

The Royal Route to Heaven

1 Corinthians Chapter 3

Chapter 3 gives us three contrasts: wisdom and foolishness; spiritual and natural; solid food and milk. A person's choice with each will lead to different paths. The believers in Corinth had fallen into foolish and natural behavior which resulted in being limited in their spiritual diet. Be careful that you don't settle for simple milk when the treasures of the Lord are so readily available to you.

As you open Chapter 3 to study, pray that you will be encouraged to draw closer to God, desiring the meat of God's Word, the nourishment that enables us to walk each day on this Royal Route.

Key Word(s)

Read through the entire chapter, looking for words or themes that are repeated. You might want to underline them in your Bible.

1. One word that is introduced in this chapter and used several times is "carnal".
 - a. How many times did you find this word in Chapter 3?
 - b. Write a definition below.

2. Make note of any other words that are repeated or that you feel are significant here and include a definition.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-8.

1. In verses 1-4, what did Paul see in the Corinthian church that made him call them "carnal"?

2. Romans 8:5-9 talks about the contrast of walking in the Spirit and walking in the flesh (or being carnal). Read this section of scripture and share what you find about these two walks.

3. How does Galatians 5:14-19 tell us we can avoid walking a "carnal" walk?

4. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:2, *“I fed you with milk and not with solid food”*. What does this mean to you?

a. There is a time when every believer needs the “milk” of the Word. What does 1 Peter 2:1-3 say about this?

b. What insight does Hebrews 5:12-14 add to help our understanding of when a believer should be ready for the “meat” of God’s Word?

5. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-8, Paul describes the role he and Apollos played and the role God plays in bringing someone to salvation.

a. What is the difference between planting and watering?

b. How would you explain the meaning of *“God who gives the increase?”*

Read 1 Corinthians 3:9-17.

1. In verse 9 Paul further describes his role and also where we fit into the picture he is describing.

a. How are we described in this verse?

b. What word/phrase is used three times in 1 Corinthians 3:9?

c. What does this say to you?

2. Paul describes a believer’s life as a building in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11.

- a. What part of the building process did Paul say he did?
- b. What is the importance of a foundation in any building?
- c. What is the only foundation for a Christian to build upon?

3. Read Ephesians 2:19-22 and write what you find that adds to our understanding of building on this foundation.

4. Once the foundation is laid, a builder must have the materials to build upon it. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 describe various building materials.

- a. What building materials are listed in verse 12?

- b. Consider these materials and write what they might represent in a believer's life.

5. Verses 14-15 describe the testing of the materials by fire. What does 2 Cor 5:10 tell us about this?

6. Now considering your answers to question #4 above, answer the following in reference to verses 14-15.

- a. Which materials would endure?

1. Why?

2. What is the result for the believer?

- b. Which materials would burn?

1. Why?

2. What is the result for the believer?

c. What can we do to be sure that we are building with materials, or works, that will endure?

7. As we read 1 Corinthians 3:15, “...*he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire*”, I think we can all agree that is not the way we want to be saved! Read Matthew 25:14-23 for the better way, the Royal Route.

a. We would all like to hear the words spoken to the servant in verse 21. Write the first two words his lord spoke to him from this verse.

b. How was this servant described?

c. What was his reward?

d. Now read again and describe what this servant did for his master. How can this lesson be used when we consider building on a foundation?

8. One way we have applied Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 is to apply it to the believer’s walk, as building on a foundation of Jesus Christ on a personal level.

a. Write out the question Paul asks the believers in the Corinthian church.

b. Now, remembering that this question is also being asked personally of you today, what does this mean to you?

9. Verse 17 goes on to say that the temple of God is holy, so you are holy! How can a believer be holy? Share any scriptures you have to add to your explanation.

As we read Paul's teaching about building on the foundation of Jesus Christ with the right materials, we can also apply this to the work of a teacher, which is the context of this section of scripture. Consider the following:

“Paul is thinking of the work of a teacher, of the Christian worker, as a builder, building on the foundation of Christ. But with what is he building? The teaching should build on the foundation which is Christ Jesus, but he should build with the gold and silver and precious stones of God's Word and correct doctrine – that which is solid and substantial. He should not build with the wood, hay and stubble of erroneous teaching and trivial doctrine.” Malcolm Wild

10. Considering the quote above, what does Matthew 18:6 have to say that could apply to this application?

11. 2 Timothy 4:2-5 has a warning to the teacher and also to the hearer. Write what you find for each below.

a. For the teacher:

b. For the hearer:

Read 1 Corinthians 3:18-23.

William Barclay said it this way, “Paul urges the man who would be wise to become a fool. This is simply a vivid way of urging him to be humble enough to learn. No one can teach a man who thinks that he knows it all already.” “The only way to become wise is to realize that we are fools; the only way to knowledge is to confess our ignorance.”

1. 1 Corinthians 3:19-20 refer to two Old Testament scriptures. What do these verses say about the man who thinks he is wise?

2. We are told not to boast in men in verse 21. What do these verses say we may boast in?

a. Psalm 34:2

b. Psalm 44:8

c. Galatians 6:14

3. We are told in 1 Corinthians 3:21-22 that “*all things are yours.*” Paul was trying to make it clear that no one, not Paul and not Apollos, has any special privileges, but every Christian is given the same provision through Jesus Christ. Read the following scriptures and share what you find that expands the understanding of verses 21-22.

a. Philippians 4:13

b. 2 Peter 1:2-3

4. Take some time now to search the scriptures for other references that include those two words, “*all things*”. Share at least one here and use another sheet to begin your own in-depth study of these incredible words.

In closing...

1. What might be some indications in your own life that you are living carnally rather than spiritually?

2. Consider what you have read this week about building on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

a. How would you explain this to a new believer?

b. How are you building on this foundation?

3. The last verse in chapter 3 states that “we are Christ’s”. What does this mean to you as you walk in this life?