1 Corinthians

Chapter 3

The Function of the Christian Ministry

**Worship** (CW:538:1)

A: The Church’s one foundation

**B: Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;**

A: She is his new creation

**B: By water and the Word.**

A: From heav’n he came and sought her

**B: To be his holy bride;**

A: With his own blood he bought her,

**B: And for her life he died.**

**Before We Begin**

**Words to Remember**

3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

At your tables: For each of the following situations, discuss what your first reaction would be. Then discuss what your actual course of a

* You’ve been working on a garden all of June and haven’t seen any visible progress
* You’re a high school student and a parent or teacher tells you, “I really expected more out of you. You need to grow up.”
* In the middle of your dentist appointment, your dentist tells you, “Things have gotten worse since I saw you last. Have you been flossing like I told you last time?”  
  The Corinthians said they wanted to be challenged, but….  
  Paul said they were mere infants in Christ, and had not grown in their faith  
  They could only handle spiritual milk, and not the solid food they should have been ready for at this point  
  Acting like infants, each of whom wants be first  
  Yet Paul still calls them brothers

**A Mature View of the Ministry (3:1-9)**

1. Paul calls the Corinthians “worldly” because they were following the wisdom of the world.
   1. What actions of the Corinthians made them look like the rest of the world?

They were following the wisdom of the world, which says you must fight and quarrel to get

your way. They treated Paul and Apollos as mere men, whose teachings were as varied as those of the philosophers (rather than as God’s representatives), all speaking the same truth.

* 1. What does this tell you about the relationship between our spiritual maturity and our lives?  
     We live out our faith every hour of every day; our immature actions are the result of an immature faith  
     We are tempted to try and separate those things
  2. Describe how we might find “worldly” thought processes creeping into the following locations:
     1. Our homes  
        Society’s views of how a family interacts  
        What society wants for children
     2. Our workplace/school  
        What will others do to get ahead?  
        Becoming a different person at work than you are other places

1. Paul calls himself a servant in this section.
   1. Describe why we don’t typically like to think of ourselves as a servant. Then discuss what negative things happen as a result of that mindset.  
      Our pride and arrogance gets in the way; we want to be in a position of power  
      We also are typically interested in what best serves our own needs  
        
      We miss out on opportunities to serve God  
      We reject God’s gracious commands
   2. Why is it actually very appealing to think of ourselves as servants with God as our master?  
      God is both in control and wants what’s best for us  
      Paul spread the Word and understood that God did the real work of conversion and faith strengthening  
      God grants rewards based on Spirit-led effort and faithfulness to His Word
2. God made the plant grow.
   1. What dangers are involved if we forget that for ourselves?  
      We spend time away from God  
      Our focus becomes fixed on ourselves
   2. What dangers are involved if we forget that as a body of Christ?  
      We can become frustrated at a perceived lack of results  
      We don’t spend enough time getting others into God’s Word
   3. What blessings are involved when we remember? When we remember v.8?  
      Our faith grows exponentially  
      We realize that we are one in mission  
      You are God’s field; God’s building

**A Sure Foundation (3:10-17)**

1. Look at the following statement: “Teachings and doctrines aren’t that important. They mostly divide and get in the way. What is most important is love.” What would be appealing about thinking that way? How would you respond? (Use verses 12-15 for help.)

Incentives to use shoddy building materials include giving in to the pressure to “produce,” being more concerned about a personal ministry than a gospel-centered ministry.

The work of those who build with destructible materials will perish (although the church leader

and any of his members who truly believe in Christ will be saved). The work of those who build

with nondestructible material will endure. Paul makes his point in verses 16 and 17. Christian

congregations are God’s temple. If church leaders argue and bicker and use worldly methods

of building the church, they are destroying God’s temple.

**Standards and Ownership (3:18-23)**

1. What is the antidote to the creeping worldliness from question 1? (Verses 18-19)  
   Get lost in the “foolish” wisdom of God, which has the power to refocus us on what’s important: following the will of God  
   “Trapped and ensnared by their own wisdom” – people of this world think they are smarter than they actually are
2. Verses 21-22: “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present of the future – all are yours.” What would our sinful nature like to do with this statement? What amazing truth is Paul actually teaching us?

We’re in charge and we can use whatever we want to do whatever we want!  
Their ministers belong to them. Christians are to make use of every good thing their pastors provide for them, as masters appropriate what their servants bring to them.  
  
The world is ours with all its beauty, its resources, its wisdom, its technology, its comforts. Life is ours to employ for our earthly and our spiritual benefits. Even death serves the Christian on his way to his eternal home.   
  
Everything that is happening and will happen in our lives is there to be used by us. All things serve our eternal good.  
  
Martin Luther in *The Freedom of a Christian Man:* “Every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things that, by virtue of a spiritual power, he is lord of all things without exception, so that nothing can do him any harm. As a matter of fact, all things are made subject to him and are compelled to serve him in obtaining salvation.”  
  
We belong to Christ. When we belong to God, we will not take advantage of the pastors and teachers who serve us.

**Review:**

New:  
  
Reminder:

Sin:

Thankfulness: