

Life Group Questions

Nov 3rd, 2024

Jesus, the Only Foundation

Pastor Ray Harms-Wiebe – [1 Corinthians 3:10-23](#)

Note from Pastor Jonathan

Hey Life Groups!

I'm looking forward to seeing all our leaders and potential leaders at our Appreciation Dinner this Friday! I'm always humbled to serve such an amazing group.

Many groups are going through What Is the Gospel as part of our Growing in the Basics. The next curriculum I'll be introducing at the dinner will be on developing our relationship with Jesus through spiritual disciplines.

LET'S OPEN UP (Pick Any You Like)

1. **Is there an event in your life that explains something about who you are today, whether big or small?**
2. **Do you have a favorite movie/book character? What makes them who they are?**
3. **Have you ever had something that you thought was valuable, but was worthless?**

LET'S DIG IN (Pick Any You Like)

4. **Why should a church remember its foundation?**
5. **What people contribute to building up the church?**
6. **How will God judge our contributions to the church?**

LET'S GROW

7. **How can we build ourselves up?**
8. **How do we contribute to building up the church?**
9. **How can we rely on God's grace to build the church?**

1 Corinthians 3:10–23

¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—
¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness,"
²⁰ and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."
²¹ So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

LET'S OPEN UP

1. Is there an event in your life that explains something about who you are today, whether big or small?

Maybe when you were young, your parents took you camping and now you love the great outdoors. Or your older siblings taught you sports and now you feel the most alive on a rink, court, or slope. Did you go to a concert, performance, or museum that jumpstarted a passion for music, theater, or art?

As a little kid, a fish bone got stuck in my throat. I remember coughing over the sink for what felt like an eternity to get it out. Since then, I meticulously chew any fish dish with bones because I'm afraid of choking again. Unfortunately, a lot of Chinese fish dishes have bones!

For Paul, the key event that defines the church is Jesus dying on the cross to save us from our sins. It unites us as a church and drives us forward.

2. Do you have a favorite movie/book character? What makes them who they are?

I enjoy learning why characters are the way they are. Harry Potter was just an orphan until a giant broke into his home to tell him he's a wizard, Harry (<https://youtu.be/z9Gwieh5FIY>). Indiana Jones wears a fedora, uses a whip, and hates snakes because of museums (<https://youtu.be/AwH6-Yh7 SM>). Superman was raised by humble Kansas farmers who taught him to fight for "truth, justice, and the American way" (<https://youtu.be/Q2l4bz1FT8U>). Lex Luthor famously hates him because Superman's the reason he's bald (<https://readallcomics.com/adventure-comics-271/>).

Mr. Wilson's attempt at a quiet life in a Kansas suburb is turned upside down by his young neighbor Dennis the Menace who's always up to mischief. Dorothy Gale dreams of somewhere over the rainbow until a tornado hits her Kansas farm and sends her to the wonderful world of Oz. Mary Ann Summers grew up in landlocked Kansas until a three-hour tour (a three-hour tour) left her stranded on a deserted island without a single luxury, like Robinson Crusoe. Dean and Sam Winchester grew up in Kansas but now travel the country hunting supernatural monsters, like the one that killed their mother.

These foundational moments make these characters who they are. If those moments didn't happen, there would be no story to tell. As the church, Paul reminds us that our foundation is Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins. This event makes us who we are and without it, we wouldn't exist.

3. Have you ever had something that you thought was valuable, but was worthless?

My wife and I went on a cruise for our honeymoon back in 2019. At every port, diamond shops drew people in by promising trinkets. We got free Tiffany and Pandora bracelets. Back in our room, we examined them and noticed something odd. The Pandora charms were nothing like the ones on the Pandora website. When I looked at the ad, I saw they promised a "Tiffany style" bracelet. Looking back, it would be absurd to give legitimate Tiffany and Pandora jewelry for free. Of course, they would give cheap knockoffs.

Paul writes that what we contribute to the church will be judged. Will our contribution be real and long-lasting? Or will it fail the test and be shown as worthless?

LET'S DIG IN

4. Why should a church remember its foundation?

Paul has made it clear that Jesus Christ is the church's foundation. Paul's an apostle of Christ Jesus (1:1). The church is made holy in Christ Jesus (1:2), they call on Jesus Christ (1:2), and Jesus is their Lord (1:2-3). They're waiting for Jesus Christ (1:8-9), they share fellowship with Jesus Christ (1:9), and Paul appeals to them by the name of Jesus Christ (1:10). Even though Jews and Greeks hated Christianity because of the crucifixion, Christians wouldn't budge (1:22-24; 2:1-2). The Corinthian Christians were still spiritual babies in Christ (3:2). Everything revolved around Jesus.

In previous chapters, they fought each other because they made human leaders their foundation, not Jesus. They forgot the limits of earthly leaders. Only Jesus could forgive sins. Only Jesus gives them a relationship with God. Only Jesus is perfect. They were baptized in Jesus' name, not Paul's.

In a healthy church, everyone remembers that we don't deserve God's love so we're driven to love others, even when they don't deserve it. We stay humble because we know we haven't earned anything by ourselves. We're excited to come together to learn more about Jesus and worship Him because He's so awesome and deserves our praise. We're eager to tell others about Jesus' forgiveness because we know everyone is headed to God's judgment for their sins unless they believe in Jesus.

Many problems happen when we make something else the foundation.

Politics	Focus on earthly goals using human means, forgetting God's higher purpose and power.
Ethnic Identity	Focus on a particular culture and language, becoming insular and unwelcoming.
Being Welcoming	Focus on not offending people, compromising God's truth.
Growing Numbers	Focus on getting more people, forgetting to disciple them.
Programs	Focus on doing more, not considering whether it brings people closer to Jesus.
Getting People to Do Stuff	Focus on doing while ignoring spiritual life, leading people to rely on their works instead of Jesus Christ.

5. What people contribute to building up the church?

We usually think it's the "important people". The pastors/elders, teachers/leaders, volunteers. Paul writes elsewhere that the purpose of pastors and teachers is to equip the church to build itself up (Ephesians 4:11-13). Church leaders want to build up the congregation so they can build each other up.

For example, teachers teach our children and teens on Sunday mornings and during the week. But they only see them a few hours a week. But parents have so much more time and access to build their children up seven days a week by showing them how to follow Jesus in their daily lives.

Pastors Ray and Vinh preach God's Word from the stage, but people gather in Life Groups to process the message together and learn how to apply it. Our parking, welcoming, prayer, café, and resource teams build up the church by demonstrating how to humbly serve others. New people come to church when our people share the Gospel at school, work, the gym, or the park. All these parts contribute differently to building us up.

6. How will God judge our contributions to the church?

God will test what each person does for the church. Paul uses the metaphor of testing with fire. Wood can start burning around 550°F/288°C. Hay and straw ignite close to 500°F/260°C. In contrast, gold starts melting at over 1900°F/1000°C while silver at over 1700°F/950°C. Precious stones also melt at crazy temperatures. Diamonds melt at 8000°F/4500°C.

I think of students building a tower and doing an earthquake test (<https://youtu.be/BSzkTkmKfts>), except it is God using fire to test how we've built up the church. All the cheap stuff like wood, hay, and straw will burn up. Anything valuable will survive.

I need to mention here that salvation is not on the line. Paul notes that the person whose work burns up will still be saved. Those who contribute to the church in a meaningful way will somehow be rewarded. What that looks like, I have no idea. Whether or not a believer contributes beneficially to the church, they will still be saved.

So, what is valuable to God? I have a few suggestions for how to approach this question.

What lasts into eternity? We have a great church building, but someday it'll be destroyed by an earthquake, fire, flood, or simple deterioration over time. We have many great programs, but we won't need Fall Festival, Under the Big Top, or Discovery Classes after Jesus returns. So, what will last?

Changed lives will. When we build the church up by telling non-believers about Jesus, those who believe in Jesus will be with God for eternity. When we teach people to develop their relationship with Jesus, those relationships will continue forever. The effects of the love and care we have for each other also stick around.

What does God value? Churches may get caught up in the celebrity status of their pastors or how flashy their programs are. Famous pastors or impressive programs aren't necessarily wrong, but God cares more about the hearts.

Think about what we've learned about the Corinthian church. We don't know what their meeting place is like. We have no idea how many people show up every week, how good their praise team is, or what coffee they serve. That's not God's priority. Paul focuses his letter on their hearts and whether they're pursuing Jesus Christ.

For our church, God cares most about our hearts. He cares about it more than flashy, performative rituals (Psalm 31:16-17; Matthew 15:7-9). We have an amazing worship arts ministry, but it's only meaningful if it points our hearts to Him. We have great teachers, but all that learning is worthless if it's only head knowledge that doesn't lead to life change. We have over a hundred Life Groups, but all of that is a waste if people aren't growing closer to Jesus.

LET'S GROW

7. How can we build ourselves up?

When I go to Taiwan to visit family, I see temples everywhere filled with tons of gods (<https://youtu.be/TeH3dR5Yl6g>). These temples inform visitors about who those deities are and people go to experience blessings from whatever god or gods are inside. In the Bible, the temple had some similarities. People went there to experience God because that's where God met people. It was a beacon for outsiders to come and know Him (Isaiah 56:7). But Paul tells the Corinthians they are God's temple because the Holy Spirit lives within each believer.

Are we part of the church? Lots of well-intentioned people jump the gun and want to build up the church before making sure they're part of the temple of God. Do we believe in Jesus? Is the Holy Spirit within us? Thousands of people come through our doors every Sunday, but only those who put their faith in Jesus are part of the church and God's temple.

Are we healthy? The apostle Peter calls us living stones (1 Peter 2:4-5). We're the building blocks of the temple. A building can't be strong if its load-bearing bricks are brittle. We need to make sure we're strengthening ourselves. Jesus calls out religious leaders who thought they were the pillars of the faith but they ignored their own glaring problems (Matthew 7:1-5). Ironically, a healthy Christian knows they're unhealthy and need Jesus. That's what makes them strong.

What are we building on? Do you know the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what He's done? If you don't, please ask your Life Group! If you know the Gospel, how is that motivating your goals or priorities? Does it lead you to spend time with God in prayer and reading the Bible? How does it spur you on to make disciples?

8. How do we contribute to building up the church?

We all contribute to how the church is being built up, whether for good or bad. If we worship God passionately during Sunday service (e.g., by singing wholeheartedly, learning during the sermon, helping others who may seem lost), we set a good example for others to follow. But the opposite is also true. We can set a bad example for others to follow (e.g., by lethargically singing or browsing social media during the sermon).

If we talk about what we've been learning from Life Group discussions or how we're experiencing God throughout the week, we inspire others to learn and grow. If we only talk about our hobbies, jobs, or whatever else is on our minds, we teach others that God is a small part of our lives.

When our actions build up the church on Jesus Christ and what He's done for us, we build with what will last. The deeper relationships with Jesus, the people we disciple, and lives changed because we shared the Good News. Will what we do last? How can you work to build up Willingdon Church?

9. How can we rely on God's grace to build the church?

Jesus owns everything and has given us so much. Earlier in the letter, Paul calls out the Corinthians for thinking the church exists to support Team Paul, Team Apollos, etc. "I'm here to help *our leader* succeed!" Paul flips this around and says that the leaders belong to them! Paul, Apollos, and Cephas are there to support the Corinthian Christians. "Our leaders are here to help *us* succeed!"

That's the same way with us pastors, elders, teachers, and other leaders at Willingdon Church. We aren't here to be the church's bosses. We're here to support the church. That's the model of leadership Jesus gives and tells us to follow (Mark 10:42-45).

So, let's give thanks for the leaders that He's given to the church and use the opportunities He's given us. I hope you can use our Life Group resources and training to grow. Take classes and courses, not because you have to, but because God allows you to grow through them. Thank God for your Life Group leader or WSBM teacher.

Jesus gives us life, so we can enjoy Him while we're on earth. Even though it can be painful and scary, Jesus can even use death to bring us closer to Him. We can serve Him in the present and look forward to His plans in the future. God uses everything somehow to work toward our benefit (Romans 8:28-30).

Let's take advantage of what God's provided and thank Him for it.