

Week 5 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Pick the questions that you think are most helpful for your discussion and feel free to modify them to better suit your group. Answering 2-3 questions at a deeper level can be better than trying to answer them all.

Text: 1 Cor 3:1-9

Icebreaker: Who's the most mature person you know? What makes them mature to you?

1. For serious bonus points, read from the start of 1 Corinthians through chapter 3, verse 9, and observe the following:

- What words and ideas are repeated?
- How would you summarize this section of 1 Corinthians? How does it fit together?
- What else stands out to you from the passage or the sermon you heard Sunday?

Yes, this will require some time to read all the way through to 3:9 but it may be the best way to help grasp all that Paul is saying so far. The fact that he brings up himself and Apollos in this passage shows us that this is all a single train of thought going back to 1:10. The repeated words and ideas help us identify what's most important and also help tie the entire passage together.

2. Paul uses analogies in verses 1-3 where *spiritual = mature* and *flesh = infants = human*. How do these comparisons help express the problem Paul has been confronting in chapters 1-2?

The Corinthians are struggling with spiritual immaturity that is stunting their spiritual growth. It's an immaturity that those outside the church should be expected to display, but not those who have been in the church as long as the Corinthians have. They are living according to the wisdom of the world rather than God's wisdom, so their growth is being inhibited.

Application: What happens when a church (that is, the people who comprise it) fails to "grow up"? Why is it a problem?

3. *Application:* In verse 3, Paul calls out "jealousy and strife" as expressions of the immaturity in the Corinthian church. What leads to jealousy and strife in churches today?

We might think of examples that are similar to what was happening in Corinth, but there could be some important differences as well. We might see the giftedness of another person and wish that we could do what they can. We might be jealous of another's marriage or family or lifestyle. We might see another ministry area growing while the one we're a part of seems more stagnant. We may just have a personality clash that makes it

difficult to appreciate what someone else contributes to the church. We can have a judgmental spirit that keeps us feeling superior to everyone else. We could go on... How can we guard against these things?

Verses 5-9, which the next question focuses on, is very informative in resetting our perspective and helping us learn to grow in humility.

4. In response to the jealousy, strife, division, and immaturity, how would you summarize the argument of verses 5-9? What is Paul trying to get across to the Corinthians?

It might be easiest to just say that Paul is trying to reset their perspective by deflecting credit for the “growth” to the only one who truly deserves the credit! How silly it is to praise the sower and the waterer for the abundant crop! Was their work important? YES! But did they ultimately make the growth happen? NO!

Application: Do you think the church today is a place where too much is made of human leaders? Explain.

5. Division and immaturity go hand-in-hand with a faulty perspective about Who in the church is truly “somebody” (see v. 7). Take time to pray as a group that our church would have a clear view about:

- the role of the church as “God’s field, God’s building”
- the role of human leaders as “servants” or “workers” who “plant” and “water”
- God as the one deserving of all glory and credit for the growth