

Study 5. 1 Cor 3:1-20

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Big idea: God has made us spiritual ('in-dwelt by the Spirit'). Let's behave as Spirit-filled people!

Intro ice-breaker question

When and where have you felt closest to God?

When and where have you felt furthest from God?

Not being wise before God can create in us a sense of distance between us and God.

We can feel 'cut-off' from church and God even when we are surrounded by other Christians. Factions can alienate and disappoint us

This question is designed to set-up the discussion later in the study about what it means for believers to be God's temple, and for God to in-dwell us.

Observation and interpretation

Many translations open with 'Brothers'. In our culture, this is a poor attempt to translate the Greek word, 'adelphoi'. In its context it clearly meant 'brothers and sisters', and that is how we should translate it.

1. What is Paul referring to in 3:2 when he says he gave them 'milk' not 'solid food'?

It is a challenging metaphor. Paul's point is not that there are two types of food, i.e. milk and solid food. Rather, the gospel that is the milk on which we start in the faith becomes solid food for those who move from being 'fleshly-worldly' to being people who behave as spiritual beings.

2. Why are they still not ready for 'solid food'?

Because the wisdom they are seeking strips the gospel of its power. They are not 'spiritual', as they live by the flesh or worldly wisdom, rather than *behaving* as people in-dwelt by the Spirit. Paul is applying his teaching in 2:6-16.

3. What images are created in your mind by the use of the word 'fleshly'? What are the signs that they are still 'fleshly'?
4. In verse 4 this is not the first time Paul has referred to the factions formed around Apollos and himself (see 1:12-17). What was the point there?

Paul's basic accusation is that they are acting divisively because they belong to 'this age'.

How is the idea developed in 3:5-9? [Servanthood is the only paradigm.]

5. What is the 'Day' referred to in verse 13?

Probably the 'Day' refers not to when we will be vindicated by our faith, but when God calls us to give an account of what we have done and said. The image of fire is one of judgement not punishment.

6. What 'reward' will they receive?

Probably seeing people mature in Christ and the church grow.

7. What role did the temple play in the OT?

Note: the word translated 'temple' actually refers to the inner sanctuary. God had chosen to dwell there (1 Kgs 8:27-30) but could choose to leave it (Ezek 10). It was the place where God was specially present and where he would meet with his people] So if the Corinthian Christians are now 'God's temple', what does this mean? [Note that it is the church which is the temple here. Not individual Christians. This text does not support 'my body is a temple' misapplications.

8. What foolishness should they adopt?

The wisdom of the cross, see 1:18-19.

9. If everything is theirs [v22] why shouldn't they boast?

Because it is theirs only because of Christ, and therefore they should boast only in Christ.

Application / Implications

11. How has your faith been built? What has contributed to its strength? What weaknesses exist?
12. Are you aware of factions or divisions at Barneys? If so, where do the divisions lie, and what can be done to heal them? If there are not factions, why not?
13. How do you see your role and gifts in the church compared to the role and gifts of staff?

Note that Paul calls the Corinthians 'fellow-workers' and 'God's field'. There is no sense a teacher or pastor being a 'leader' in the way that is used in secular society. We will come to different gifts in chapter 12-14.

14. How do you understand and experience being 'sacred'

I.e. 'separate/set apart'. It is linked to being in-dwelt by the Spirit, and how we are to behave.

Prayer ideas

15. Thanks for the way people have planted, watered, built you.
16. Pray that your lives will reflect the foundation on which you are built.
17. Pray for healing in the divisions in the church, here and elsewhere.
18. Pray that we all behave as spiritual beings (in the sense Paul means) and draw on the wisdom of Christ.