

Week 6 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Text: 1 Cor 3:10-23

Icebreaker: Have you ever tried to build something where you didn't have the right materials or cook something where you didn't have the right ingredients? How'd it go?

1. Read this week's passage. What stands out to you from the text or from the sermon you heard Sunday?

2. Paul said in verse 9 that, "You are...God's building." What does the "building" described in verses 10-15 represent, given that Jesus is its foundation?

Since Paul says "You (plural) are...", and he's writing to the church in Corinth (see 1:2), we can see that the building represents the church. The church is NOT a building in a literal, physical sense. This would have been evident to the Corinthians since the early church often met in people's homes (see Acts 18, for example). Instead, the church is the assembly of God's people at a particular place and time. In a metaphorical sense, though, the church is a building! Paul will develop this image out further by calling the Corinthians "God's temple." With Jesus as the "foundation," it makes sense that the building being referred to here is the church.

Application: Who do you think these "builders" are today and what kind of activities do they engage in?

Going back to verse 9 from last week, Paul said "For we [i.e., Apollos and himself] are God's fellow workers..." He then goes on in verse 10 to describe himself as a "skilled master builder," which links the work of the builder to the leaders of the church. We could say that the builders today are the leaders of the church as well; however, we should not exclude unpaid, non-staff people in the church! Leaders in the church, whether employed by the church or not, are part of the work of building up the church. The activities of building consist of doing the work of ministry (see Eph 4:11-16). Most directly, this includes the teaching of the gospel so that it might be understood and lived out in all of life, including in works of service. Leaders "build up" the church in this way.

3. Paul lists various materials in verse 12, where only some are valuable and can withstand fire. What do you think these materials represent?

The materials include the ministry of the gospel that leaders are called to give themselves to. It is possible for leaders to engage in busyness in the church that might look impressive but is in fact not worthy of the foundation. Leaders might pursue selfish motivations or fail to rely on prayer. They might seek to please people or gain acceptance from the surrounding culture.

Application: Can you think of an example of work or ministry that will endure and that is worthy of Christ? How about the kind that won't last? Explain the difference.

This passage clearly shows that the future "fire" will expose the difference, so it's valid to say that we may not know the final outcome until the end. We can be confident, though, that the things that will last are those things that depend on "the power of God" over "the wisdom of men" (see 2:5). It's the message of the cross that will endure.

4. Verses 16-17 reveal that the "building" in verses 9-15 is in fact "God's temple." What's significant about the temple from what Paul says in these verses?

The temple is the place where God dwells. He is present there, and it is set apart (holy) from everything else. All of this ties together to show the Corinthians that they individually are part of something collective. They form a single temple where God is present. It's their true identity. Because God is present there, the temple is a place of unity, not division, so the factions in Corinth are a threat that must be remedied.

Application: God's Spirit dwells in us. What does this mean for us as a church, both as an encouragement and as a potential warning?

We have the confidence of God's presence among us. It's a warning, though, that disunity and self-promotion is contrary to what it means to be God's temple.

5. How do you think verses 18-23 fit as a response to the underlying problem where the Corinthians were saying they belonged to certain human leaders?

The language here mirrors what was said in 1:12—literally, "I am of Paul," etc. Paul says here that, rather than belonging to any of the human leaders, the Corinthians are "of Christ." They were seeking to gain status by aligning themselves with human leaders but Paul is showing them that they already have more than they can imagine in Christ, both now and for all of eternity. It's as though they have been striving for poverty in comparison to the riches they already possess.

Application: In Christ, we already have all we could desire (that's truly worth desiring) given the grand scope of eternity. Take time to praise God for all he has given us since we "are Christ's."