

Gardeners and Builders
Sunday School Lesson
I Corinthians 3:1-23
July 6, 2025

The opening story in our lesson is outstanding. One of my favorite shows on TV is NCIS and chances are that many of you are familiar with the characters. One of the long time characters is Special Agent Timothy McGee. McGee has degrees from both Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Johns Hopkins University. He is brilliant with technology. He is also a classic geek. You have likely seen episodes where he dresses up as some super hero from the comics or movies or video games to attend some sort of convention.

Those conventions have various names but they are all under the umbrella of Comic Con. Comic-Con is the premier event for all things comics and related popular art, including movies, television, gaming, interactive multimedia, and so much more! Participants enjoy cosplay galore and take part in unique programming, exclusive previews, and presentations, not to mention the expansive and diverse Exhibit Hall that features merchandise and displays representing all fandoms. My youngest daughter and her husband have been attending them for years.

When my family went to Disneyland in April, Lauren and Mike came all dressed up because they knew through their geek associations that it was a special dress up day. Honestly, I can't remember the name of the day but there were hundreds of people that were dressed like they came out of 1950. But that wasn't the focus of Lauren and Mike. Their first priority was making sure their nieces and nephew were safe and having a good time. They paid attention to their needs and wants, waiting until they could return to the park that evening to do the rides they wanted to do while I did babysitting duties.

Let us pray

O Holy God, transform our lives as we follow you. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and most of all, hearts that do not judge. Amen.

Our Purpose Statement: **To commit to work together in building up the body on the one foundation of Christ.**

The church in Corinth had serious problems. Paul had laid the proper foundations when the people in Corinth first heard the message of Jesus and committed their lives to follow him. But sadly, that did not last when Paul left. Groups began to have different priorities and some of the visiting preachers did not help the situation. Rather than focus on the priority of the gospel and the priority of following Jesus, loving people, and sharing grace, they began thinking only of themselves and what happens when we make our wants and needs more important than the gospel? A lot of bickering and a lot of heartache.

They started by dividing on what preachers they like the best. Some chose Paul, some chose Peter, and some chose Apollo who was known for his outstanding preaching skills. All three men were not there to compete against one another. They were there to share Jesus and build up the body of Christ. Jesus was their focus but the folds at Corinth were focusing on other things.

They argued over what food they could and could not eat. They argued over whose spiritual gifts were the best. Some were committing sexual sins with the excuse that Jesus forgives. They were suing one another in court. They were gorging on the Communion elements so that nothing was left when the poorer members of the congregation got there after work. In every case, the focus was what “I want” not what “we need.” Jesus and loving your neighbor was not a part of the conversation.

One Foundation

Paul tried to reorient the church back to Jesus, the foundation of our faith. These new Christians did not have the gospel to read and very few of them knew much about the Hebrew Bible. Paul reminded them that the church is like a garden or a building. Some must lay the foundation or prepare the soil first. Paul knew he had laid a good foundation. It was the same foundation he had laid in Philippi, in Thessalonica, in Colossae, and in Ephesus. In that good soil, Paul had planted seeds. Peter and Apollo were not there to lay a foundation but to build on what Paul had started. They were there to begin building a structure or watering the garden. They were not there for comparison.

Many a church has been destroyed over someone not liking the preacher or not liking the music or not liking the order of service or some other complaint. When someone does that, they are not focusing on God, but themselves. Worship is about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Worshiping anything else is idolatry. God is our Creator, Christ is our Redeemer, and the Spirit is our sustainer. This is difficult to do in today's culture because there are so many other things screaming for our attention. We live in a culture that screams “Me! Me!” Our focus in the church is always the health of the body of Christ so we can share our witness with the world. No one wants to attend a church that gossips about each other.

The author gave us a handy list of questions to ask ourselves:

- Does it build up or tear down?
- Does it restore or abolish?
- Does it inspire or defeat?
- Is it what we want or what God calls us to?

Let us pray:

Holy Jesus, help us to keep our focus on you and the call to serve. May we look at our brothers and sisters not as competition but as co-workers seeking to build on Christ' love with our actions of kindness and grace. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.