

## PORTER MISSION TRIP FULLY FUNDED \$2150 BY FATHOM

### INTRODUCE

Good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here. If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 3. 1 Corinthians 3. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible, so if you don't have one, grab one of the hard-backed black one under every chair. You can open your phone or tablet. 1 Corinthians 3. If you open a black one from under your chair, 1 Corinthians 3 is on [page 953](#).

### INTRODUCTION: GYM

So, while you're turning there, quick survey: how many of you work out?

- So, maybe you do strength training like lifting weights,
- or you do cardio like running or cycling,
- or something like that?

Ok! It seems like a pretty good thing, right? Nobody's really bad-mouthing physical fitness, right? No one's like,

- *"Being in shape is the worst thing for you!"*
- *You want your best life now:*
- *eat whatever you want,*
- *drink to your heart's content,*
- *and live a sedentary lifestyle...*
- *just park it on the couch.*
- *It's what's best for you!"*

I just haven't heard that argument.

Now, to those of you who work out: how many of you belong to a gym? Or a box, for my crossfitters out there? Ok.

Well, I was thinking about that, this week,

- because it seems to me that everyone I know goes to the gym,
- and maybe I just have some really fit friends...
- but just drive by Vasa
- or 24-hour Fitness
- or Lifetime (which I think can be seen from space)
- they always seem to be packed with people.

So, I looked it up. In the US, there are approximately 45 million adults who have gym memberships.

- Which sounds like a lot,
- but that's approximately 14 percent of the population.
- So, not as many people as I thought.

And then, a rather fascinating stat I found was

- that around 80% of the Americans
- who have a gym membership
- don't even use it regularly! <sup>i</sup>

So...what's the point of that? Like, what are you getting out of that?

- "I want to put out the vibe that I work out..."
- but I don't really want to work out...
- so, I'll just spend the money on that...
- to make me look good,
- and make me feel like I tried to care."

## APPLICATION

But then I got into studying this week's passage of scripture, and it very quickly dawned on me that this phenomenon is not unique to the gym. It happens in the church, as well.

- You see, there are many '*self-described Christians*',
- who, for all intents and purposes, have the membership...
- but never use it.
- They want the external benefit of 'looking like a Christian',
- or they want the internal benefit of 'feeling like a Christian',
- when in reality, it's just hollow.
- It's empty.
- It's false.
- It's a façade.
- It's like, "*I care enough to pretend...*
- *but not enough to do anything more...*
- *and therefore, I'm not getting any healthier.*"

## RECAP

This is what Paul has been getting at the last couple weeks, and today he really cranks it up!

So, we pick up in chapter 3, right on the heels of chapter 2, and what Paul has just told the Corinthian church is that there are really only two categories of people: the natural person, and the spiritual person.

And the natural person, we defined as simply, a person who does not have the Spirit of God.

- They are unsaved.
- They are lost.
- Their eyes have not been opened to the wisdom of God.
- They are natural.

But then Paul said that the Corinthians, the members of that church, were not natural persons, but spiritual persons.

And that doesn't mean the same thing it means today, as in,

- *“Yeah, I'm spiritual,*
- *because I do Hot Yoga,*
- *and watch Oprah,*
- *and I read The Secret,*
- *and I'm in-touch with the universe.”*

That's not what Paul means.

He simply means that the spiritual person has had their eyes opened to the wisdom of God by the Holy Spirit.

- They are saved.
- They are born-again.
- They are Christians.

## **TRANSITION**

And he ended by reminding the Corinthian church that they have the mind of Christ...they have the Spirit. They are no longer natural. They are spiritual. And that's where we pick up in chapter 3 verse 1.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1

[1] But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

### EXPLAIN: FLESHLY

Now, this is the first time in 1 Corinthians where Paul criticizes the church directly and sharply. He's kind of implicitly called them out in the first two chapters, but now he takes off the gloves with a blatant rebuke.

- I could not address you as spiritual people,
- but as people of the flesh.

Let's do a little work on that idea...people of the flesh. What does Paul mean? Well, he's kinda throwing a third category of people into the mix with the natural, and the spiritual...he adds the people of the flesh. Which is kinda in the middle of the two, ok?

- That's how the ESV translates it. people of the flesh.
- The NIV calls them 'worldly'.
- Other translations say 'carnal'.
- And then some use the word 'fleshly'...
  - which I'm not even sure is a word, but I like it.
- Fleshly.
- I could not address you as spiritual people,
- but as fleshly.

The Greek word here is *sarkinos* (sä'r-kēnos). And it's a different word from the word used in chapter 2 that describes the 'natural' person.

That's because the natural person is completely devoid of the Spirit.

- While the fleshly person is still, **in Christ**.
- The fleshly person is 'spiritual'...
- they are saved...
- but they are living as if they did not have the Spirit.
- They are Christians,
- not natural persons,
- but their behavior testifies
- that they are still too much of the flesh.

### **EXPLAIN: INFANTS**

And then Paul chooses another metaphor. He calls them **infants in Christ**. Now, this would have been perceived by the Corinthians as a really harsh criticism.

- They would have taken offence at the idea
- that they were immature infants...
- because they likely fancied themselves as mature.

They thought of themselves as cultured,

- and successful,
- and bright.
- They loved the Greco-Roman philosophers.
- They thought themselves wise!

So, this rebuke from Paul...calling them infants...would have been a blow to their pride for sure. They, likely, would have been stunned to hear Paul's rebuke of them as infants and fleshly.

But their behavior reveals their true state: **they are like children**.

## ILLUSTRATION: CHILDREN

And every parent in the world understands this idea. Because children notoriously think they are more mature than they really are.

My four-year-old thinks she's mature. Right? She thinks she knows best. But if we'd let her, her maturity would lead her to:

- only eat sweets...
- and watch TV all day...
- and never go to bed...
- and wear princess dresses all day every day...
- and say incorrect things:
  - like she calls tomorrow 'nexterday'...
  - which is brilliant...but wrong.

But you just try to convince her that she's not mature...well, good luck!

And it's not just 4-year-olds! My 11-year-old nephew told me a couple weeks ago that he wants to grow up to either be a professional basketball player, or a professional scooter rider. To which I wanted to reply:

- "bro, I've seen you ball...and you're no Lebron!"
- And that other thing doesn't even exist!"

He's immature.

And it's not even just children: from the ages 13-23 I was convinced I was going to be a rock star. And listen,

- I'm leading worship next week,
- So, y'all can confirm...
- that was never gonna happen!

I'm immature in many ways.

## TRANSITION

So, Paul is saying,

- *“Hey, you’re supposed to be spiritual...*
- *cause you aren’t natural anymore...*
- *but the way you’re living...*
- *your behavior indicates that you are fleshly...*
- *you’re like babies!”*

But he goes on: verse 2

## 1 CORINTHIANS 3:2-3a

[2] I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, [3] for you are still of the flesh.

## EXPLAIN: MILK

So, this passage has often been mis-interpreted. So, let me tell you what it does NOT mean first, and then we’ll get to what it means.

Question:

- Did Paul intend to start them off with the message of the cross
- as some sort of elementary teaching,
- and then, after they grasped it, advance to deeper things?

Like, did he think that a person advanced

- beyond the simple message of Christ crucified
- to speaking in tongues,
- and performing healings,
- and experiencing heavenly visions and revelations?



The answer to those questions is a resounding ‘no’.

- Paul does not divide Christians up into lower-level beginners who need to be fed a diet of theological milk,
- and an upper-level elite who can receive advanced doctrine.

One commentator put it like this, and I agree:

*“The Corinthians failure to grow up is the result of their own inability to digest what he is offering them. The fact is that his meat does not differ from his milk. The fundamental contrast in Paul’s mind is not between two quite different diets which he has to offer, but between the true food of the Gospel with which he has fed them (whether milk or meat) and the synthetic substitutes which the Corinthians have preferred.”<sup>ii</sup>*

I think that’s a helpful interpretation.

- They don’t need different food...
- they need to digest what they’ve been given!

They don’t need a change of diet, but a change of perspective.<sup>iii</sup>

## **ILLUSTRATION: BREAST FEEDING**

And, the image here is striking. So, Paul planted this church in Corinth and then stayed there for a-year-and-a-half.

- So, he’s there, with
- this new batch of Christians for 18 months,
- and then he moves on to other churches.

But now he’s writing to the Corinthians

- after about 3 years of being away,

- and what he's hearing,
- is NOT that they've grown up and matured healthily...
- but rather, that even now they're behaving like babies!

I mean, it's graphic, but Paul is saying:

- *"You're 5-years-old..."*
- *And you still need to be breast-fed!?!"*
- That's just creepy and gross!

So, he says,

- *"you're still infants..."*
- *You're still of the flesh..."*

and then he goes on.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 3:3b-4**

For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? [4] For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

### **EXPLAIN**

Paul is pointing out clearly where the church was being fleshly.

- There is jealousy and strife going on.
- The opposite of the humility that
- Paul had previously referred to in this book.

They're behavior is self-centered,

- and self-indulgent,
- and self-sufficient.

- They're acting fleshly.
- They're acting like infants.
- They're acting humanly.
- They are not living the way they ought.

They've got a gym membership...

with no intention of ever going to work out.

## APPLICATION

Now, the text that we just read, isn't really that hard to understand.

- It's not cryptic.
- We don't need mega-bible scholars to explain it all to us.
- But I think it addresses a reality that we see HERE, today,
- just like was being seen in Corinth.

So, we have lots of people in churches today, even here at Fathom,

- and it's not as if there's some sort of hierarchy
- where some of you are super spiritual saints,
- and the rest of us are just serfs and peasants.
- There's no JV or Varsity when it comes to the Holy Spirit!

But there are some in here who are infants...and others who are more mature.

And listen, that's how it always should be. There should be some who are newer in their faith, and some who are more matured.

- But you should only be an infant for a season...
- because people things grow!

But some of you have been ‘saved’ for years, or decades...

- but you’re still acting fleshly...
- you’re behaving like an infant.
- And that’s not what God wants for you.

## ILLUSTRATION: SPHERES

So, this text isn’t difficult to understand, but it is more difficult to live.

Because for very many of us, myself included, it is often very easy to detach our spiritual lives from our every-day lives.

- You see, it’s really easy to compartmentalize my ‘Christian’ stuff
  - into one segment of my day or of my week,
- and then to have the rest of my life
  - detached from the Holy Spirit
  - for the remainder of my time.

Theologically, there are two terms for these realities.

First, there is what you believe. And we call that **SLIDE** ORTHODOXY.

- This is your theology,
- your doctrine.
- What you believe about God
- and the Bible
- and sin
- and salvation.
- Orthodoxy.

And then there's how you live, and that is called **SLIDE** ORTHOPRAXY.

- This is how you live.
- It's how you work,
- and how you play,
- and how you spend money,
- and how you spend time.

**ORTHODOXY: WHAT YOU BELIEVE.**

**ORTHOPRAXY: HOW YOU LIVE.**

And the reality is that God wants these two spheres to **SLIDE** perfectly overlap.

- Maturity is when the sphere of orthodoxy
- matches up with the sphere of orthopraxy.
- The perfectly mature person would have these line up perfectly.

But the reality is that most of us have more of a **SLIDE** Venn Diagram going on here.

- Where there might be some overlap...
- but much of what you believe
- has no bearing on how you live.

And that's the problem.

- How much your spheres overlap is how mature you are.
- And the spaces where these spheres don't overlap,
- is what we call hypocrisy:
  - believing one thing
  - and living out something else.

And I talk to loads of people who express

- that they're unhappy in their faith.
- Or they feel disconnected from God.
- *Why don't I hear God's voice?*
- *Why don't I feel the Spirit?*
- *Why am I not growing at all?*

*"Because your spheres are out of line! You're believing one thing, and living another thing entirely."*

And that misalignment...

- Is what is holding many of you back in infancy.
- It's keeping you fleshly.
- It's keeping you from growing and developing and maturing.

## **APPLICATION: HOPE**

**BLANK SLIDE** So, let me throw something at you that I believe will turn this rebuke into hope: **God will never allow his children to permanently stay in a place where they are fleshly.**

- If you are God's child...
- if you are spiritual...
- if you are saved...
- then God might let you struggle...
- he might let you fall...
- but he will never allow you
- to permanently stay where you are.

Now, that's assuming you are genuinely saved, ok?

- But if you are his child...
- he will not let you stay there.
- Goodness, we say it here all the time:
- **but it's ok not to be ok...it's just not ok to stay there.**

And I believe that's the hope in this passage coming in the form of rebuke.

### **EXPLAIN: HOW?**

Now, how does God do that?

How does God NOT ALLOW us to stay permanently in our flesh?

Well, we call this the sanctification process, and we talk about that a lot here at Fathom, but let me suggest how God normally pushes us away from infancy to maturity by quoting C.S. Lewis.

**SLIDE** *"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."* – C.S. Lewis – The Problem of Pain

So, I think that quote is a helpful tool for thinking about how God moves us

- away from infancy...
- away from fleshy living...
- and towards maturity.

## WHISPER

First, he **SLIDE WHISPERS** to us in our pleasures. Right?

- So, when we see a beautiful sunset...
  - and post a thousand pics on Insta, right?
  - But when the beauty of creation just causes you to worship.
  - That's a whisper.
- Or when you've had a wonderful conversation
  - with a close friend.
  - That's a whisper.
- Or you finish a good book.
- Or you drink a great cup of coffee.
- Or you get that last bite of the perfect Chipotle burrito:
  - just all the flavors marinating together
  - in that last, juicy bite.
  - Oh man!
  - Whispers!

To the spiritual person, those are moments of God whispering to us in our pleasures.



## **SPEAKS**

But then, God also **SLIDE SPEAKS** in our consciences. And God primarily does this through his Word.

- He'll speak to you.
- He'll talk to you.
- Maybe not in an audible voice from heaven.
- But he'll speak to your conscience through his Word.

So, what does God do when you've got sin in your life that he wants to rid you of?

He'll speak to you through his Word. He'll convict your heart.

- It could be through a sermon.
- It could be through a passage you've read.
- It could be a conversation with a friend where a passage is brought up.
- It could be through just the everyday feeling of conviction that accompanies all hypocrisy.

God speaks in our consciences through his Word!

## **TRANSITION**

- But what happens when we ignore the whispers?
- What happens when we write off God's Word to our consciences?
  - Both of which, I am very good at, by the way.
- What happens?

Well, Hebrews 12 says this:

## **SLIDE HEBREWS 12:5–6**

[5] And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reproved by him.

[6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

## **SHOUT**

When we ignore God’s whispers, and God’s Word, he begins to

### **SLIDE SHOUT.**

- He brings discipline...to correct you.
- He brings trials...to bring mature you.
- He brings you into the desert...to win your heart.

Now, not every suffering is a result of you NOT listening...but some are!

## **APPLICATION**

And if this is where you are today, Christian...

- if you are fleshly...
- God is not ok with that,
- and he will not let you stay there.
- Why?
- The Lord disciplines the one he loves.
- HE LOVES YOU!
- And he WILL do whatever it takes!

*He shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.*

Suffering will bring into sharp clarity and focus the application of God's Word in your life.

- And if God's whispers
  - and God's speaking to you
  - will not call you into holiness
  - then God will mature you through pain.
- 
- If it's your mouth that speaks negativity and gossip.
  - If it's your mind that looks and lusts for sexual experiences.
  - If it's your heart where pride and jealousy are rampant.
  - If it's your addiction to that thing that numbs out your misery.

I DO NOT CARE WHAT IT IS...

- if you will not be matured by God's whispers or words...
- he will grow you in suffering.

Why? Back to 1 Corinthians 3:1 - But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants [what are those next two words?] in Christ.

- You are his!
- You are in Christ!
- And he will stop at NOTHING to mature you.

That's the hope that is found in this rebuke.

If you are in Christ...he will finish the good work he started in you.

## ILLUSTRATION: KIDDIE POOL

So, let me end with this: Maryse and I renovated a house in a new neighborhood last year, and in our neighborhood there's a community pool.

- So, we got a pool membership,
- and last summer we went there often,
- and Harper took swim lessons,
- it was a blast.

Now, at the pool, there's a full-sized pool with a slide and a diving board and a deep end and all that.

But then, there's also a little gated section with a smaller pool... it's the kiddie pool.

- And the kiddie pool isn't as deep.
  - Like, the water only came up to Harper's chest.
- And the water was much warmer than the main pool...
  - I mean creepily warm...
  - A bunch of potty-training toddlers...
  - in a small body of water...
  - you do the math.

But we would take Harper, and she loved the kiddie pool.

- And so, we'd sit on the side and soak our feet,
- or sometimes I'd get down in the kiddie pool with her.
- And we'd play and splash. It was great.

But you know why it was great? BECAUSE SHE WAS THREE.

It would have been a totally different if I went there by myself...

- hairy dude in his 30s...
- wearing water wings...
- just soaking in the warm shallows of the kiddie pool!
- Like, call the cops or something.
- Something has gone wrong
- when the bearded creeper
- is hanging out in the kiddie pool.

## **CONCLUSION: APPLICATION**

Where are you at today?

- Are you an adult in the kiddie pool?
- You got a gym membership and never go?
- Are you fleshly in some sin in your life?
- Are you still sucking on a bottle
  - when you should be eating meat?
- Are your orthodoxy and your orthopraxy out of alignment?

If so...I'm pleading with you.

- Heed the whisper of God.
- Heed the Word of God for you today.
- And if you won't...
- he will raise his voice...
- because he loves you.

Let's pray

## COMMUNION

We respond in 4 ways:

- Communion
- Tithes & offerings
- Prayer
- Singing

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.realbuzz.com/articles-interests/fitness/article/9-surprising-gym-statistics/>

<sup>ii</sup> Hooker, M.D. *Hard Sayings: 1 Cor. 3.2.*

<sup>iii</sup> Fee, G. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians.*