

## How To Get Life Right – 1 Cor 3:18-23

### 1 Cor 3:18-23; (Intro)

These are not new issues for Paul – he’s already addressed them

From loving reminders as to who we are in Christ, and church fights, the nature of the gospel, our calling in this world, how we proclaim Jesus, the necessity of the Spirit . . .

From all of that to the nature of the church in ch3 . . .

It seems as though he’s not ready to move on until he ties them together

And in doing so, **he basically tells** us how to get life right, in one short paragraph

Beginning in v18 with the statement – *let no one deceive himself*; 1OW . . .

#### **Lean not on your own understanding (v18a)**

Which you might recognize from Prov 3:5 which says – *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.*

And I think that’s the idea Paul is trying to get across here in 1 Cor

B/c doing so, that is, leaning on your own understanding, leads to self-deception

Thinking that what you’re thinking is right, apart from any input from others, and independent of the facts – is the final step towards deceiving yourself

Which Paul flat out says don’t do

Especially in the important things – the things of God, and the things of life

#### • One of the keys to which is **surrounding yourself with the right people**

You can avoid leaning on your own understanding, and the self-deception that goes along with it – by surrounding yourself w/ people who think biblically . . .

Follow Christ, and love you enough to speak the truth; Those are the right people

Which is one of the reasons I think Paul says this on the heels of talking about the church for the better part of ch3

When we’re connected as we s/b in the body of Christ . . .

When we belong together in mutual partnership as God intends . . .

We’re the least susceptible to constructing false realities in our minds, and leaning on our **own understanding**

A second key is . . .

#### • **Immersing yourself in truth**

**You can avoid** leaning on your own understanding, and the self-deception that goes along with it – by immersing yourself in truth

When you live in a vacuum of truth, void of facts, there’s nothing else to do *except* lean on your own understanding

Which we do all the time when someone offends us

In the absence of facts, in the absence of truth, we think all kinds of crazy thoughts don’t we?

And most often we end up multiplying our deception, instead of avoiding it

Which is why it’s critical to immerse ourselves in truth, especially when it comes to spiritual matters – as in biblical truth; the truth of God’s Word

B/c getting someone’s motive wrong in what they did to you or said to you, is one thing But getting *God’s* motive wrong, and *God’s* way of living wrong – is deadly

*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way **to death.** (Prov 14:12)*

And then third, you can avoid leaning on your own understanding, by . . .

#### • **Checking yourself for irrational thoughts**

**When I traded** commodities in downtown Chicago, I used to get up at 4:20 every morning to catch the first train in

And for the first couple of years, I almost went crazy with the ridiculous things I thought, at that ridiculous hour

I can’t tell ya how many times I was gonna move to Montana and live off the land

And that’s just the tip of the iceberg

Until I finally disciplined myself not to think *anything* in the morning, except – “get to the train so you can go back to sleep”

That’s was the only thought I allowed myself to think

B/c in a vacuum of rationale, reality goes out the window, and self-deception rules

#### • Which is bad enough when you’re tired

But when your boyfriend just broke up with you, or you just lost your job, or the doctor’s news is not good . . .

It can be life threatening to lean on your own understanding – as in suicidal

And it’s in those moments that you *have* to check your thoughts and take them captive . . .

And then immerse yourself in the truth of God’s Word, while surrounding yourself with the presence of God’s people

Otherwise you’ll end up thinking all *kinds* of crazy thoughts, and doing all kinds of crazy *things*

Things that are contrary to God’s way of living . . .

And things that in your better moments would never cross your mind

That’s the first principle here from v18

If you’re going to get life right – don’t lean on your **own understanding**; Second, is to . . .

#### **Forsake the “wisdom” of the world (v18-20)**

18 – *If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.*

As in, let him become a fool in the world’s eyes, that he may become wise in God’s

Let him forsake the wisdom of the *world*, that he may embrace the wisdom of God

You see, you can’t have it both ways if you’re going to get life right

You can’t straddle the fence – b/c the wisdom of God is diametrically opposed to the wisdom of the world

#### • “Wisdom” that says – eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die

Wisdom that says – it’s all about you and you’re the master of your destiny

Wisdom that says – money is everything, so do whatever it takes to make it

And so is sex, so do whatever you want to get it

And if it feels good, do it; Or looks good, that’s all that matters

And the more stuff you have, the happier you’ll be

If anyone among you thinks that way, Paul says – forsake **it; become a fool**

**And he gives us** 4 reasons for doing so, starting with the fact that:

### 1. It's the only way to become truly wise

*If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.*

Once again, you can't have it both ways if you're going to get life right

You have to forsake the one to get the other

You have to become a fool, at least in the world's eyes, in order to become wise in God's; It's the only way

### 2. It's folly with God

19 – *The wisdom of this world is folly with God*; Need I say more?

You can't live and think in a way that's foolish to God, and expect to get life right

It doesn't work that way; We don't know better than him

### 3. It won't get you very far

19b – *He catches the wise in their craftiness*, quoting Job 5:13

Saying that no matter how smooth you are, no matter how crafty and cool your M.O. – foolish living and foolish thinking *will* catch up with you; it's unavoidable

B/c God is the one who makes sure of it – *he catches the wise in their craftiness*, their cleverness, their deception

### 4. It's an exercise in futility

B/c God sees right through it

That's the very next verse, where Paul borrows from Ps 94:11 to say – *The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile*

As in useless when it comes to getting life right

Useless when it comes to learning the lessons and living the life

Useless when it comes to pleasing the Lord

And useless when it comes to experiencing the fullness of his blessing, and the goodness of his grace

The thoughts of the “wise” are futile

Like the blurb I saw in the newspaper recently, informing people of healing sessions under the tutelage of a Shamanic – a “spiritual leader” who supposedly has special healing powers

And for \$425 you could attend 5 sessions intended to “help participants connect with wisdom and energy of the elements to help heal what is out of balance in their lives”

Really? People pay for that kind of garbage?

It's futile; And though they may not know it, God certainly does

And it's one of the many things you must forsake if you're going to get life right

Forsake the wisdom of the world, and . . .

### Embrace the “folly” of God (v18b)

That's the other side of the coin, and part of *let him become a fool* in v18b – something

Paul has already talked much about in ch1

Not only do you have to forsake the wisdom of the world in order to get life right, but you have to *embrace* the “folly” of God

Folly as in the gospel, the word of the cross, Christ crucified

Like he says in 1:21 – *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.*

Referring to what? Christ crucified, as he says in 1:23 – *We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to Gentiles*

If you're going to get life right, if you're going to live it as God intended, if you're going to enjoy eternity with him, and life to the full now . . .

You not only have to guard against your own understanding, and forsake the wisdom of the world – but embrace the folly of God

#### • The folly that he loves you

Think about it – the God of the universe actually loves you

If he didn't say it, I wouldn't believe it; But he does, in verses like **1 Jn 4:9** –

*In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*

If you're going to get life right, in fact, if you're going to get life in the first place . . .

You have to embrace the folly that God actually loves you \*\*\*\*\*

#### • And that he wants a relationship with you

Like Jesus said in **Jn 14:23** – *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

And the apostle John in **1 Jn 3:1** – *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.* That's relationship language

And the “folly” of God that we must embrace, if we're to get life right \*\*\*\*\*

#### • Along with the folly that he *died* to make it possible

Which Paul makes clear near the end of this letter to the Corinthians in **15:3**, saying – *Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures*

That's folly – at least in the eyes of those who don't believe

That the perfect Son of God died in our place, for our sins, so we wouldn't have to

And it's applied to us through belief and repentance on our part – simple

If you're going to get life, and get it right, you have to embrace that \*\*\*\*\*

So have you? Have you embraced the folly of God?

If not, don't wait; Lean no more on your own understanding

And trust the futile wisdom of this world no longer; Rather . . .

### Pin your hopes on the Lord (v21-23)

That's the final thought here, and I think the gist of what Paul is saying in these last verses of ch3

That if we're going to get life right, we must pin our hopes on *God*, as opposed to man

Saying in v21a – *Let no one boast in men*. As in, don't put your hopes in *them*

Or their abilities, or their prowess, or their knowledge, or their position

Why? B/c the ground at the foot of the cross is level

#### • As good as your favorite pastor might be . . .

Or as good as your favorite Bible teacher might be . . .

Or as good as your favorite SG Leader might be . . .

They have no more access to God than you do  
They came to Christ just as you did, and they're in Christ just as you are – no more and no less

They don't have access to some special knowledge that you don't have  
They don't have a special place with God that's off limits to you  
And they don't enjoy an insider's privilege with God that you can't  
Even if you're talking about apostles like Peter/Paul, or awesome teachers like Apollos

There's no special knowledge, no special position, and no special privilege in the body of Christ . . .  
B/c **y21 says – all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's**

IOW in Christ, as part of God's family . . .  
And under his rule/reign/provision/protection – that's the last part of the verse . . .  
In Christ, we have access to the same knowledge of God, and the same relationship with him, and the same blessings of life . . .  
And we experience the same aspects of death, and the same things of this world – as anyone else; including *leaders* like Paul and Apollos and Peter

All the marvels and blessings and wonders and beauty and knowledge of this world, and this life, and the life to come – are yours, just as much as they are someone else's

So it makes no sense whatsoever to pin your hopes on *them*, leaders or not  
In Christ, you already have everything they do, and everything you'll ever need to get life right  
B/c the foot of the cross is level, and there's equal access for all

So instead of boasting in them, instead of reveling in your proximity to some leader . . .  
**Instead of pinning** your hopes and dreams on some preacher or pastor . . .  
Pin them on God; Pin them on the Lord; That's how **you get life right**

- Now, that doesn't mean that your pastors and spiritual leaders are nobodies  
Or that they're unworthy of your respect and honor – they are; very much so

**1 Tim 5:17** – *Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.*  
Obviously referring to pastors  
Elders that they are, they are worthy of honor upon honor if they lead well and work hard to teach and apply the Word of God to your life

And **1 Thess 5:12-13** says – *We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.*  
Again, referring to the pastors and elders and spiritual leaders of a church  
They are to be respected and esteemed very highly in their work \*\*\*\*\*

But not boasted in to the point that you pin your hopes on *them* instead of God  
Or on their teaching, instead of the *source* of their teaching  
Or on their life, instead of the *source* of their life (**Summary**)

Honor your pastors and spiritual leaders, yes  
But don't pin your *hopes* on them, pin your **hopes on the Lord**  
Embrace *his* folly, while forsaking the world's, and guarding against your own  
**Do that, and you'll get life right every time**