church — one building, one field — not a fragmented, divided one. By quarreling and dividing, the Corinthians struggled to destroy what God was building.

10. Here Paul developed more fully the architectural model he introduced at the end of 3:9. Paul presented himself as **an expert** (*sophos*) **builder** ("master builder" NRSV; "wise builder" NASB) who **laid a foundation**. **Someone else** (Apollos? proponents of factions?) was **building on it**. Paul took no pride in his initiating role, but admitted that he only served to lay a foundation through **the grace God had given** to him.

Paul balanced his claims for himself and Apollos by adding a note of humility for each. For himself, he admitted that he did not deserve his leadership role in the church. Only by God's grace was Paul Christ's servant in this way (Rom. 15:15; Gal. 1:15; 2:9; Eph. 3:2,7-8; 2 Tim. 1:9). Some argue that "grace" here refers to the spiritual gift of

apostleship, not to God's unmerited favor. In either case, the result is the same for Paul's argument: Paul served the church only through God's gracious gift.

To extend a note of humility to Apollos and others who also worked in the Corinthian church, Paul added another thought: anyone who built on Paul's foundation was to **be careful how** he built. This warning also rebuked the contemporary Corinthian leaders who built upon Paul's foundation when he and Apollos were absent (16:12). By allowing such dissension to exist, they did not build wisely.

In the preceding verses (1:17-2:7), Paul loaded the word *sophos* ("expert") and related expressions with tremendous baggage so that his readers would understand "wise" to mean "spiritual" and "of God." Since building wisely meant building a unified structure on Paul's foundation, those who built dissension not only built foolishly, but also built in an unspiritual manner in opposition to God and his purposes. Paul made certain that the church leaders knew their responsibilities to perform their ministries properly, and did not shift the blame entirely to the people.

**11.** Why should the builders of the church have been careful? Paul answered (**for**) first by reminding the Corinthians that their foundation had already been laid. Paul had set the foundation of the church at Corinth when he had first brought them the gospel of Christ. No builder of the church should try to lay **any foundation other than ... Jesus Christ.**

Here Paul implied what he had already stated plainly: some leaders of the Corinthian church had begun to replace the church's true foundation. They were not careful to build on the gospel of the crucified Christ (1:23; 2:2), but tried to found the church on human wisdom and pretense. Any church leader who substitutes human imaginations for the true gospel of Christ has set aside the only acceptable foundation for the church.

**12-13.** Builders must also show caution because God will reward church leaders according to the work they accomplish (compare 3:8). Because Paul spoke of **any man**, his words apply to every believer indirectly. But they form a direct warning to church leadership.

Church leaders can build upon the foundation of Christ's gospel in two different ways. On the one hand, they can use **gold, silver, and costly stones**. These materials will withstand **the fire** of God's scrutiny that **will test the quality of each man's work**. On the other hand, they can build with **wood, hay or straw**. Such materials will not withstand the fire of divine judgment.

Paul said that **the Day** (i.e. the day of final judgment [Isa. 13:6,9; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14; Zeph. 1:7,14; Mal. 4:5; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10]) would **bring to light** the nature of each leader's work so that **his work** would **be shown for what it was**. So, all Christian leaders should pay careful attention

to what they bring to the church. Although the true nature of their work may remain hidden for a while, it will one day be revealed for all to see.

By this argument, Paul called the leaders and participants of the Corinthian divisions to account. He asserted that the trouble they caused would detract from their eternal rewards. He also encouraged them to reaffirm the gospel so that they would gain greater rewards on the Day of Judgment.

**14-15.** Paul further explained the two possible outcomes for church leaders. If a leader's work **survives** the fire of God's judgment, **he will receive his reward**. God promises great rewards to those who serve him faithfully (Ps. 19:11; Matt. 5:12; 10:41-42; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23,35; Co. 3:24; 2 John 1:8; Rev. 11:18). But if a leader's work is **burned up** by divine judgment, the true believer **himself will be saved**, but only as **one escaping through the flames** of a burning house. Judgment on church leaders is more severe than on ordinary believers (Jas. 3:1). For this reason, leaders must lead the people of God very carefully.

## THE TRUE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Divisive loyalties to human leaders are not only contrary to the nature of leadership in the church. They are also contrary to the nature of the church. In this section, Paul demonstrated that the church of Christ is too wonderful to be satisfied with following human celebrities.

**16-17.** Paul first pointed to the sanctity of the church. He wanted the Corinthians to understand how special they were in God's eyes, and how their status as the temple of God required a particular kind of leadership. Leaders must not serve the church with human wisdom, but with divine wisdom from the Spirit because the church is holy before God.

Paul expected an affirmative answer to his question: "**Do you not know ... ?**" Believers should recognize that they **are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives** in them. Just as the Name of God dwelled in Solomon's temple (1 Kgs. 8:29,44,48; 9:3; 2 Chr. 6:2,10,20; 7:16), the Holy Spirit lives in the New Testament temple which is the body of believers gathering in the name of Jesus (Matt. 18:20).

The sanctity of the Holy Spirit's dwelling requires that the leaders of the church be very careful. In fact, **if anyone destroys God's temple**, harming the church by leading through arrogance and human pretense, **God will destroy him**. Why is this judgment so severe? Because (**for**) the temple of God is **sacred** and the Corinthian church is **that temple**. The Corinthian leaders needed to preserve the unity of the temple, not to destroy it with divisions. Insofar as they divided the fellowship, they attacked God's holy temple, his body (1 Cor. 12:27; Col. 1:18,24) and his bride (Eph. 5:23-27), thereby provoking God's wrath.

**18-20.** The preceding reflections on leadership led Paul to draw out an implication for the Corinthians: they needed to be careful not to fool themselves. The Corinthian believers had fooled themselves into thinking they were doing the right thing by dividing the church and exalting human wisdom to support their contentions with others. In their culture such behavior seemed reasonable.

Paul insisted to the contrary. The **wise by the standards of this age** should take heed. Instead of pursuing the standards of the world, every believer must become a "**fool**" in the world's estimation by following the wisdom that comes from the Spirit of God. In this way, the Corinthians would actually **become wise**.

Why must Christians become fools in order to be wise? Paul supported (**for**) his argument by pointing once again to the antithetical relationship between worldly wisdom and God's wisdom. **In God's sight** the **wisdom** held so strongly by **this world** is actually **foolishness**. Paul quoted two Old Testament passages to support his belief in this antithesis. First, he quoted Job 5:3 in which Eliphaz said that God was like a hunter, catching Job as he **catches the wise in their craftiness**. Job was caught in the trap of depending on his own reasoning rather than accepting the wisdom of God (Job 42:3). Second, Paul paraphrased Psalm 94:11 which mocks those who think they are safe when they rebel against God, but whose thoughts **are futile**. These Old Testament citations demonstrate that people who exalt human wisdom in rebellion against God will find that God overcomes and destroys their efforts. Paul warned the Corinthians from these passages that their reliance on pretentious human wisdom would bring them under God's judgment. From these verses, the Corinthian leaders and laity should have determined to abandon the so-called wisdom that had led them into divisions.

**21a.** On the basis of what he had just said (3:18-20), the apostle drew a final conclusion (**so then**). The Corinthians were to cease **boasting about men**. Paul had warned them earlier to "boast in the Lord" (1:31). Here he focused on the negative side of the issue. The Corinthians needed to forsake the wisdom of this age that led them into factious exaltation of themselves and other human leaders. They needed to see their boasting for what it was: not boasting in higher theology or wisdom; not boasting in greater righteousness; but boasting in mere men.

**21b-23.** Paul gave one final reason for this rejection of human pride. He began with a comprehensive statement: "For (NASB, NRSV) **all things are yours**." The language of this expression derives from Stoic philosophy. It originally described wisdom as mastery over all that one encounters in life. Paul used this Stoic saying to encourage the Corinthians to gain a proper, Christ-centered perspective on their lives. If they became people of spiritual wisdom, they would see that everything had been given to them in Christ.

All things are Christ's inheritance, and Christ shares that inheritance with all believers (Gal. 3:29; Eph. 1:10-14). The gifts the Corinthians received in Christ were boundless, and they included the blessing of the leadership of **Paul, Apollos, and Cephas** (the apostle Peter). These men were gifts from God to the church, and should

not have become sources for division. Moreover, the **world, life, death, present, and future** also belonged to the Corinthians. Christ controls all these things, and he will place them all under the feet of his faithful ones (Rom. 5:17; 6:23; 16:20; 1 Cor. 1:4-5; Gal. 3:14,26; Eph. 1:3,10; 2:6; 3:6). Because all believers share these blessings equally, including the leadership of the aforementioned men, the Corinthians had no basis for their divisions.

Beyond this, all believers **are of Christ**. No matter what happens, believers can rest assured of their eternal destiny because they belong to Christ (Rom. 14:8). Finally, **Christ is of God**; the Son belongs to the Father who rules over all (see 15:28). Believers' blessings in Christ are secure because Christ's place with the Father is secure.

Paul rehearsed these wonderful facts about the Christian life to inspire his readers to reconsider their actions. They divided the church at Corinth, struggling with each other and seeking to gain power through human means. But these actions were entirely out of accord with their identity in Christ. If they would submit to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and see life rightly, they would have no need for these struggles. Instead, they would see that they had all been blessed beyond measure.

## APPLICATION

Christians sometimes think that realizing their worth and value as the temple of God and the heirs of Christ's kingdom always leads to sin. Not so. Paul told us that the church is far too valuable to be abused by self-serving human leaders. We need to look closely at the honor that belongs to the church. When we do, we will see that human leaders are merely servants of the one Leader who alone is worthy of our full loyalty: Christ.

Several aspects of this chapter readily apply to the modern church. First, like the chapters before it, chapter 3 continues Paul's argument that the Corinthians needed to cease their boasting and quarreling, and to be reconciled to one another. From this, we again learn the importance of maintaining unity and like-mindedness in the modern church. Since we have seen Paul emphasize these ideas for three whole chapters (so far), we should also realize how important this concept is. This is not a secondary issue for Paul, but gets at the root of the gospel's goal. As a result, it should be a primary issue for us as well.

Second, regarding church leaders, we should not idolize them, but recognize that they are servants of Christ, and that all they accomplish is only by the grace of God, not by their personal abilities and merits. We must not rally around personalities, no matter what use Christ has made of them. Rather, we should make certain that whatever we build has the true gospel as its foundation.

Leaders themselves should not only focus on Christ, but should always make sure that their flocks also focus on him. They must always be careful that their flocks do not fixate on human leaders, and must warn the church against celebrity worship. If they do not, the people may tend to fall into the error of Corinth even without their leaders' prompting.

Leaders should also remember the coming Day of Judgment when their works will be tried by fire, taking encouragement that any work they build on the true foundation (Christ) will survive, and refusing to build with inferior materials such as pride and worldly wisdom, or even popularity. All Christians should take comfort in knowing that this judgment will not threaten our salvation, but should weigh seriously the fact that man-centered workmanship will yield not eternal reward.

If we hold pride in worldly wisdom or in leaders other than Christ, we should be ashamed at our behavior, knowing that we are acting immaturely. Instead, we ought to be humble toward one another, seeking unity in the simple doctrinal truth of the gospel. We greatly need humility to bring us to the point where we can comfortably be labeled "fools" by the world.

Third, to help us accomplish all these ends, we need to remember that the church is God's temple. It is the holy building in which he dwells. Individual Christians need to remember that they are not simply in relationships with God, but in relationships with each other in Christ. As a whole, the church is God's temple. We need to have a proper respect and love for the church, and not to treat it as a simple human institution. As much as we dislike things the church does, and as much as we may dislike certain people within it, we need to remember that it is holy to God. God loves his church and dwells in its midst. We as well should learn to love the church. If we do, this love will go great lengths in helping us quash quarreling and jealousy, restore unity, and work toward maturity.

As a further help against boasting and jealousy, we should remember that all things are ours in Christ. That is, everything belongs to Christ — he has inherited all dominion, power, and authority from the Father. Since he shares his inheritance with us, all things belong to us in Christ. We need not bicker over insignificant items like the status of our leaders, or the superiority of our wisdom. We possess so much more in Christ that no such worldly treasure could possibly compare to it.

## **DIGGING DEEPER**

### **Worldly (3:1,3)**

In these two verses, Paul used two different words for "worldly:" *sarkikos* and *sarkinos*. *Sarkinos* seems clearly to denote actual, physical flesh in almost all of its biblical occurrences (2 Chron. 32:8; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; Rom. 7:14; 1 Cor. 3:1; 2 Cor.

3:3; Heb. 7:16), even though it is sometimes used metaphorically. 1 Corinthians 3:1 seems to be the only occurrence that may potentially vary from this meaning.

*Sarkikos*, in half of its biblical occurrences, describes that which is material, though not made of actual flesh (Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:11; 2 Cor. 10:4). In two of the three remaining usages (2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Pet. 2:11), it identifies that which opposes the Holy Spirit, that which is of the nature of the fallen world. The only fairly ambiguous uses of *sarkikos* come in 1 Corinthians 3:3.

To make matters more difficult, in the verses at hand, Paul used *sarkikos* and *sarkinos* as if they were synonymous. In verse 1, he described the Corinthians as being “worldly” (*sarkinos*), but in verse 3 he said they were “**still**” (*eti*) worldly (*sarkikos*), even though this was the first time he employed any form of *sarkikos* in the letter. The uses of *sarkikos* in 1 Corinthians 3:3 probably are best seen as references to that which opposes the Holy Spirit, and thus parallel the uses of *sarkikos* in 2 Cor. 1:12 and 1 Pet. 2:11.

While some commentators place great weight on the different meanings of these words, the fact that Paul used them synonymously (**still**) suggests strongly that their meanings were really not so distinct. If for some reason we feel compelled to maintain that their meanings must remain distinct, we should notice that a metaphoric use of *sarkinos* here could well extend its definition into the normal territory of *sarkikos*.

### **Rewarded, Reward (3:8,14)**

The Bible frequently speaks of heavenly rewards (*misthon*) that we will receive in accordance with our works on earth (Mat. 5:12,46; 6:1; 10:41-42; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23,35; John 4:36; 2 John 1:8; Rev. 11:18; 22:12; compare Mat. 6:20; Col. 3:24). While the Bible makes it clear that we receive blessings only “in Christ” (Gal. 3:28-29) and on the basis of his merit, it also says that we will be rewarded according to our works (Rev. 22:11-12). These two ideas are hard to reconcile. We must affirm, on the one hand, that the rewards we will receive belong rightly to Christ alone. On the other hand, we must affirm that he will share them with us according to our works. At the same time, we need to avoid the error of saying that we earn our rewards by our own merit, and the equally wrong determination that nothing we do on earth has eternal value in heaven.

### **The Day (3:13)**

The Day of the Lord is a central concept in Scripture. It is when God comes as a warrior to defeat all of his enemies in a single day. He judges the nations, and fully restores his people to the Promised Land so that they will never lose their covenant blessings again (Isa. 2:11-12,17; 13:6,9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14; Amos 5:18,20; Obad. 1:15; Zeph 1:7,14; Mal. 4:5). The New Testament echoes this expectation (Acts 2:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10).

## Temple (3:16-17)

Much like the tabernacle before it (Exod. 25:8; 40:34-38), the temple was the place where God dwelt in the midst of his people (1 Kgs. 6:12-13; Ps. 132:12-14; Ezek. 43:7). Ezekiel 40-48 prophesied a future day when the temple would be rebuilt, marking not so much the rebuilding of the structure, but the eschatological hope of the restoration of the kingdom of God (Ezek. 47:1-12). The New Testament picks up this theme, especially as it portrays the coming of the kingdom of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 2:19-21; Eph. 5:5; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 9:8-9; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 11:15). As Christ's body, the church also takes on the identity of the temple (2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21), where it may be said that the Holy Spirit dwells in the corporate body of the church, the unified fellowship of believers (1 Cor. 3:16).

## ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to be a worldly Christian? What did the Corinthians do to make Paul call them worldly? Why is this unacceptable for true believers?
2. What is the role of Christian leaders? Do they accomplish their tasks by natural abilities? How much credit for church growth can leaders accept?
3. If Christian leaders serve Christ perfectly, will they ever be at odds? Do Christian leaders ever serve Christ perfectly? Why or why not? If Christian leaders served Christ perfectly, would this eliminate jealousy, quarreling and divisions?
4. For what works will leaders be rewarded on the day of the Lord? Do they need to fear that they will lose their salvation and perish in the judgment? What implications do these answers have for Christians who are not leaders?
5. What is the significance of calling the church God's temple? How do we feel about the church? How should we feel about the church? Why is it important for leaders to think and feel appropriately about the church? Why would it not make sense for Paul to have argued that each individual Christian is himself a temple?
6. Why do leaders and those who are led both need to be humble in order to preserve unity? How do we reconcile this with the pride we are to take in Christ?
7. What is the nature of true wisdom? Can true wisdom lead to divisions? Why or why not?
8. How does this chapter relate chapters 1, 2 and 4? Does this chapter build upon the ideas in chapters 1-2? Does it anticipate the ideas in chapter 4? Explain your answers.