

## Daily Devotionals: Dear Church | July 31, 2022

### 1 Corinthians 3:10-23 | Buildings

#### DAY 1

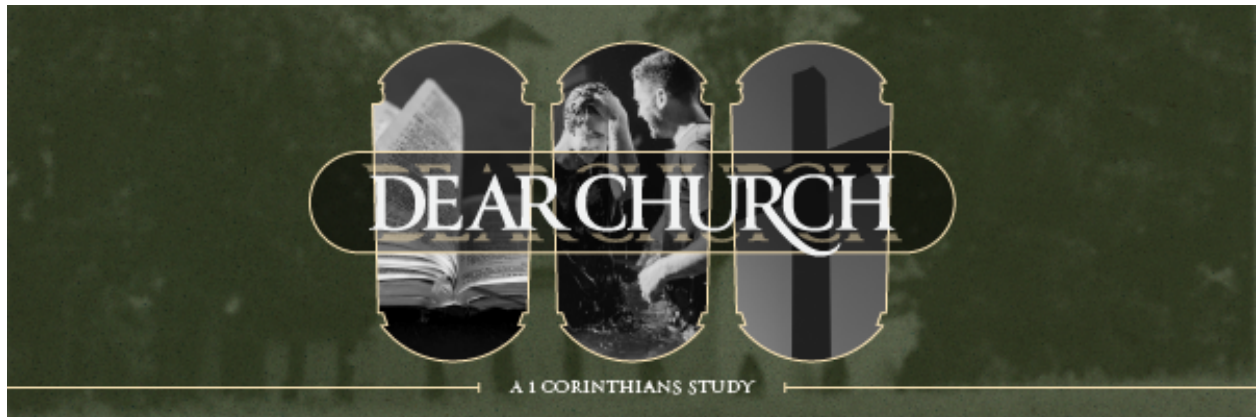
For this first day, read through **1 Corinthians 3:10-23** in its entirety.

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

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

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; <sup>20</sup> and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." <sup>21</sup> So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, <sup>22</sup> whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, <sup>23</sup> and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

**What's your first reaction to what you've read?**



**What do you sense is the main topic Paul is writing about here? Explain.**

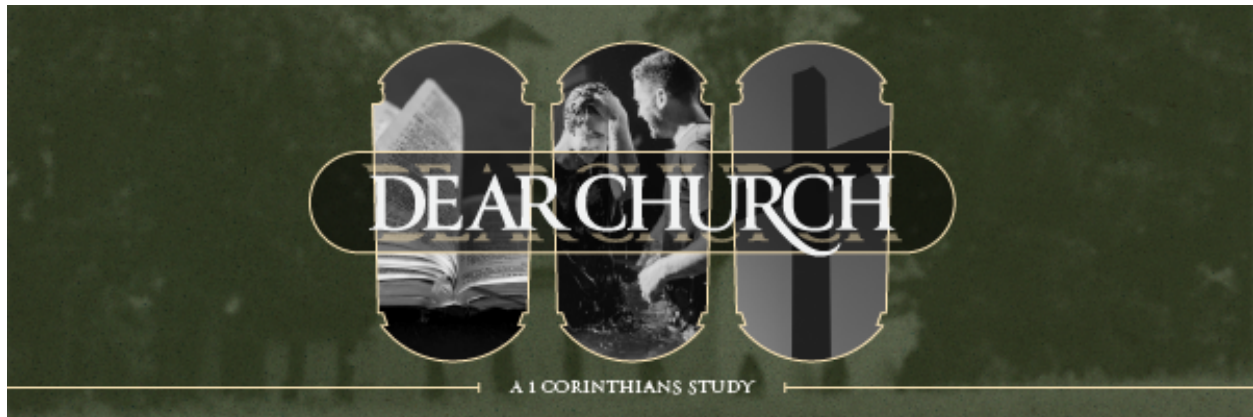
**What words are repeated?**

**Do any sentences stand out? Which ones?**

**What was confusing?**

**What was encouraging?**

**What's something to pray about as a result of reading this passage?**



## DAY 2

Today, we're going to start digging into parts of **1 Corinthians 3:10-23** by investigating verses 10-15. Let's start with verses 10-11.

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

**Last week, when we looked at the beginning of chapter 3, Paul used an agricultural metaphor. What imagery does he start to use in these verses? Does this change in metaphor help you understand in a different way what he's expressing?**

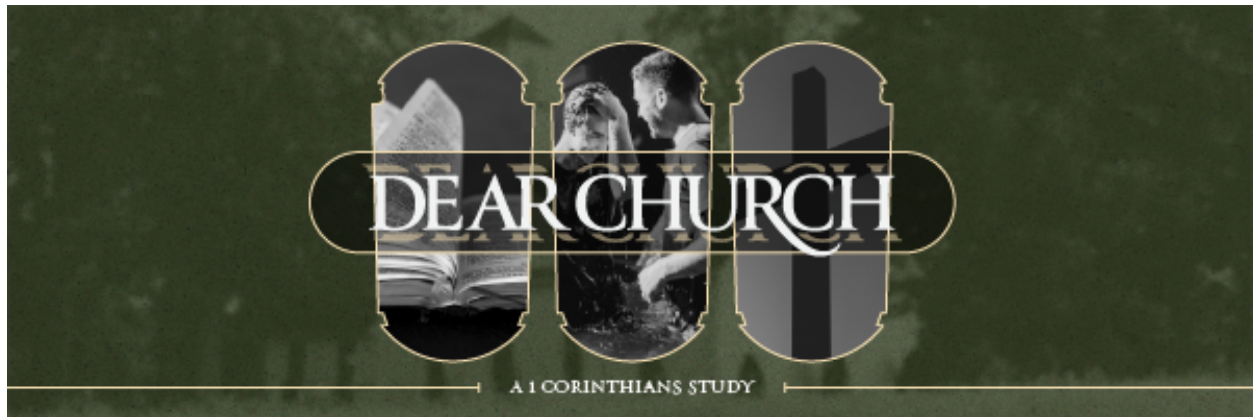
**Paul mentions the foundation he's laid. What foundation is that? Why is it important that he starts by saying, "By the grace God has given me...?"**

Let's explore this foundation a little further. What does each of these verses say about this foundation?

**Matthew 7:24-27:** "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash."

**1 Peter 2:4-6:** As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—<sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says:

"See, I lay a stone in Zion,  
a chosen and precious cornerstone,  
and the one who trusts in him  
will never be put to shame."



**Ephesians 2:19-22:** <sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

**After reading these different passages, how would you describe this foundation? Does any of it seem contradictory? How might that expand your understanding of the foundation?**

**Now onto verses 12-13...**

<sup>12</sup> If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, <sup>13</sup> 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.

**What do you notice about the building materials? What imagery do you think Paul might be trying to evoke? Any particular buildings he might be referencing?**

**What is the difference between how the first three and the second three would be used? What does it say about the purity of the building?**

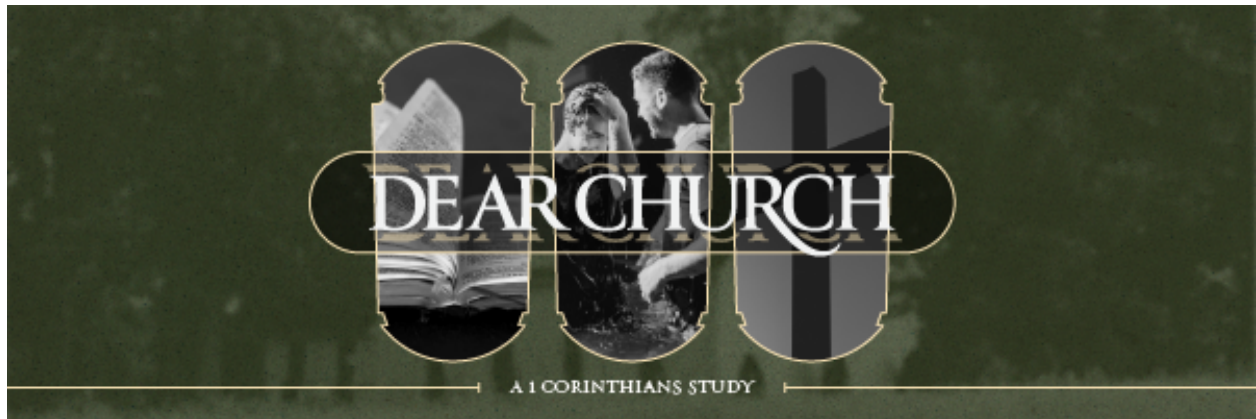
**To what Day is Paul referring? What does it have to do with testing the quality of each person's work?**

**And now verses 14 and 15...**

<sup>14</sup> If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

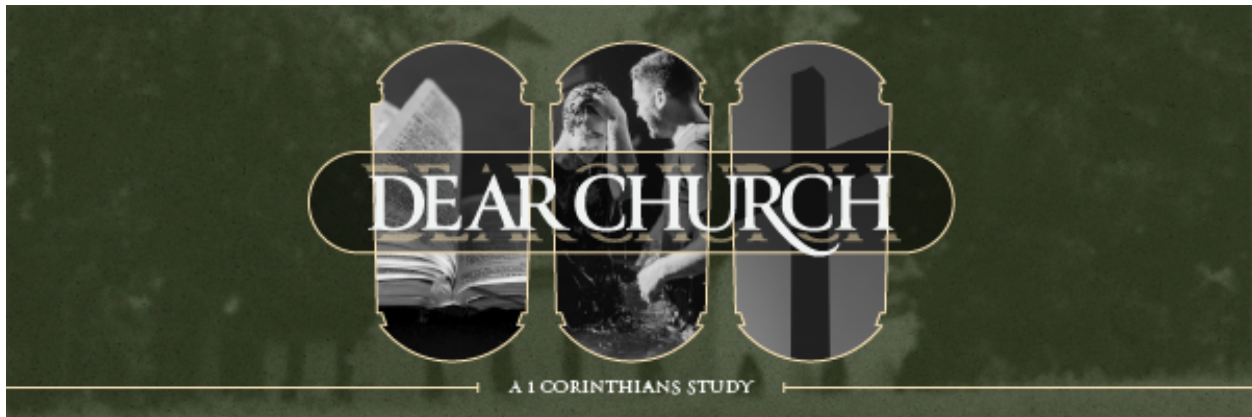
**What is the true test of a builder's work? What reward will they receive?**

**What do you think Paul means by "one escaping through the flames"? How does that relate to the building materials laid out above?**



**RESPONSE:** What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

**PRAYER:** Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.



### DAY 3

Yesterday, we became builders. Now we're going to up the ante by looking at what's being built. Perhaps in your study yesterday, you concluded that when Paul described a building with gold, silver, and costly stones, he was describing the Temple in Jerusalem (or even a local Corinthian temple to another god). And you might very well be right!

It stands to reason that he would move right along to using the Temple as imagery for the church.

**1 Corinthians 3:16-17:** Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? <sup>17</sup> If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

**What is God's temple? Or maybe more accurately, who?**

**What does it mean that God's Spirit dwells in their midst? What does it mean for us today?**

There is a very important distinction that needs to be made in these verses. Many people, when reading this passage, will see the word "you" as meaning "me." In that case, you could say, "I am the temple of God." But that's not quite the right translation. In this case, *you* should be translated as *y'all*. It's plural, not singular. Paul is calling the church the temple of the Spirit. And he's not talking about a physical building! The people are the church.

**How does the change from singular to plural change the way you read that passage? How does it change the way you view the church?**

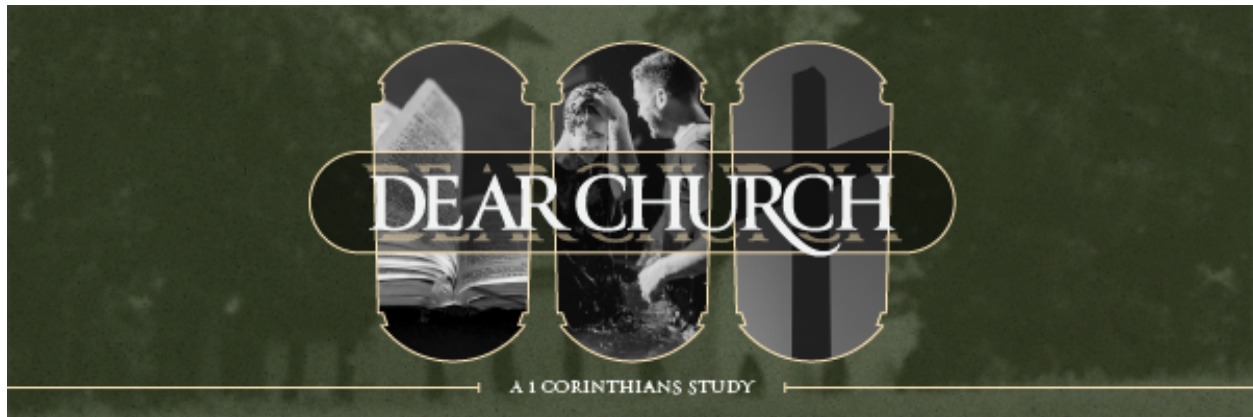
Let's expand that by looking at a few other places in scripture where the temple is discussed.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20:** <sup>19</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

**2 Corinthians 6:16:** What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will live with them

and walk among them,



and I will be their God,

and they will be my people.”

**1 Peter 2:4-6:** <sup>4</sup> As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says:

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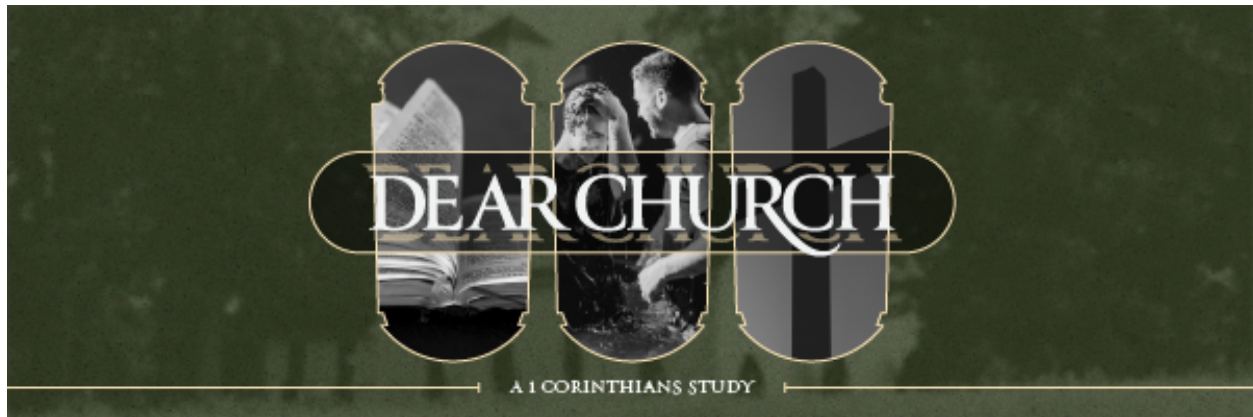
**Ephesians 2:21-22:** <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

**Each of these verses talks about us being the dwelling place of God. List the similarities and differences in the way the temple of God is described. Look at the foundation, the builders, and whether it’s the church or an individual.**

**Now spend some time in quiet reflection, asking God to create in your mind a more concrete picture of this metaphor used throughout these letters to the churches. Explore the mystery of God dwelling in us, whether as a group or as individuals. Journal about what God might reveal to you.**

We’ve established God’s temple is his people, his church. So in verse 17, when Paul starts issuing warnings about destroying God’s temple, we’d better pay close attention!

**What would you say destroys God’s temple? What is it that Paul says destroys the church in the context of this chapter?**



Let's look at two different Bible commentaries that will help us understand the gravity of this warning.

In Matthew Henry's commentary of these verses, he writes:

Every Christian is a living temple of the living God. God dwelt in the Jewish temple, took possession of it, and resided in it, by that glorious cloud that was the token of his presence with that people. So Christ by his Spirit dwells in all true believers. The temple was devoted and consecrated to God, and set apart from every common to a holy use, to the immediate service of God. So all Christians are separated from common uses and set apart for God and his service. If we are the temples of God, we must do nothing that shall alienate ourselves from him, or corrupt and pollute ourselves, and thereby unfit ourselves for his use.

The NIV Application Commentary says this:

The term for "destroy" must not be watered down to refer merely to temporal judgment...in light of the consistent testimony of Paul elsewhere, the rest of the New Testament, first-century Judaism, and the Apostolic Fathers. The reason Paul chose this term, over more common terms for eternal condemnation, is to show that the punishment fits the crime. They who would do away with God's sacred enterprise will themselves perish. Overall these two verses form the strongest warning in all the New Testament "against those who would take the church lightly and destroy it by worldly wisdom and division."

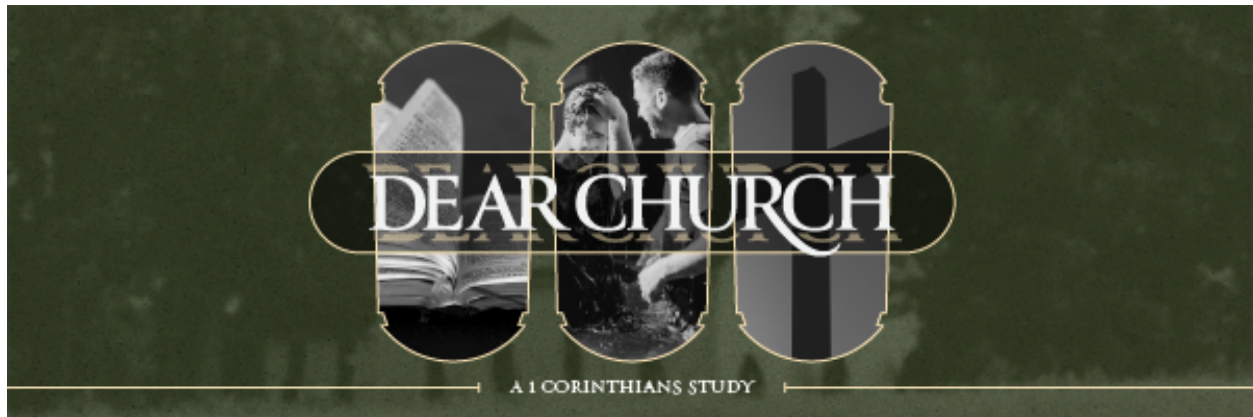
**Reflect on the sacredness of God's temple and this warning. How do you respond to this emotionally? What can God teach you in your response?**

**How does this warning apply to us today?**

**RESPONSE: What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?**

**PRAYER: Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.**





## DAY 4

Now that we've explored the metaphor about the church being a spiritual building (or the place where God dwells), Paul comes back around with practical advice to conclude his point about how important Christ as our foundation is.

**Re-read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9. Remind yourself what issue and argument Paul is addressing.**

**1 Corinthians 3:18-20:** 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. <sup>19</sup>For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; <sup>20</sup>and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.”

**How were the members of the Corinthian church deceiving themselves? What lies had they bought into?**

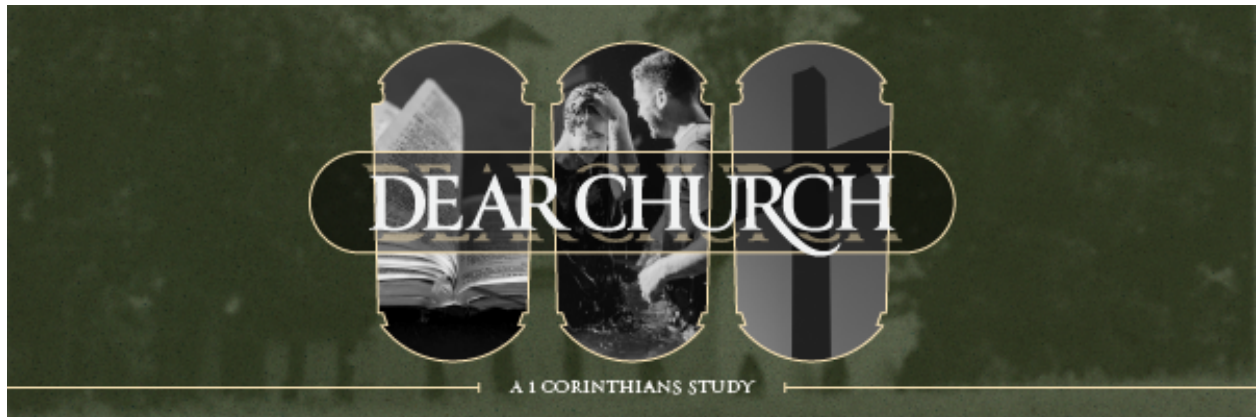
**How had the “standards of this age” and “the wisdom of the world” infiltrated the church in Corinth? To what result?**

**What does it mean to become foolish to become wise? To what foolishness is Paul referring? Feel free to cheat by looking at 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.**

Here, we see Paul weaving this all together: immaturity, comparison, division, and arguments are all results of trying to apply the world’s standards to a ‘building’ where they don’t apply. Division is the ultimate result of using lesser things as a means of salvation or kingdom work. Only the truth of Christ crucified and the work of the Spirit among his dwelling place can unite God’s church. Even though that might look like foolishness to the world, ultimately it’s wisdom in God’s larger story.

**What hope do you find in the “foolishness” of preaching the cross of Christ? How does that hope confound human wisdom?**

So, what’s the moral of the story? What’s Paul’s conclusion about the division in the church?



**1 Corinthians 3:21-23:** <sup>21</sup> So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, <sup>22</sup> whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, <sup>23</sup> and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

**What belongs to us? What does this have to do with boasting?**

**How does that impact the argument between followers of Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Peter)? How does this impact arguments that arise in the Church today?**

What a beautiful promise that we are of Christ, who is of God! Again, remember that much of the church's fighting was the result of who followed whom. Was Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Peter) right? The fact they were all building on and belonging to the foundation (or cornerstone) of Christ makes them all right!

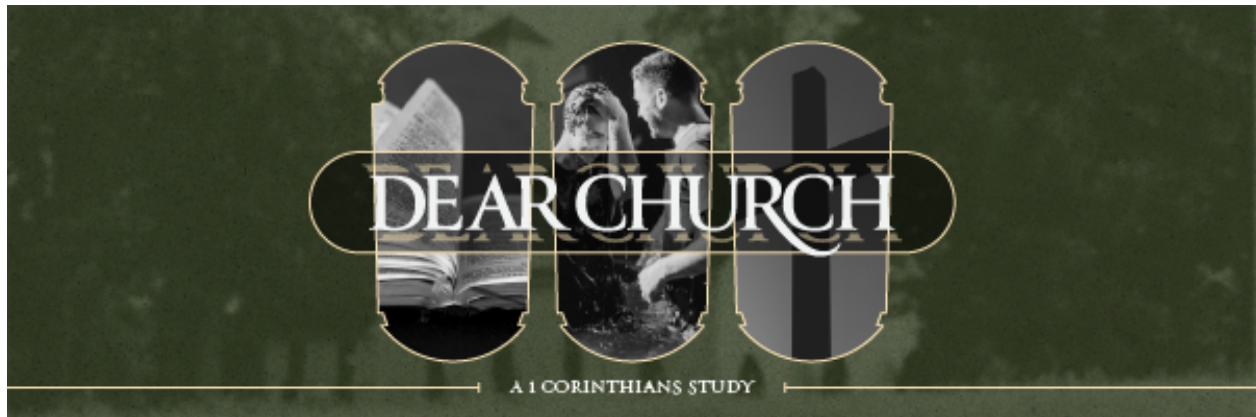
**Why was it important for Paul to remind the Corinthians that everything was theirs in Christ? What does that say about their identity?**

**Why is it important for Paul to remind you that everything is yours in Christ? What does that say about your identity?**

**When our identity in Christ is worked out, what does that do to our arguments and immaturity? How does that look more like the Temple of God?**

**RESPONSE:** What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

**PRAYER:** Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.



## DAY 5

On this final day, read through our passage prayerfully one last time and then answer the questions below. Begin by re-reading **1 Corinthians 3:10-23**.

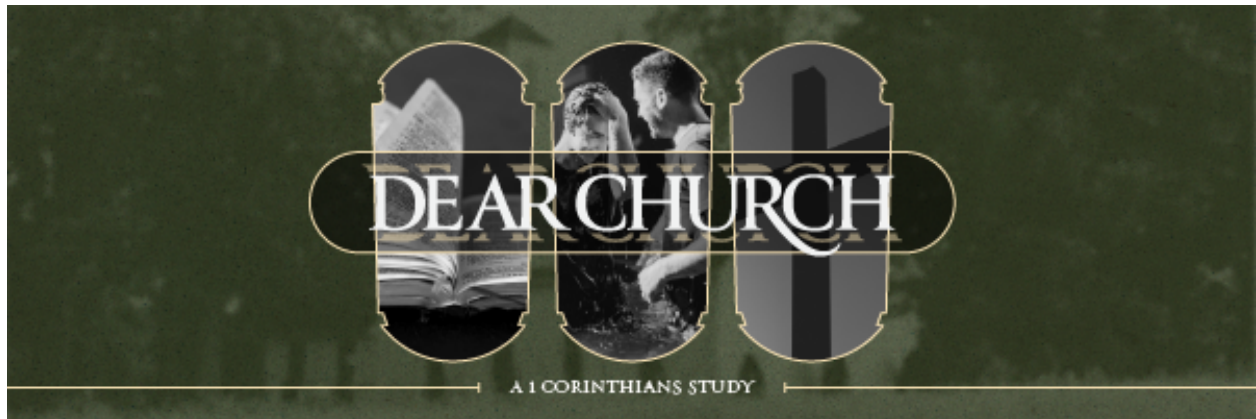
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**What did you learn this week that challenged you most?**

**What did you learn this week that encouraged you most?**



**What did you learn about yourself from this study?**

**What did you learn about God?**

**What lingering questions do you have?**

**PRAYER:** Write a prayer based on your reading and study this week.