

Study 4: Paul vs Apollos?

Getting Personal...

In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul pulls off the gloves and gets personal. In chapters 1 and 2 he's been helping the Corinthians to see the implications of the gospel for boasting about wisdom. Now he starts to specifically address their particular boasting.

In Chapter 2 Paul said that only spiritual people could understand God's wisdom. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 how does Paul say the Corinthians acting?



What specifically shows that they're acting in this way?

The Corinthians are Christians. That means they're spiritual too. The problem is they aren't acting like it. With all their fighting and boasting about their leaders they're acting like unspiritual people. The biggest division in the church seems to be between people who support Paul and people who support Apollos

Introducing Apollos...

Have a look at Acts 18:24-28. How is Apollos described?

Apollos arrived at Corinth after Paul and helped to build the church. Is there anything about his skills and personality which could have caused some of the problems Paul is addressing?

From the description of Apollos in Acts it sounds like he's got a very different style to Paul. Paul preferred to be plain and clear in his preaching. But in Acts it says that Apollos was an eloquent speaker and a fierce debater - the very things which some of the Corinthians were so impressed by. When he arrived on the scene in Corinth, some people thought he was more impressive than plain old Paul, and that's what caused the problems. People started taking sides between Paul and Apollos based on who they thought was the best sounding speaker. But Paul tells the Corinthians that there is no reason to think he or Apollos are better than the other.

Gardening with God...

What metaphor does Paul use in v 5-8 to describe gospel ministry



Fill in the following table from v 5-8 to see what tasks the leaders at Corinth were responsible for.

	Paul	Apollos	God
Task			
Status			
purpose			



Paul says that he and Apollos had different parts to play in the same enterprise. They were both involved in growing God's church, but neither of them was ultimately responsible for any growth that happened. Only God gave the growth.

Different leaders can contribute different things towards growing God's church. Have you seen any examples of this in a church you've been to?



Building with God...

What metaphor does Paul switch to in v 10-14



What foundation is all Gospel work built on?

What will happen to leaders who don't build the right kind of building?

When will it happen?

What kind of ministry is made of hay or straw and won't survive God's judgement?

If you're a leader, think about the ministry you're involved in. Is it based on Jesus Christ and teaching people about him? Or are you building a ministry to make yourself look good?

Paul says that both he and Apollos are building on the foundation of Jesus Christ. In v 17 what is it that they're actually building?

Fighting over leaders eventually destroys the church. Why is this so dangerous (v 16-17)?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:18-25

Wise foolishness

In v 18 Paul gets back to his argument from Chapters 1 and 2. Why is it wise to become foolish?

How will 'becoming foolish' stop someone from boasting about leaders?

Why should they stop boasting about men?

The Corinthians have been saying that they belong to a particular leader. But Paul says that's a wrong way of thinking. Christian leaders like Paul and Apollos are servants. They belong to the Corinthians to build them up in their faith. In fact if the Corinthians are in Christ all things belong to all them, so there is no point in boasting about anything.

Leaders, boasting and you...

Do you ever play 'favourites' with the leaders at church?

Are you ever tempted to think that you are better than other Christians because you're following the right leaders?

Imagine someone who sounds eloquent and brilliant like Apollos shows up at church. Should they be made a leader? Why/why not?