

I Corinthians 3 —Divisions

Last time we saw that we are in a Partnership with Jesus which answers so many questions for us since we have to consider our Senior partner in all things that we do and say.

--From here on, we are leaving the introduction of the letter for the body where Paul begins to deal the specific problems within this church.

1. The first problem is the problem of division within the body of Christ. I Cor. 1:10-12

Of all the problems that this church had, Paul addresses the problem of division first. Why is that?

--Good lesson in understanding and applying the Scriptures to our lives: Not just asking what does this mean? but why is this here? why this place?

--They had many problems: Heresies about the resurrection, moral lapses, Lord's Supper problems, but division made the top of Paul's list. Why?

--There is a reason for dealing with this one first and it has everything to do with the overall purpose of the Jesus' church: to model and give away the good news of Jesus.

The big WHY: Why do have church? Why are we still here? Why do I need to live right and godly and grow in Christ? – we have a job to do—Spread the news of Jesus.

--An unloving environment can say the right words and do the right things, but if the vibe is wrong?

--People pick up on the vibe of things long before they listen to the words.

--The gospel is a love story "for God so loved..." and only love can tell it!

--**Division is the death of our witness.**

--A church can have all the right ingredients—this one did: **VV. 5-6** Would you join this church?

We have all the right ingredients here, in fact, we regularly emphasize the ingredients.

--Your pastor rants and raves about the ingredients all the time: Outreach, in-reach, discipleship, doctrine, gifts, giving, faith, prayer, etc.

--We emphasize the important ingredients but where is our emphasis on the all-important ingredient of love—the one thing that stirs all the other ingredients together?

2. The Corinthian church had multiple problems but their primary problem was that they didn't love each other.

Why do you think of all the places the Holy Spirit picks to describe godly love, He picks this book? This church? **I Corinthians 13**

--**I John 4:7-12** – What a statement! John mentions love 45 times in this little letter.

--A church that is divided gives the lie to the message of God's reconciling love!

--The last thing our world needs is one more example of how not to get along!

The church that reflects more of the sinful-nature's power to divide than of Christ's power to unite has lost its right to preach Christ's message at all.

--**I Peter 4:8** – They had quite a bit of sinning going on over there in Corinth; they really needed love to hold them together.

This is a room full of sinners—without love we are nothing.

--**Matthew 22:37-40** – everything hangs on love—Do we really love God with all ourselves and each other as ourselves?

--If we do, it will make all the difference.

--Galatians 5:14-15 – Who would want to be part of anything like that?

3. Of all the ingredients for a healthy church, love is the most important one.

--Like a cake with all the right ingredients but you never blend them, the ingredients aren't very tasty by themselves.

--Individuals doing their own thing; they meet on Sundays but are really just a bunch of lone rangers--who would want to be a part of that?

--A body who loves each other, supports and builds each other up, prays for each other and stands as one—that is attractive!

--**"Taste and see that the Lord is good." Ps. 34:8** One of the first tastes of who God is **us**. How do we taste?

--**John 13:34-35** – We are known not by our deep faith, evangelistic zeal, sacrificial giving, sound doctrine, amazing sermons and music--we focus on these things as we should but where is the focus on love?

Galatians 5:22-23 – How does the Spirit demonstrate His presence?

--Love is foremost and can even be understood as the single fruit with the others as descriptive of love.

--There are many parallels between this verse and **1 Cor. 13** "patient, kind, does not envy, does not boast, is not proud,..."

Children were asked to describe love and this was some of their responses:

- Rebekah, 8, said, "When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time—even when his hands got arthritis, too. That's love."
- Billy, 4, said, "When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth."
- Bobby, 7, says, "Love is what's in the room at Christmas, if you stop opening presents and listen."
- Nikka, 6, says, "If you want to learn to love better, you should start with someone you hate."
- Cindy, 8, says, "During my piano recital, I was on a stage, and I was scared. I looked at all the people watching me, and I saw my daddy waving and smiling. He was the only one doing that. And I wasn't scared anymore."
- Jessica, 8, says, "You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot."

Are you contributing or taking away from the love factor here? **Your actions, your words, your attitude?**

Only love can tell the story we have been sent to tell.