

1Corinthians 18-02-11b

Let's pick up our study now in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, and we're looking at this idea of the church as a fellowship. And for us, being in sort of a unique situation, we have sort of an extended fellowship. A lot of us are scattered, and I think it is a provision God has made for this particular day and time where it is difficult to assemble a group of like-minded believers who have a mind like us believers.

And so God has provided us a means of assembling and having fellowship together, and we're constantly trying to improve our lines of communication and the ways that we can enjoy that fellowship even though we are physically separated. And that's an ongoing effort, and we'll continue to try to find avenues of communication that can draw us closer. But in nearly all cases, even if you're at a distance from where I am, there are family members, there are friends, there are other believers in the periphery, and that is the church.

The church is the body of Christ, and there is sort of a seamless transition between the body of Christ that is the local church and the body of Christ that is the universal church. There is no real line of demarcation there. It's a very smooth graduation, and you can meet someone and instantly find fellowship and harmony with them because they understand spiritual things as you do, and they love the Lord Jesus as you do, and they're trying to live their life to please Him as we are.

And it is important for us to watch for those opportunities and to ensure that we don't cause conflict or let our excessive passion drive a wedge, an artificial wedge of division. It is one thing to say, I appreciate you, I love you as fellow believers, but when it comes to the daily implementation of the Christian life, your understanding is different enough from mine that our communion isn't going to be mutually up-building. I think if we have too much contact, it is going to promote a sense of division, and it is going to emphasize our differences.

Casual contact actually promotes our unity better than more frequent contact, and this is an important skill to develop, an important discernment to cultivate. When there are believers in our periphery, how much fellowship do we establish? Well, that is going to be directly proportional to the unity that it promotes. If more fellowship creates more unity, then seek more fellowship.

If a greater amount of exposure begins to be a trial in terms of patience and trying not to divide and trying not to let differences become prominent, that is the time to step back a pace or two and to love from afar. The passage before us tells us how to measure fellowship. We are becoming carnal, and it is drawing us back to the old man if it causes us to stand in two different places, to be excessively impassioned, or to have conflict.

Now, there are special cases, like in the parents and growing children, where if you have a conflict with your children, that is a different thing. There is a different set of parameters at

work. We are talking about fellowship between believers who are not otherwise organized in terms of an authority structure or responsibility for training or supervision.

This is the optional kind of fellowship. Do we do or do we don't spend time, cooperate on projects, and have fellowship that we can opt into or opt out of based on its fruit? If it is a building, it doesn't mean that there is not going to be the occasional challenge. It doesn't mean that within your home there is not going to be the occasional tiff.

This is normal. We are human. We are fallible.

But looking at the climate, not the weather, is there up-building? Is there growth? Is there commonality? Do the times of conflict and standing in two different places really sort of stand out because they are exceptional? They are proof that something has gone momentarily wrong in what is otherwise a wonderful and mutually positive fellowship. We've got a useful litmus test here. I don't know if anybody even uses litmus tests any more or not.

That may age me. It's like saying, we've got a great slide rule. I've got a great abacus.

Look at my folding ruler here. Now people do it with a laser gun. We've got a thermometer.

Instead of a thermometer, you've got a little thing you aim at a vent. Who knows? But anyway, we've got a useful measure, a signal, symptoms to watch for. It is not God's will for us to strive and contend and be divided.

It shows us to be immature. We either need to overcome those things that divide us so that we can be unified or we need to separate into separate unities. You all do your thing over there.

We'll do our thing over here. God bless you. I will not be divided and contend.

When we do have occasional contact, we'll focus on those things that unite us, the common ground, the essentials of the faith. And where you all want to talk in tongues and we want to exegete passages, we'll agree to disagree. I'm not going to judge you.

Hopefully, you won't judge us. We'll smile at each other across a small creek or a wide river, but we'll smile. We're not going to attack.

We're not going to shoot. We're not going to lob grenades. We're not going to judge and inflict consequences and penalties because we differ.

Just remember in some cases and in some ways, they may be more right than we are. I will tell you that there are some churches that don't seem to dig very deep into the Word of God, but the love they have for each other may out-distance my own. If you've got three truths and you work those truths on a daily basis, you may get a lot further than somebody that's got 30 truths and doesn't really put them into practice.

It's not how much you know, it's what you do with what you know. And that's the measure. Is it

unifying? Is it up-building? Does it reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are you creating cracks in God's temple? Look at the verse, chapter 3, be careful how you build.

The work is going to become clear. It's going to be made manifest. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss.

Notice the work gets burned and he is going to suffer loss. It's two separate things. If it endures, he will receive a reward.

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? Instead of the physical temple that we've seen being reconstructed in the days of Haggai and Zechariah and Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah, there is a building and the glory of God does not fill it like a cloud. The Ark of the Covenant is not in the Holy of Holies. That thing disappeared in the days of Jeremiah.

And it is a structure without the presence. What Paul emphasizes here is our fellowship. Now this is not the same.

There is a five-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit to individuals. Do you remember we organize them under five points. There might be more or less, but it's convenient to think of a five-fold ministry.

At the point of salvation, the Holy Spirit regenerates us. We have new life. We are born again.

Right? Regeneration. From that point forward, the Holy Spirit indwells us, lives within us individually. He is there to speak to our conscience, to interpret for us the Word of God, to sharpen and enable our spiritual perception.

I should reverse that, to enable and sharpen our spiritual perceptions. Indwelling. He seals us.

We are the stamp of God's ownership and we are stamped with specifically belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are a part of His body and we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. We are not sealed by our good behavior, not sealed by what we think or what we say or how we act.

God's Holy Spirit seals us into Christ. You're in once and for all. That's eternal security.

The only argument you need for eternal security is you are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God. Now do you think that you can undo a spiritual birth that is guaranteed to be a spiritual birth? No. You are guaranteed by God's Holy Spirit.

You can't. You cannot, with a work of man, undo a work of God. Once saved, always saved.

Like it or not, for better or for worse, when you are born to a set of parents, you've got a biological father and a biological mother, it doesn't matter what happens with them or what happens with you. You are a product of that union and it's unchangeable. Live or die, good or bad, up or down, it's a fact.

So regeneration, indwelling, sealing, gifting, you are assigned a unique and special role in the fellowship of the body toward and with other believers. You have a unique opportunity to be a blessing. Maybe it is by being a prayer warrior.

Maybe it is by being a sympathetic ear and one who is able to supply a word fitly spoken, like apples of gold and pictures of silver. You just have that gift of empathy and of sympathy and of gently reminding someone of truths that come to your mind uniquely because that's your gift. Maybe you've got the gift of help and you are that person that just seems to be there when there's a need.

You have a sixth sense about what to do and what not to do, about when to be there and when to step back and let someone grieve or struggle or work something out for themselves. You've got that sensitivity of, you're like the body's healing function. You are the antibodies.

You're the ones that come and fight the infection. Others of you may be the glue that comes in to heal up a wound and others may be the ones who produce the scar tissue and help knit things back together. There's so many gifts within the body of Christ in the spiritual realm that there's only a few that are representatively named.

You don't have to put a name to your gift. You are given one. The presence of the Holy Spirit gives you the potential to be a blessing to fellow believers.

You don't even have to know what it is. If you do what a corpuscle, if you are a faithful white blood cell, if you are a faithful ligament or tendon or muscle or capillary or alveoli or neuron, if you are just faithful to do your function, if you're a neuron, you fire when you're supposed to fire and you stay quiet when you're supposed to stay quiet. There's nothing worse than having pain signals when you shouldn't be having pain.

To have an itch when there's nothing that needs to be scratched. To be noisy when you ought to be quiet. This is why we have NSAIDs and aspirin and other forms of pain relievers.

There are signals that aren't helpful and we have to make them go quiescent. Whatever your function is, you be faithful to that. Ensure that you are fed.

Ensure that you are healthy. Ensure that you are well-oriented, that there's no impediment to your relationship with God, your fellowship with God, your empowerment and enablement by the Holy Spirit, your discernment, your sins have been confessed and are cleansed. You are fully operational, fully functional.

You're not sick. You're not down. You're not dysfunctional.

Your spiritual gift will function. And then finally, the fifth one is filling. The first four are pretty well automatic.

You are regenerated at the point of your faith. You are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, like it or not.

You are sealed by the Holy Spirit, whatever you do.

You are gifted by the Holy Spirit. Your gift may not function if you're dysfunctional, but the gift is there. It's a potential always.

But the one that is optional is the filling of the Holy Spirit. And that's why we have a command, be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. Be filled.

This is something we cultivate, to be fully enabled, fully empowered, to be respectful of those first four things, to remember them, to examine ourselves and make sure that we're in the faith, to weed out that which divides, that which is reflecting an excessive passion, that which creates contention and division and tears down instead of building up. We identify and we eradicate those things. That gives the Holy Spirit full sway.

We can operate with His enablement. We can see with His eyes. We can hear with His ears.

We can speak with His voice. In the same way that He represents us before God the Father, He enables us to represent God the Father before others and with others. Those five things.

So that's individual. That's not what our passage is talking about. All of that that I just said, that's not what the passage is talking about.

What does He say here in chapter three verse 16? Do you all not know that you all are the temple? Singular. You're not temples. Individual.

You're collective assembly and fellowship. You as a group are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you. Group.

The indwelling and the filling and the sealing and the gifting and the regenerating of the Spirit that is applicable on an individual level is not in view. This is the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the group. The group is the temple.

It's not temples, one over here and one over here divided. His whole theme here is unity. The Holy Spirit should be in a unified, uncracked, undivided, stable temple.

Plum and square temple. A beautiful temple adorned with gold and silver and precious stones. Not a house of straw.

Not a pile of hay. Now, how does that happen in a group? God assigns leadership to the group. God assigns an under-shepherd, a local shepherd, someone who is responsible for ensuring that that temple is a fit dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.

And by extension through the Holy Spirit, you have the Lord Jesus. Where two or three are gathered in my name, Jesus said, there am I in the midst. The Holy Spirit is often called the Spirit of Christ because when the Holy Spirit is there, He is our conduit to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord Jesus Christ is our way and our access through the veil to the Father.

Jesus said, if you have my words and keep them, you're the ones who love me. I and my Father will come and make our dwelling with that individual. That again is the individual.

Wouldn't it be great if a group of individuals were of like mind so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. And not only is there the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit for those individuals, but the group becomes a body of parts with a central spirit and a central presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the thinking and the plans and the purpose of the Father are reflected in the group as an organism.

It's interesting to go back and look at origins and where did life come from. And from the evolutionary point of view, you know, molecules decided wouldn't it be great if we self-replicated? Wouldn't it be great if we got together? Wouldn't it be great if we created RNA? Wouldn't it be great if we created DNA? Wouldn't it be great if nature selected all of this and brought it out? And then we ended up with little single cell organisms like bacteria, prokaryotes and eukaryotes and all these other things. Little organisms.

But one of the problems they have is trying to figure out, okay, in our evolutionary view where this all just conveniently happened in an unguided and accidental fashion. And okay, you get life and you get these little cells. When did they start glomming together and turn into an organism? So that it's not just a cluster of grapes where you basically got one grape and here's another grape, but each individual grape is a grape.

But when they cluster together, it's not like a cluster of grapes. Now it's like a mouse where, well, it's not a complete mouse without this ear. You know, one more or less grape in a bunch is still a bunch of grapes.

One grape by itself is still a complete grape. But a mouse, if you start taking parts off of him, well, that's a mouse leg. Major dragged up a deer leg from somewhere, a complete, you know, shoulder, elbow, wrist, hoof.

So proud of himself. You know, look at this, biggest bone I ever had. But it's not a complete deer.

I look at that and say, that's a part of a deer. That is not the whole thing. And it's not a deer unless all those parts are together.

And by the way, even when all the parts are together, it's not a deer unless it's alive. I mean, it's a dead deer, but you can assemble all the parts and unless it's got life and self-guiding thought, I'm going to leap, I'm going to graze, I'm going to run, I'm going to stand, I'm going to sleep, I'm going to do whatever. You know, a dead deer isn't what you're after.

You want a live deer, unless you're a hunter looking for venison. So this idea of the corporate body is what we're looking at here. This is the temple of God collective.

And with the spirit of God, not only indwelling and filling each individual, but in the group. The

group becomes greater than the sum of the individual parts. A group can do things that individuals can't necessarily do.

There is a synergy and there is a potential and there is an opportunity for the diverse parts that make up that body to function. And if one of them is missing, the rest of the body suffers. You're missed if you're not there.

We're looking for you. We need you. We are blessed by your presence and your encouragement and your thoughts and your expression of those thoughts and your role and your function.

You appreciate things and you are appreciated. The fellowship is better for your presence and misses you when you're not there. That's an ideal church.

That's what Paul is talking about here. Instead of splitting and dividing apart and creating a giant vacuum where the Holy Spirit can't dwell and can't draw everything together to be greater than itself, there should be unity. If anyone defiles, verse 17, the temple of God, God will destroy him.

If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. And interestingly, it's the same word here. And you have a text note to that effect in your New King James.

If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him. Defile, I don't know why they changed it. It's the exact same word.

This is phthere, P-H-T-H, and after you get your laptop screen clean, you can say the rest of the word, phthere, P-H-T-H-E-I-R-O, phthere, phthere. This is a really interesting word. A lot of these that have difficult pronunciation don't come across in English.

It can mean to perish. In Greek literature, it was used in the sense to kill, to be killed, to perish in battle, to be no more, to lose someone through illness, buildings that crumbled with age and fell apart. Phtheromai, the omi ending, is sort of a middle idea and almost a reflexive idea and is reflexive in some cases.

So someone can destroy themselves or ruin themselves. The best suggestion I can give you for a translation here is ruin, to ruin, keeping in mind that it has a range of meaning from being killed or dying in battle, falling down and coming apart. But if anyone ruins God's temple, this can mean cracking it, knocking a wall out, checking rocks through the windows, failing to show up so that there's a gap and a missing piece.

If anyone ruins, causes destruction to the temple of God, God will ruin, cause destruction to him. Now this is not destroy in the sense of apolia, annihilation. This is ruin in the sense of loss.

My roof leaked, water got in the wall, it mildewed and the wall is ruined. Ruin has happened to my house. Now my whole house is not obliterated and destroyed.

I wasn't hit by a meteor. It wasn't taken in a giant fire. But my house has experienced ruin

because of this leak and this destruction in the wall.

Termites got in, had to have two whole walls rebuilt. This actually happened to us in one of the houses we lived in. Had to have a guy come in and completely rebuild an entire wall.

Later on in that same house, I rebuilt a whole other wall because of ruin from termites. God says, you let termites into God's temple, God's going to let termites into you. God will ruin him.

For the temple of God is holy, which you are. The fellowship of like-minded believers, the local fellowship of like-minded believers is what is in view here is holy to God. You should think of that, think of the group the way you think of God's temple in Jerusalem.

Would you do anything to defile it? Would you take a handful of manure and swing it against God's temple? Would you bring a maimed, lame, blind sacrifice into the temple precincts and defile that area of worship? Well, Paul encourages us to think of the local fellowship, whether it's just our family or the other believers in our periphery, to the extent that we are local and assemble with one another. Do you recognize the sanctity of that fellowship? The sanctity and the importance of unity and no ruin creeping in between believers who are in that fellowship? That's what Paul is talking about. And if we allow any rot, any mildew, any deterioration in God's temple, to that extent it is going to come back on us from God.

You ruin God's temple, God will ruin you. That's what Paul says here in verse 17. So, what is the application? What is the admonition from that truth? Let no one deceive himself.

This is the hardest thing to detect and eradicate is self-deception. It is easy for me to look at other people and see where they are deceiving themselves. I have no trouble looking and saying, you know what, you're kidding yourself.

If you think that is the way to success and fulfillment, you're dreaming. You're a dreamer. You're deceiving yourself.

If you think that that is the path to happiness, it's not. Well, can I turn my laser sharp crystalline focused perception on myself? Let no one deceive himself. If now notice, we've gone from the corporate, you all are God's building, you all are God's temple, don't let anything happen to ruin God's temple.

If any individual brings in ruin, God will ruin that individual. And now we've shifted and we're talking in the singular. This is you and me, me, myself, and I inside.

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, if anyone among you is spouting the wisdom of the world, let him become a fool. Let him leave off, because the wisdom of men is foolishness with God.

And the foolishness of God is wiser than men. And he's saying, look, you've got to shift your measurement tool. Stop measuring wisdom with the world's ruler.

Now I'll give you an example of this. How many churches today, and I'm speaking in generalities, not throwing rocks at anybody in particular, but there is a trend in Christian, Protestant churches, that claim to be conservative and everything else, of problem solving. We're going to have a special class for singles.

We're going to have a special class for the bereaved. We're going to have a special class for the divorced. We're going to have a special class.

We're going to go through a study. We're going to help you with tools to get ahead in life. We're going to teach you about relationships.

We're going to teach you about child training. We're going to teach you about building better marriages. We're going to have a retreat.

We're going to have a special speaker. We're going to work through a book. We're going to do this author and that program, and we're going to bring in this trendy new deal that everybody raves about.

It's really helpful, and oh, I learned so much about how to go along, get along, and how to be a better employee, how to be a better this, how to be a better that, and it sounds great. Who isn't in favor of better marriages, better child training, better work in your employment, doing better financially, Christian financial planning, all of these things? You say, well, what's the matter with that? Here's the danger. I'm not saying they're all bad.

I'm not saying they're categorically wrong, but the danger is the wisdom of the world. Unbelievers have seminars on marriage. Unbelievers have seminars on child training.

Unbelievers have seminars on doing better financially. All of these things are the wisdom of the world, especially if their answer to these questions is, here are six things you can do to organize yourself and be more productive. Here are five ways you can be a better husband.

Here are four ways you can be a better parent. Here are 12 ways that you can get ahead in your job, and they are secular steps. It's the wisdom of the world, and if the church starts putting that hay and that straw into the building, it is not going to stand in the day of fiery judgment.

Churches are not going to be judged by how many practical tools for everyday living they supplied. That's the wisdom of the world. Any unbeliever can do that stuff, and many churches actually promote the stuff, hoping that unbelievers will come in and be drawn in, and they do a bait and switch.

We'll bring you in with practical advice on your marriage. My husband doesn't love me anymore. My wife doesn't appreciate me anymore.

Well, here's, you know, wrap yourself in cling wrap or wear overalls, and learn how to fix things, or, you know, these sort of common sense steps. Have more entertainment. If your youth,

they're leaving the church, let's entertain them.

Let's bring in movies, and it used to be miniature golf. Now it's probably, I don't know, video games or who knows. Let no one deceive himself.

Anyone among you seems to be wise in this age. If they're offering you practical go-along-to-get-along, use-your-head-to-get-ahead steps, let him become a fool. Now, if he's going to become a fool, what kind of fool is he? What foolishness are we talking about in this context? What is the foolishness of God in this context? What is it specifically? The message of the cross.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the message of Christ. His work on the cross, that's the focus of the fellowship. Who we are in Christ.

What our opportunities are in Christ. How we function in Christ. What is accomplishment in Christ.

The foolishness of the cross. If you're wise about money and relationships and employment and, you know, getting ahead in the world, become a fool. Start focusing on spiritual truth.

It's counterintuitive to the world that the best way to be a good parent or a good husband or a good wife or a good child or a good employee or a good employer or a good member of society is to concentrate on spiritual truth. Concentrate on developing the fruit of the Spirit, which is ours in Christ. The Lord Jesus died to give us not success in material terms, but eternal life.

To take up our cross and follow Him. Why did He say that? If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. Why take up the cross? If you take up a cross, what's the one thing everybody's going to know about you when they look at you? It's dragging a cross around.

You're identifiably associated with Jesus Christ. If you take up a cross, any time you see a cross, other than maybe over a grave, what do you think? Well, something to do with Christianity, something to do with Christ. It is the symbol of Jesus Christ.

You look at the cross, it's Christ. It's not one of the thieves. The only time I think about the thieves is when I pass a Lutheran church or something and there are three crosses out on the lawn.

I've seen Lutherans seem to be more fond of that than others. There was one out in Rockwall, the first one I ever saw. Occasionally I'll drive by a church and there will be three crosses out on the lawn and I think, so is this the church of the two thieves? Why are there three crosses? The cross represents Christ.

I'm not interested in the thieves. It's a wonderful example and story and it's in the Word of God and that's great. But I don't think about the thieves.

When I look at the cross, I think of Christ. To be a fool, as it says in verse 18 here, let him

become a fool in order that he may become wise. If anyone seems to be wise, appears to be wise, looks like he is wise, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

It seems just nonsensical unless you know what wisdom and what foolishness is. Be foolish to the ways of the world. What you do doesn't make sense.

It's counterintuitive to an unbeliever. You ought to look funny to unbelievers. Why haven't you striven for this? Why didn't you accomplish that? Why didn't you provide yourself with more money? Why didn't you strive harder for material success? Why do you do what you do with what you have? Why do you spend your time the way you do? You're a fool.

Well, Paul says, be a fool so that you can become wise. That transferable wisdom that goes into the future. Verse 19 makes it clear.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. It is written, he catches the wise in their own craftiness. That's from the book of Job.

He uses their craftiness against them, catches them in it. And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are futile. It looks wise to us, but it's futility.

It is investing in the wrong thing. We like to think, oh, if I had a time machine I'd go back and invest in Microsoft, or I'd invest in Apple, or I'd invest in some stock that's really ballooned and made a fortune. That would have been wise. How wise would it have been to invest in? Not really.

You might have made a lot of money and that money might have tripped you up. I've never seen such unhappy, miserable people as the rich. It gives you a whole new set of worries.

Now you've got responsibilities. What should you do with that money? How much of it should you keep? How much of it should you reinvest? How much of it should you donate? To whom should you donate? Are you going to make sycophants and dependents? Are people going to love you for your money? Are people going to look at you differently? Are they going to treat you differently? Can you pursue a healthy walk with the Lord and you've got all this money weighing you down? We think, oh, it wouldn't weigh me down. Well, it probably wouldn't weigh me down.

But if you spend it, is that good stewardship? How's that going to hold up in the day of judgment? God's going to say, you mean you had this many hundred thousand dollars and this is what you spent it on? How selfish was that? Where's the cause of Christ? Where's your eternal thinking? To me, if you're a believer and you've got a lot of money, you've got a huge responsibility. A stewardship. You're accountable.

You've got God's money. You're like the treasurer. What are you going to do with that? How are you going to budget it? Are you going to keep it for yourself? Are you going to line your own nest? Are you going to look around and find who's needy? Who qualifies? The poor you have

with you always.

You could pour it all out to the poor. Well, to which poor? And how much? And when? And where? Huge responsibility. It can be a great stumbling block.

The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile. The world measures wisdom by, look how well off you are. Therefore, let no one boast in men.

And now he's come full circle back. The things that you are contending about and dividing over and standing apart from each other by your views and your priorities and your values of these communicators. He says, don't boast in these things that you are passionate about.

Well, but let me tell you the six reasons why the Apostle Paul is the best guy. Oh no, I've got six equally good reasons why Apollos is the best guy. Well, you all haven't heard Peter.

I was over in Capernaum. I heard Peter. I was in Peter's house.

I heard Peter tell stories of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, Paul and Apollos, they didn't spend any time with the Lord. I listened to Peter.

Let me tell you what a great guy I am because I've heard Peter. Well, I think all of you are all wet. I just follow Christ.

My mom and dad heard Christ give the Sermon on the Plain, and they passed along to me, and I'm plugged in straight to the source. Paul says, let no one, remember in verse 18 he said, let no one deceive himself? Now he says, let no one boast in men. Not only, I ask myself, why doesn't Paul say, you individually, you singular, do not deceive yourself? Why does he say, let no one deceive himself? Because it's a two-pronged exhortation.

If you let no one deceive himself, that means I should not do it, and I shouldn't stand for you doing it. I shouldn't tolerate you doing it either. Let no one means you need to eradicate this out of the group.

You personally should not do it, and you should not stand for it elsewhere in the group. Your group policy, you all should not let people do this. You shouldn't do it, and it shouldn't be a characteristic in your group.

You need to take steps if this crops up in your fellowship. Let no one deceive himself. If someone's deceiving himself, you need to hand them a copy of this letter and say, you know, my brother, I love you, but here's something Paul said that's been meaningful to me, and I think it would be meaningful to you if you take it to heart.

Truth spoken to one another in love. When he says let no one, it means get the beam out of your own eye, and then you'll see clearly to get that mote out of somebody else's eye, but nobody should have obstructed vision. You may have the bigger problem.

Solve yours first. Then you can see clearly to take the mote out. He doesn't say, well, just get your beam out and let the other guy worry about his mote.

One of the things about something big in your eye is you can usually get it out yourself, but a little tiny thing, usually you have to get somebody else, don't you? It's harder to get some little thing. Even with a mirror and a pointed rolled up Kleenex or something, small things are best gotten out by somebody else who can help you because they can see it and you can't. So the Lord Jesus says the big obstruction that you can remove for yourself, get that out of your eye, and then you can be used by God to help somebody else get a small thing out of their eye.

Let no one deceive himself, verse 18. Verse 21, let no one boast in men. You need to start dampening this kind of thing in your conversation.

Don't you be boasting that you like one teacher better than another, even though you probably were blessed by one particular individual who just had the knack. God put that particular guy in your periphery and he was very helpful. Praise God for that, but don't let that be an issue when you're fellowshiping in the group and don't let somebody else make an issue out of an individual communicator either.

Let no one boast in men. Why? All things are yours. Why do you say, well, Paul's my guy.

Guess what? Apollos is your guy. Peter is your guy. The Lord Jesus is your guy.

It's all provided for you. Why are you limiting yourself? There's a whole smorgasbord on the table and you're only eating the cheese. Sample everything.

Try some dishes. You might find you like other things. You may benefit and get nutrition and strength from other things that are on the table.

All things are yours. Why limit yourself? Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come, all are yours. Some of these guys are going to be better at shining a light on practical application, the world.

Some guys are going to be great at making eschatology real and the future hope just almost becomes tangible in your mind because they have such a gift for exposition of prophecy and prophetic books. Whatever their particular specialty is, Cephas, he walked with the Lord. He has those recollections of the personal teaching of the Lord Jesus.

Apollos, coming from a Greek background and being able to bridge the gap between erudition and worldly wisdom and what God provides as the complement and the supplement and the context for that and putting it in its place. Nothing wrong with worldly wisdom if it doesn't dominate, if it doesn't exclude spiritual truth. That's Apollos' gift.

Paul has a great gift for founding. We have other passages where he says, I laid the foundation. I was the one who came in first.

I'm your father in Christ. You have many teachers but not many fathers, not many founders. That's his unique gift, his introduction.

Some guys are really good at starting things up but they don't want to stick around and run them. They are startup specialists. Paul was a great evangelist as an apostle and he cultivated and assigned pastors who would then take those groups on.

So there's a different specialty for each and Paul says, don't limit yourself just to a founder or just to a builder or just to a guy that's good at practical application or just a guy that's good at the personal walk and teaching of Christ or somebody that's good just on narrative or a guy that's just good in prophecy. They're all yours. Try to get it all on board.

Appreciate them all. Be blessed by them all. They all belong to you, plural, you the group.

And if some people really get motivated by prophecy, God bless them. Be unified with them. Encourage them.

If this guy over here really likes the practical application side, God bless him. Encourage them. Be one with them.

Don't say, well, you know, my whole thing is the personal, I would just spend all my time in the Gospels. Well, I would just spend all my time in prophecy. Well, I would spend all my time in the historical books.

That narrative just does it for me. That's all yours. And if some people appreciate one over another, appreciate the people and their role in the body of Christ.

Their particular gift may be fueled and fed by that area of enthusiasm within the Word of God and the particular kind of teaching that brings it out. Don't dampen the spirit. Don't put out the spirit's fire.

Don't quench it. Those parts of the body get that particular kind of energy. Some parts of our body run better on, you know, they need a shot of adrenaline.

Others, we've got some muscles that are endurance muscles. We've got other muscles that are quick response and fight or flight. And, you know, at different times, different parts of the body do different things.

And you need particular things to make your ears work well and your center of balance work well. You need electrolytes. And, you know, all of the parts of the body fitly joined together work and we should be unified and we should be appreciative and we should be supportive and we should be looking at the big picture.

It's really kind of clear when you go through this chapter, isn't it? All are yours and you are Christ's. You are the body of Christ and Christ is God's. You're the temple of the Holy Spirit and when the temple is filled with the Spirit, both individually and collectively, the Lord Jesus Christ

is present and honored and glorified.

God the Father is present and honored and glorified and everything is accomplished. That is chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians. It's a wonderful encouragement to us to overcome the limits of our human instinct, our human perception, our human tendencies to divide and to specialize and to focus on things that are short-term.

Raise our eyes. Lift our gaze. Expand our appreciation for those long-term things that benefit the whole body and that reflect the glory of the whole Trinity.

That's our unique privilege and our unique opportunity. Well, we'll pick up here in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 next time where a new turn is made and Paul is going to say, let a man consider us as servants of Christ and stewards. Servants and stewards.

You don't go to a restaurant and spend all your time analyzing the waiters. It's the food. It's the fellowship.

You just get around a table with some really good food. The best waiters, the best waitresses are those that supply exactly what you need when you need it and get out of the way. They don't make an issue of themselves.

They don't try to sit down and join the table and tell you their life experience. They don't stand there and talk to you when you're trying to talk to each other. They take your order.

They bring your food. You need a bottle of ketchup, they bring it. And the rest of the time they're not an issue.

That's what we're going to see beginning in chapter 4. Well, let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, the unique identity we have in this age as members of the body of Christ, baptized into that unity by your Holy Spirit.

We pray that as we reflect on what we've seen in this portion of your word that it will be meaningful and motivating to us, that it will clarify the situations we find ourselves in, the decisions we need to make, the ways that we interact with each other, our conversations, our goals and priorities throughout the day. We pray that our fellowship will be enlightened and will bring credit to the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Holy Spirit will be manifest in that temple of fellowship and that we will all grow toward the standard of a mature man and be prepared for service and function in this life and in the next. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.