

I CORINTHIANS 3

BUILDING A GREAT CHURCH

STUDENT GUIDE

DAILY BIBLE READING

DAY 1	I CORINTHIANS 3: 1-4
DAY 2	I CORINTHIANS 3: 5-17
DAY 3	I CORINTHIANS 3: 18-23
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THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

Paul dealt with some very sticky issues at Corinth. As we make our way through this exciting book, we will notice issues which one would think are characteristic only of a Christ-less culture but surely could never characterize the church of Jesus Christ! Paul's goal for the Corinthians is to move them from division to dedication, from sectarianism to solidarity. In short, Paul desires Corinth to be a great church. God desires no less for us.

OUTLINE

- 1. The Members of a Great Church (vv.1-4)** - Let's begin our study of a great church with its members. Paul begins with precisely who makes up a great church in the first paragraph. In general, there are three types of members found within our churches:

A.) *Natural Member* - The Greek word translated "natural" pertains to the soul or mind. In other words, Paul is identifying the principal of animal life, which men have in common with brute beasts. A person outside of Christ, void of the Spirit of God, is akin to animals, functioning like the beast of the field. Every church has the "natural" member on its rolls.

B.) *Spiritual Member* - Paul uses the Greek word "pneuma" which means "wind" or "spirit." This root word is the same word translated as the Spirit of God. So the "spiritual" member is one that has been born again and has the Spirit of God living within them.

C.) *Carnal Member* - In contrast to the "spiritual" member is the "carnal" member. The term "carnal" comes from a word that means "flesh." Paul is not referring to skin and bones. Instead, he is referring to the Corinthians "fleshly" behavior, a behavior rooted in their old nature and not in their new nature in Christ.

Thought - *If the Corinthians were to be a great church in their pagan city, they must become "spiritual" and not "carnal."*

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2. The Ministry of a Great Church (vv. 5-17) - A proper understanding of God's ministries for the church is essential to building a great church. Paul draws two illustrations from daily life to place the church's work in its proper perspective:

A.) *Agriculture* - This was a common image known to practically everyone. Paul's intention is to move their thinking from the workers to the work, from the ministers to the ministry itself.

B.) *Architecture* - Thus, he moves from the field laborer to the construction worker. The church is like a building which takes all kinds of workers to complete and all must work in full harmony if the church is to be a great church.

Thought: *No church can ever approach greatness apart from the sure foundation of Christ.*

3. The Minister of a Great Church (vv. 18-23) - One of the reasons the Corinthian Church experienced so much division centered around their unhealthy understanding of the ministers God had placed in their midst. Paul makes it his purpose to correct the false views the church possessed. In fact, the only way the church could be a great church was to possess great ministers. What is required to cure them of their contentious ailment? What is first required is a proper estimation of the ministry. What criteria could the church utilize to secure sound judgment regarding ministers?

A.) *Wisdom* - Unfortunately, too many pastors and servants of the church settle for a display of intellectual wisdom. While Paul was one of the most educated Christians of his day, he allowed no time to argue such non-sense. Paul was not anti-intellectual. Learning was good then as well as now. Yet no amount of formal studies could guarantee wisdom would result.

B.) *Wealth* - Obviously, Paul is not referring to the pastor's financial portfolio. Rather he's speaking of the pastor's wealth in belonging to the entire church for the glory of Jesus Christ. No man should "glory in men" for God's servants belong to all — "all are yours."

Question: *How much significance do you place on the pastor's education? Be specific. What is the most important method of securing wisdom a pastor may pursue? Explain.*

Wrap Up: In this study, we have explored three requirements necessary to build a great church. A great church must be made of great members. There must be more "spiritual" members than "carnal" members. "Carnal" members behave as if their old nature was never changed. On the other hand, "spiritual" members offer mature perspective and sacrificial service for the cause of Christ.

What is more, not only must the ministry itself remain healthy, being firmly built upon the only sure foundation, Jesus Christ, but also the minister — God's pastor — must be a man after His heart, seeking His wisdom, His approval. Nor may the members possess an unbalanced view of God's man. Instead they must look at him as a man with feet of clay just as they are. The sole difference is, he is called by God and given to them for service in building a great church, an eternal church.