

THE WISDOM OF LEADERSHIP THAT LASTS



1 Corinthians 3:1-22

05



WEEK 5

The Wisdom of Leadership that Lasts

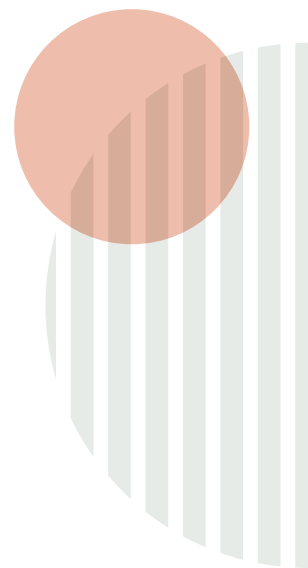
As Paul continues his critique of the divisive community in Corinth, he directly addresses the nature of leadership in the church. The believers in Corinth have incorporated a cultural understanding of leadership. In this worldly understanding, the community is a giant social ladder with leaders at the top. They respected the leaders that showed the most skill and influence. They also tried to align with their favorite leaders, hoping that such an alignment would advance their own social standing within the church. It seemed completely reasonable. That was how social life worked in Corinth.

However, Paul teaches that Christian community is upside down from that of the surrounding culture. This is because it is ultimately God who accomplishes the work (verse 6). Leaders in the church are laborers in God's field. If there is prestige in getting your hands dirty working for God, it is only before God Himself, not others. The approval to be earned in Christian service is only approval before God, and He assesses that work according to His standards (verses 10-15). The pursuits of approval among other people will burn up and amount to nothing. Work done to please God will last.

In reading this week, consider how your own view of leadership and service might be shaped more by the world than by Christ. How does Paul invite us to rethink the church leadership and where we seek approval?

Daily Readings

- 01 1 Corinthians 3:1-9
- 02 1 Corinthians 3:10-17
- 03 1 Corinthians 3:18-23
- 04 Hebrews 5:11-6:1
- 05 1 Peter 2:1-8
- 06 1 Corinthians 6:18-20
- 07 Romans 12:1-8



THE CHURCH AND ITS LEADERS

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ.² I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.³ You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?⁴ For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?

⁵ What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.⁹ For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.

¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care.

¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which

is Jesus Christ.¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw,¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

¹⁶ Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

¹⁸ Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise.¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness";²⁰ and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."²¹ So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours,²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,²³ and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

WARM UP

What is your idea of a great vacation plan?

- ___ Spending time at the beach
- ___ Snow skiing in the mountains
- ___ Hiking or cycling
- ___ Visiting National Parks
- ___ Visiting historic or interesting places
- ___ Exploring overseas destinations
- ___ Taking a cruise
- ___ Visiting relatives
- ___ Staycation
- ___ Other

Who is the most authentically spiritual person you have ever known and how did they influence you for Christ?

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-23

Remember that the Corinthian church had factions who were quarreling with one another. How do you think they might have received verses 1-4? Paul suggests that their maturity is stunted because of jealousy and strife. What effect does such behavior have on a church's mission?

In verses 5-9, Paul assesses the true role of Christian leaders. Does this minimize the importance of their roles as leaders or elevate their responsibility to walk in humility? How should we respond to this truth in our contemporary setting? Should we put Christian leaders on pedestals or attribute celebrity status

to them? Consider Hebrews 13:7-19 and four responsibilities concerning Christian leaders:

1. They are to live lives that are worthy of imitation.
2. They are to hold to right doctrine.
3. They are to care for those under their charge.
4. Those under their charge are to respect the authority God has given them.

According to 1 Corinthians 10-15, God's impending judgment will reveal the quality of work we do on the foundation of Christ. How should this inspire us?

The phrase "don't you know" is used ten times in this letter and is always followed by a definitive statement. Looking at verses 16-17, what statement does he make? What is the significance of this statement?

How does Paul conclude this chapter? What points does he reiterate?

APPLICATION

How does your work build on the foundation that Christ laid?

PRAYER

List one or two prayer concerns to share with your group.

Pray for the Elders and leaders of your church.



On the ride home from a church service, a little boy sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, “That preacher said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I wanted to stay with you guys.”