

1 Corinthians

# Wisdom & Unity

Meeting the demands of  
Christian life and living




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Starting where  
you are:

Any questions?



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# 1 Corinthians 3: The Spirit – Flesh Divide

Believers in Corinth fell into one of two groups: spiritual or carnal. Paul gives certain indicators so they might see where they were and choose to be united on the faithful foundation that is Jesus Christ.

## Spiritual

vs.

## “worldly”/fleshly

- pneuma (Spirit)/ pneumatikos
- having to do with the Spirit (of Spirit)
- indicative of growth
- maintains the “temple of God”

- sarks (flesh)/ sarkinos
- having to do with the flesh (of flesh)
- illustrated as “babes in Christ”
- defiles the “temple of God”

# 1 Corinthians 3: Unity through Maturity

**At issue:** Division(s) amongst believers due to spiritual immaturity.

**Paul's proposal:** Choosing spirituality over worldliness will produce unity among believers and positively represent God as a reflection of Christ.

*Immature believers rely on and rally around divisions based on the flesh.  
Mature believers resist and reject divisions because of the Spirit.*

## Chapter Outline

Claim of carnality (3:1-4)

Call for spirituality (3:5-17)

Wisdom for unity (3:18-23)

# 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 – Claim of Carnality

Paul claimed that the believers in Corinth were functioning through the nature of their flesh and were therefore, spiritually immature.

## **Explanation – v.1-2**

- He was unable to reveal spiritual truths due to their natural inclinations.
  - “Fed you with milk” → See 1 Peter 2:1-2; Hebrews 5:12-13
- They were unable to receive nourishment due to their spiritual immaturity.
  - “you were not...you are still not able” → See Hebrews 5:14

## **Examples – v.3-4**

- Divisions based on carnal practices
- Beliefs based on carnal ideologies

# 1 Corinthians 3:5-17 – Call for Spirituality

Paul proclaims the possibility of unity among believers if they reject natural inclinations and strive for spirituality.

## **Hopelessness of carnality – v.5-7**

- Misplaced trust in people
- Misunderstood object for praise
- Misapplied faith

## **Reason for unity – v.8-9**

- Faithfulness is rewarded by God
- Fellow laborers are united under God (see also 1 Cor. 15:10-11)
  - The faithful fellow laborers worked in the same “field” for the same purpose.

# 1 Corinthians 3:5-17 – Call for Spirituality *(cont'd)*

## **Foundation for unity – v.10-11**

- Continuity of leadership
- The church's one foundation (see also 1 Cor 15:1-5)

## **Caution for unity – v.12-15**

- All will be evaluated
- All will be revealed
- All will be judged

## **Care for unity – v.16-17**

- Guard God's deposit in you
- Guard God's possession of you

**God's field & God's building**  
Spiritual maturation is the result of faithfulness to the One who joins and keeps all together.

# 1 Corinthians 3:18-23 – Wisdom for Unity

Spiritual maturity can be seen in one's view of self. Likewise, a united church can be discerned by how they view themselves together.

## **Avoid self-deception – v.18-21a**

- Reject worldly wisdom as a standard
- Realize God's dominion over human ingenuity
- Recognize that glory belongs to God

## **Accept grace – v.21b-23**

- Receive of God's sufficiency
- Exercise of Christian responsibility

**“...all are yours.”**

Within God's grace toward us are expressions of both Christian liberty and expectations of Christian responsibility.