

# Series: Together Toward Maturity

Inductive Bible Study Guide: 1 Corinthians 3:16-23



---

## Step 1: Observation – What does the passage say?

Read **1 Corinthians 3:16-23** slowly and carefully, more than once. Let yourself really see what's there before trying to interpret it.

### Observation Prompts:

- What questions does Paul ask?
- What metaphors or truths are being revealed?
- What warnings or commands are given?
- What does this passage say about God's temple and wisdom?

---

**What does Paul say about God's temple in verse 16? Who is he referring to?**

---

---

**What warning is given in verse 17? Why is this so serious?**

---

---

**What is said about wisdom in verses 18–20?**

---

---

**How does Paul describe God's view of worldly wisdom?**

---

---

**What final command does Paul give in verses 21–23? What reason does he give?**

---

---

---

## Step 2: Interpretation – What does the passage mean?

Now we explore what this passage means in context. Paul is still addressing divisions in the church and helping them understand what it means to live in light of the gospel—not in human pride or status.

### Context:

Paul has just finished talking about how every believer is building something on the foundation of Jesus. Now, he expands that idea to God’s temple — the local church body — and challenges the Corinthians to see themselves as holy, set apart, and not to be fooled by worldly thinking.

---

### Questions to Explore:

What does it mean that “you are God’s temple”? (v.16)

How does this change how we view the Church and our relationships within it?

---

---

---

---

Why does Paul say “God’s temple is holy—and you are that temple”? (v.17)

What does this imply about how we treat the church and each other?

---

---

---

---

What does Paul mean when he says “let no one deceive himself”? (v.18)  
What kind of deception is he referring to?

---

---

---

---

Why is “the wisdom of this world” considered foolishness to God? (vv.19–20)

---

---

---

---

How does Paul shift their perspective in verses 21–23?  
What does it mean that “all things are yours,” and that we “belong to Christ”?

---

---

---

---

---

### Word Study Suggestions:

- Temple (v.16): Greek *naos* — the inner sanctuary, where God’s presence dwells.
- Destroys (v.17): Greek *phtheirō* — to corrupt, ruin, or defile.
- Deceive (v.18): Greek *exapatāō* — to seduce, mislead, or fool completely.
- Wise in this age (v.18): refers to worldly systems, philosophy, or influence that are detached from God's truth.

---

## Step 3: Application – How should I respond?

Paul's words are a strong reminder that we belong to God, both individually and collectively. The church is not a place to elevate human leaders or wisdom—it is God's holy temple, and we are called to walk humbly and wisely in light of that.

---

### Personal Reflection:

Do I see my church community as sacred and holy? How does that impact how I speak, serve, and relate to others?

---

---

---

---

Have I been influenced more by the world's wisdom or God's truth?

---

---

---

---

In what ways might I be “deceiving myself” when it comes to how I view success, influence, or knowledge?

---

---

---

---

Am I still holding on to pride or favoritism when it comes to church leaders or personalities?

---

---

---

How can I live this week as someone who “belongs to Christ”?

---

---

---

**Summary Truths:**

- The church (body of Christ) is God’s temple — His Spirit lives among us.
- Destroying unity in the body is a serious offense to God.
- Worldly wisdom is foolishness to God — we must not be deceived by it.
- We belong to Christ — and that identity should shape everything we do.

---

**Optional Memory Verse:**

*“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”*  
— 1 Corinthians 3:16 (ESV)

---

**Prayer Prompt:**

“Lord, help me see Your Church the way You do. Teach me to live in a way that honors Your presence among us. Strip away any pride, division, or worldly thinking in me. I belong to You—may my life reflect that.”

---

**For Further Study:**

- Ephesians 2:19–22 — The church as God’s dwelling place
- Romans 12:3 — Thinking with sober judgment, not pride
- James 3:13–18 — Wisdom from above vs. wisdom from below