

## “Unity: Where, What, and How to Build”

### Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Graphic: houses, foundations, crosses, unity

Key Verses: 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.

Theme: Grow on the solid foundation of Christ, we are God’s holy temple, and it’s hard work.

### 1) Introduction

- a) **(CUE 1)** In 1 Corinthians 3:9, Paul wrote to the church: “For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.” Paul told the church to grow up...be united together under the banner of Jesus Christ, and him crucified – NO ONE ELSE...stop following anyone but Jesus Christ...allow the Holy Spirit to be an active player in your life, so you can understand spiritual things and have the mind of Christ.
- b) And remember, Paul says we are free from having to be like the world...as followers of Jesus, we are NOT LIKE the world! And as we grow together, it’s GOD that does the growing...and we are effective as witnesses for the Gospel of Jesus Christ when we allow God to grow us...
- c) This idea of growth in - of building - the church, is critical to Paul and critical to us. How many people know that there are over 400,000 churches in America? Maybe you’re like, “Yeah, I’ve been to several of them 😊.” How many knew that the latest polls report that 80-85% of those churches are either stagnant or in serious decline?!?!
- d) Well, why is that? Lots of reasons, for sure, like demographics and cultural shifts and all that stuff. Most obvious, simple, reason why churches grow stagnant or decline: because the people IN the churches, including the pastors and leaders, are stagnant or declining...simple!
- e) We’re so tempted to work really hard for a few years to build our house of faith and then switch to cruise control. It’s easier! I got the walls of my house up...studs are all framed in... Sure there’s always some trim work and repairs, but I’m good...even joined a small group! If that’s our attitude, then there’s no room for growth and we start to stagnate. How do you know that God doesn’t want to add a whole other wing onto your understanding that creates exponential growth in you for the kingdom? Remember, this is God doing the building in your life by the power of the Holy Spirit...

- f) Growth as a church is imperative, and that growth is fiercely contingent on the SPIRITUAL growth of the people IN the church.
- g) So, open your Bibles with me to 1 Corinthians 3, starting in verse 10, and let's find out more about where to build, what to build, and how to build.
- h) Let's pray...

## 2) Scripture

### a) Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

- i) OK, so Paul is using this architectural metaphor....
- ii) **(CUE 2)** Paul said he “laid the foundation”...Paul came and proclaimed the good news to people who were either pagan or Jewish...he told them about Jesus Christ, Son of God, crucified, buried, and resurrected. He laid that out with words and concepts they could understand. It's a SOLID FOUNDATION, Paul says. He did that (verse 10), like a MASTER BUILDER.
- iii) And everyone knows, I assume, that in order to build anything like a house or a building, you have to have a foundation.
- iv) And so our first question we ask this morning is WHERE DO WE BUILD? And the answer from Paul is: On the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. Paul's movement, this church, has a foundation that he laid on the solid ROCK of Jesus Christ.
- v) Problem: the Corinthians had some serious slippery cultural influences that confused who and what that foundation was. They were building on their status, on who had developed their faith. It was spiritual name-dropping. They were trying to build the building on the builder and not the foundation. It would be like trying to get 50 people around the perimeter of a new house being built and try to hold the frame in place while everything else is built up around it. It's not SOLID. It WILL collapse.
- vi) As a skilled or “wise” craftsman, Paul laid a foundation that he already spent the beginning of this letter describing: the wisdom of Christ. It was foolish to the world (1:18). It was not the wisdom of Paul or any other human leader (2:4-5). It was Spirit-taught and available to all who had the Spirit (2:12-15).

- vii) So the foundation is simply Christ. So obvious!
- viii) There's a classic joke that tells of a preacher leading a children's sermon. He asks the kids, "What is brown, has a bushy tail, lives in trees and eats nuts?"
- ix) One kid shouts in response, "I think it's a squirrel, but I'm going to say Jesus!" It seems like Jesus is always the right answer in church, right? But in this case, it's totally true.
- x) What is the foundation of the Christian life? Jesus Christ — his forgiveness, redemption and guidance in our lives. And anyone who has God's Spirit within him or her — any true believer — is given this foundation.
- xi) Universal access. Not humanly granted by clergy. Not institutionally granted by the church. An equal playing field for all of us. Regardless of denomination. Regardless of years we've followed Christ. Regardless of our past. Regardless of what we know.
- xii) We all have the same bottom line — "that foundation is Jesus Christ."
- xiii) It's on THAT that we build our lives, if we want to be followers of Jesus Christ....
- xiv) So WHERE DO WE BUILD? On the foundation of Jesus Christ.

**b) Read verses 16-17**

- i) Second question is: What do we build?
- ii) In order to show WHAT to build, let's back up to take a biblical survey of the physical location of God's presence. God is omnipresent, yet people have known God's tangible presence to reside in specific places:
  - (1) Genesis 11: God is in the heavens — and because God SEEMED far off in the heavens, people built a tower to reach him. Didn't work out so well for the people...God scattered them over the region.
  - (2) Exodus 20: God atop a mountain — people terrified to approach him. Still – God is somewhere over there...only Moses could go.
  - (3) Exodus 25: God is in a tabernacle, or tent (we're getting closer) — people can carry His presence on their journey wherever God called them to go.

- (4) 2 Chronicles 6: God is in the Temple in Jerusalem — the permanent home of God’s presence on earth. Always in the Holy of Holies, accessible **ONLY** by the **HIGH PRIEST**, and **ONLY ONCE PER** year.
- (5) When we get to Mark 15: God is on the loose! This is after the crucifixion — the temple veil torn; anyone, not just the priests, can access God’s presence. God is on the move...
- (6) And then here in 1 Corinthians 3: Paul says, God, now, is in human temples — people, like you and me, have become God’s new home, his presence within us.
- iii) It’s the most amazing concept to get our heads around, if we stop and think about it. Paul’s words are stunning! God’s moved from cosmic (out there) to corporate (over there) to individual (in here). God freed himself from physical buildings **FOR US**, so He could inhabit the people he was building. What love is this, O my soul?!
- iv) Imagine being a good Jew at the time. You know the precise attention to detail that God prescribed for his tabernacle and temple. Everything exactly as he wanted it. Only the finest craftsmen. Gold, linens, acacia wood — lavish goods used in construction. God’s home in the tabernacle and especially the temple were like *lifestyles of the rich and famous* meets the Torah.
- v) Now...NOW!: I, God showed, won’t dwell in buildings made of stone and wood and gold, but in people. People are that new ornate home of God’s presence! The institution that was the temple is now the individual. And since God did not create us, or this institution, to live in isolation, in order for God to dwell **IN US** (plural), we have to be gathered together in local churches of over 400,000 stripes, united under the banner of Christ.
- vi) And so I don’t care if you’re Methodist or Pentecostal or Baptist, God has chosen to dwell in you, and we ought to start acting like it and treating each other like it too. And that’s one reason why I invited Andy and Mara and Allyssa and Johnathan and Rebecca to be here today.
- vii) And even though having God reside in us, having our bodies, minds, and hearts be the **TEMPLE** in which God chooses to reside, raises a million questions about how we treat our bodies, what we put **INTO** them, and what comes **OUT** of them, the point Paul is making is this:

viii) Because we are the temple of God, we are called to be nothing if not holy. The last thing you want to do is use cruddy, defective building materials to go on top of a really solid foundation. Because even though the foundation is solid, the building will be weak.

ix) God is crafting a permanent home in which he is pleased to dwell atop the foundation of his Son. That building is us — the holy people of God. And just like God does the growing... God is the one doing the building.

x) That's WHAT we build...

xi) Finally, HOW? How do we build this?

**c) Read verses 18-23**

i) Where do we build? On the foundation of Christ alone. What do we build? The building is us, his people.

ii) Now for the building plan. How do we build this life of faith? Paul says two things.

iii) First, (vv. 18-19) the plan will feel counterintuitive.

iv) It will feel like doing just the opposite of what the world tells us. Being a follower of Jesus requires downward mobility. What does THAT mean? We are tempted by the world to totally rely on ourselves... Christ requires us to rely on Him! The world says we should continuously worry about our finances – where's the money coming from for the college tuition or the car or the next meal? But Christ requires that we view ALL our resources as HIS and we just get to keep what we need to live. What about sexuality? World says it's a free-for-all. Watch 5 minutes of any show on cable and this is clear. Christ requires celibacy in singleness and purity in all marriages – defined as one man and one woman. This list goes on: we're required to forgive those who wrong us, have humility, serve those in need. Totally opposite from the world!

v) A good indicator of how things are going in our faith life is if we ever feel that living our faith is strange to those around us. We're probably in a good place if it seems counter-cultural (we talked about that last week a little). If our lives blend in and don't seem at all countercultural, chances are we're just building spiritual foolishness.

vi) Second thing, we've already been given all we need for building a Godly life and faith (vv. 21-23). All the materials are already here to build!

- vii) The Corinthians were feeling wise by society's standards: self-promotion through credentials. They felt the need to prove their merit. But ultimately, they already had everything they could need or want in Jesus Christ. Paul gave them the simple message – everything they needed.
- viii) In the same way, we've been given "all things." We don't need credentials. We can all access the same spiritual blessings because God resides in every one of us. We have all the spiritual gifts we need.
- ix) Listen, our spiritual growth doesn't depend on who teaches us, where we go to church or who we've read recently. Those are just tools we use to build our spiritual lives. Ultimately, there's no boasting in human influence. As Paul said earlier in the chapter, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (v. 6).
- x) You can see this amazing spirit alive in Paul's words. We have everything we need to grow because it is God who grows us, and he's given us all things.

### 3) Conclusion

- a) The foundation is Christ! The building that contains God's presence is us. The way our lives are built will feel both countercultural and universal at the same time.
- b) Pastor Andy will be telling us about a vision for a building plan that they have in Portugal. They will be planting a church...building a church. It's on Christ that they will build and rely. They will invite God to dwell in them for stability and impart Christ on others for salvation and growth. And it'll take hard work and all the spirituals gifts God has given them to break through the cultural barriers and advance the Kingdom of God where they are to be planted.
- c) In our lives, growing is not optional as Christians. Read all you can...serve all you can...love all those you can...pray all you can...and live each day passionately in love with the God who came from the heavens and now lives in YOU! If you're longing for Christ to be more present IN YOU, or come into your heart for the first time, I encourage you right now to invite the Holy Spirit to open your heart to come in...and grow on the solid foundation of Christ.
- d) (kneel) Let's pray...