

The Role of Church Leaders

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 June 2024

Preacher: Kevin Murphy

[0 : 00] We're reading from 1 Corinthians 3, 1 and chapter 4 to 2, 1 to 2. But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in human way?

For when one says, I follow Paul, and another, I follow Apollos, are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul?

Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

[1 : 12] 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, for no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 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.

If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

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

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, for the wisdom of this world is folly with God.

[2 : 30] For it is written, He catches the wise in their craftiness, and again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile. So let no one boast in men, for all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world, or life or death, death, or the present or the future.

All are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Chapter 4. This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. This is the word of God. Okay, thank you, Zoe. Let me pray for us very briefly, and then we'll dive in.

Father, as we come to your word, we want to hear you speaking to us. We want to know what's on your heart and your mind. We want to be a church that is formed by you and your word. So come and speak to us, I pray, Lord.

God, if anything that I say is not of you, God, we pray it will just fall away. We want to hear your word to us today. And so speak to us, I pray, in your great name. Amen.

[3 : 42] Okay, I think that it's time that I was given an upgraded title. If you know my email signature, at the bottom, the title says Pastor.

But I think Pastor is not very impressive, not very noteworthy. And so I'm putting in an application for an upgrade. And I was thinking of something like Lead Visionary Apostle of Watermark Church. And while we're at it, I think we should just change the name to maybe Watermark Ministries International. Senior Visionary Apostle of Watermark Ministries International. What do you think? Yay? Nay? Okay, I can hear some nervous laughter. If that's a little bit excessive, maybe we can negotiate. I'm okay to settle on something like just Senior Chief Apostle of Watermark Ministries.

Or Lead Prophetic Voice. Or Senior Evangelist Apostle of Watermark Ministries. Or Lead Apostolic Evangelist.

[4 : 43] Or we can go on and on and on. Chief Senior Pastor, Chief Apostle, etc., etc. Now we may think such names are ridiculous. And they are.

And just by the way, that's a joke. We don't need to change our name. Don't worry about that. But all around the world, churches are filled with leaders that have given themselves these ridiculous titles.

Why is that? Why do we do that? Well, one of the reasons is pastors are typically very insecure. And we need to find a way to bolster ourselves, to lift ourselves up.

We need to find something to grab onto, to make ourselves feel more powerful, more secure, more authoritative, more respected. But I think one of the real questions is, why do churches fall for it?

I mean, it's one thing to have pastors that give themselves these crazy titles. But why do people in the church actually support that? Why doesn't anybody say, this is ridiculous? And what happens when there's disagreements?

[5 : 45] What happens when Chief Senior Apostle has a power struggle with Chief Senior Prophet, right? Then who's going to win? I read a story recently of a church in South Africa, earlier this year, where the police had to be called into the church service, because there was a fist fight on stage between the two pastors.

This group in the church had a problem with this group, and this group didn't want these guys preaching, and this group thought there's no ways we're going to let these guys preach, and so they're having a fist fight on stage, and the police had to be called in to separate them.

Friends, what happens when there's power struggles, and there's fights, and there's divisions in the church? Well, as we've been reading the book of Corinthians, we see that something like this, maybe not to that same degree, is happening in the church in Corinth.

The church of Corinth is full of divisions, and factions, and fightings, and there's this group over here, and they like this leader, and there's this group over here, and they like this leader, and they can't get along.

And we know one of the reasons for this is because in the ancient city of Corinth, there is the cultural idea of patronage. We spoke about this a few weeks ago, where members of society would attach themselves to someone in society that had status or position or power.

[7 : 06] They were called a patron, and so you as a member of society would follow them, and devote yourself to them, and attach yourself to them, and say, I belong to this member of society. I belong to Ed, or Oscar, or Tiffany, right?

And now because I belong to Tiffany, I get given status and power because I attach myself to this patron. And so that's what's happening in the church of Corinth.

This thinking has come into the church, and so these members are looking to various leaders, those that are impressive or powerful or have high status, and they're saying, I belong to this leader.

I'm Paul's man. I'm Apollos' man. I'm Peter's man. And by doing that, they seem it's a way of raising their own status, their own position, their own power in the church.

And so that's what's going on in this chapter again. And so in our passage today, Paul wants to do three things. He wants to show them that their thinking is deeply problematic. He says there's a problem here.

[8 : 04] He wants to show them how to think about church leaders. And then thirdly, he's going to show them who do we really belong to? Who do you really belong to? If you're a Christian, who do you belong to?

Okay, so let's dive in. So the first one, what's the problem with their thinking? Look at verse 1 to 4 with me of your passage. He says this, Now I, brothers and sisters, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now, you're still not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife amongst you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

For when one says, I follow Paul, and another says, I follow Apollos, are you not being merely human? Okay, so what's the problem here in the church? The problem is there's spiritual immaturity, right?

That they are like spiritual babies in Christ. He says to him, you're infants in Christ. You're still babies in your faith. And why does he say that? Because their thinking, their actions, their behavior, in fact, their heart attitude, doesn't correspond with how God wants him to behave, but with the thinking of the world, what he calls the flesh.

[9 : 26] He says, you're not of God's spirit, you're of the flesh. Okay? And so he says, being of the flesh means our sinful nature, our fallen nature, our selfish desires.

So he says, you guys are not spiritually mature, you're spiritually babies, because you're still acting, behaving like you did before you were Christians. Now this would have been hugely offensive to the Corinthians, because they thought of themselves as very spiritually mature.

Because in their church services, there was lots of spiritual things going on. So there were spiritual gifts, there's this person has a word of knowledge, and this person's interpreting, and this person's praying in tongues, and this person has a prophetic word.

There's lots of spiritual activity, and they thought of themselves, look how spiritually mature we are. Look how wise we are, sophisticated. We are so spiritually mature. Look how God is using us.

And Paul says, actually, just look at your conduct. Look at your relationship. Look at your heart.

Look at the jealousy, and the strife, and the fighting, and the conflict that's going on.

[10 : 27] You guys are babies. You're not mature at all. I could not address you as spiritual people, as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. Now here we learn a very important lesson.

And the lesson is this. Spiritual maturity is never defined by how long you've been a Christian, or how busy you are with Christian activity, or how much you know in your head.

It's almost always defined by the condition of your heart. But how much you are surrendered to Christ, and how Christ and the gospel is shaping your life, so that you start to live, and act, and behave, and think like Jesus.

So some people have been Christians for 30, 40 years, or very busy with church activity, or know a lot of things in their mind, but actually they're still babies in Christ.

They're still spiritually infants, immature. And Paul says, maturity is not defined by those things. It's by how much your heart is shaped by Christ, so that you start to live like Him, and think like Him, and act like Him.

[11 : 35] And so here's the problem. And even though these Corinthians think that they're very impressive, actually their faith is immature, because it's leading to all sorts of divisions, and conflicts, and fighting.

And so look at what Paul says at the bottom. Look at verse 18 at the end. He says, If anyone amongst you thinks that he's wise in this age, according to thinking of this generation, let him become a fool, that he may become truly wise, for the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God.

So Paul's showing them that their thinking is upside down, right? They think they're smart, but actually they're unimpressive. So then he wants to say, Okay, well if that's the problem, how should we think about church leaders?

Okay? And here he's going to say two things. First thing he says is this, church leaders are not all that impressive. Okay? So remember they're saying, Paul's impressive.

No, Paulus is impressive. No, I think Peter's impressive. And he says, No, they're actually not that impressive. Look at what he says here at verse 5. He says, What then is Apollos? What then is Paul?

[12 : 40] Who is Kevin anyway? Okay? That's a great question. How should we think about these church leaders and pastors? Well, he tells us, Servants, that's who they are. Servants through whom you believed, and as the Lord assigned.

I, Paul, planted the seed of the gospel. Apollos watered it. But God gave the growth. So, neither he who plants, nor he who waters, is anything.

But God gives the growth. Okay? So sometimes, people look at pastors, and they think, Okay, those are special people. They've got some kind of special power, some kind of special connection to God.

And if I can align myself with them, or get them to pray for me, or bless me, then I'm, you know, God's going to really bless me. So, this happens from time to time.

People sometimes come to me after the service, and say, Okay, my child's got some big exams, and I really need them to get into that Ivy League university. Please will you pray for them?

[13 : 42] Okay? I need you to pray. And this will happen three, four weeks in a row, right? Please pray a special prayer for my child. And the thinking is, Okay, I as a normal Christian, I can't pray for them.

But you, you the pastor, you've got a special connection. Your prayers are more powerful than mine. Right? Do you see what I'm saying? And Paul says, No, no, no. Who are we?

We are merely servants. Servants through whom you believed. Look what Paul says. He says, I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but where does the power lie?

Where does the growth happen? Where does, what actually causes change in anybody's life? It's God. God is the one who brings about the growth. God is the one who, who changes lives.

God by his spirit is the one who renews us, and restores us, and heals us, and redeems us, and changes us. God is the one who saves us.

[14 : 39] Any real life will change your spiritual power in your life, it's not because the leaders have got power that we lay our hands on you, and now there's supernatural power. No, it's God that does it. The leaders job is just servants, right?

It's God's spirit who reveals the gospel, as Neil's told us last week. It's God's spirit who opens our eyes to understand the gospel. It's God's spirit that changes our lives, and leads us to repentance. Neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything. It's God who brings the change. And so the Corinthians are saying, I belong to Paul, I belong to Apollos, as a means of elevating their status, of somehow attaining some kind of power or authority.

And Paul says, who are we anyway? We're nothing. We're nothing. We're just servants. In fact, look at what he says in verse 9. I love this.

He says, for we, he's talking about the apostles, we are workers, but you, you are God's field. You are God's building. I think that's amazing.

[15 : 43] He says, who are we the leaders? Well, we're like farm laborers. We're construction workers, right? But you guys, you are really the impressive one. So think about this, okay?

Think about what is the most impressive building in Hong Kong. Okay, I'll tell you the answer. It's Bank of China, right? If you work for another bank, sorry to disappoint you.

Bank of China, most impressive building in Hong Kong, right? I mean, every, every skyline picture, if someone's going to draw the skyline of Hong Kong, what is the one building that must be there? It's the Bank of China building, okay? And the Admiralty. It's so iconic. It's amazing. We all know who designed it, right? Who was the architect behind it?

I. M. Pei, the great Chinese American architect, but here's the question. Does anybody know the builders that actually worked on the construction site? Anybody know the laborers, construction workers?

[16 : 42] Anyone know who drove the concrete mixer, or, you know, put up that panel of glass, or actually did any of the actual work? Nobody knows them.

And it was built 35 years ago. Presumably, many of those workers have actually died. Anybody see all their names in the newspaper? Saying, oh, we mourn the loss of this great construction worker, who, you know, worked on the building.

Anyone, any government official announced the death of some poor construction worker? No.

Nobody knows who they were. Nobody cares about them. They were just laborers, right?

But the building, that's impressive. Here's the point, right? The designer, the architect, we all know who he was. He gets on it. It was his idea.

He's someone special. But the workers, the builders, the laborers, nobody cares about them.

Nobody stands on the foreshore of TST, and looks across the harbor, and sees the building lit up, and thinks, wow, those workers are amazing.

[17 : 44] Nobody does that. And the point is this. The building doesn't exist to make the workers look good. The workers exist to make the building look good.

Okay? Now, what does Paul say here? He says, we, we, we're the leaders. We're just workers.

We're just workers. But you, you are God's building. You're the one that people must look at and say, look at how amazing God is.

Oh, and for us, we will just fade in the background. Who cares about us? But when people look at the church, people should say, wow, God is amazing. Look at what he's done with those people. We'll take another example.

Vineyards, right? Think of those, those French vineyards, grow the most amazing wine, that sells for crazy amounts of money. Okay, maybe you know who's the, the head winemaker. Okay, he's famous, right? Or she's famous. But anybody know who the, the workers are, the famous farm laborers? Nobody cares about them. Because their job isn't to look impressive, it's to make impressive wine.

[18 : 44] Look what Paul says. We are workers, we are laborers, we're nothing special. God is where the power lies. Verse seven. So neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything.

It's God who gives the growth. So leaders are not that impressive, right? But then, maybe, maybe I'm, maybe I'm pushing it a bit too far. Because on the one hand, leaders are not that impressive, they're almost like nothing.

But on the other hand, Paul says, but they're not quite nothing, because actually, they're not unimportant. The leaders, and their job, is very important, because how they build, has a very important, has important implications.

Right? So again, think of the building, right? The laborers and the builders, on the Bank of China building. Okay? Even though nobody knows, who they were, nobody, can you hear?

Yeah? Nobody remembers their name, just think how important, their job is. Just think if, one of them cuts the corners, or decides to buy cheap materials. Or, they look at this wall, and they think, that wall looks a little bit skew, but, ah, it doesn't matter, no one will notice.

[19 : 52] Or, they get a supply of bolts, that come in, right? And they think, we may not use bolts, that are this long, these bolts are only this long. Ah, it doesn't matter, no one's really going to notice, it's behind the facade anyway.

What's going to happen? It's going to be a catastrophe, right? When that building is tested, when a typhoon comes, or, okay, we don't have earthquakes, imagine we have earthquakes, what's going to happen?

It's going to be a disaster, and people's lives, are going to be in real danger. And so, the same is true for the church. Church leaders are not everything, in some ways, they're almost nothing, but they're not quite nothing, because their job is very important.

And how they go about their work, has various serious consequences. So, look at what Paul says in verse 10. He says, according to the grace of God, that was given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation.

And someone else, is now building upon it. So, take care, let each one take care, how he builds upon it. Verse 12. Now, if anyone built on that foundation, with gold, or silver, or precious stones, or wood, or hay, or straw, each one's work, will become manifest, revealed.

[21 : 04] For the day of Christ, will disclose it. Because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test, what sort of work it is. So, he's saying, ministry leaders, all their work, is going to be tested.

And it might be proven, to all be in vain. It might look good, it might look impressive, but one day, it's going to be exposed. And then, you're going to see, how important it really was.

In fact, he actually says, it's more serious, because, look at verse 16. He says, the stakes get higher and higher. Do you not know that you, that word you, is plural, not singular.

So, you all, are God's temple, and God's spirit dwells within you, okay, within us as the church. We are God's temple. If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.

For God's temple, the church, is holy, and you are that temple. So, he's saying, leaders who build towards themselves, who think and act, according to their sinful nature, according to worldly wisdom, according to what makes them look good, or impressive.

[22 : 09] He says, not only are they going to build a monument, to their own futility, actually, one day, they're going to find themselves, at enmity with God. Because they, they're going to build in a way, that's going to come crumbling down, and they're going to have to answer, to God himself.

And so, leaders are not everything, almost nothing, but not unimportant. And so, the question is this, how, how should we build church?

What makes a strong, and healthy church? Well, how do we not, how do we build the kind of church, that can stand, what do the Corinthians need, to think, so that the church won't get blown over, when difficulty comes, but it can stand, not only external pressure, and persecution, and opposition, but internal division, and conflict?

How do we, build the church, so that not only, can we stand outside pressures, but internal, sinful nature, and immaturity, and conflict, and division? Well, look at what he says, look at verse 10.

He says, I laid a foundation, and now someone else, is building upon it. Let each take care, how he builds, verse 11, for no one, can lay a foundation, other than that, which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

[23 : 26] Paul says, this is the foundation. It's like, he's mapping out the building, and he's saying, I laid the foundation, I came with the message of Christ, and the gospel, I came to tell you about Jesus, and don't think, okay, now we can move on from there, now let's go build over here.

Okay, that was elementary, that was good to get us going, now let's, let's move on to more important things. He says, no, no, no, no, this is, these are the boundary lines, this is the cornerstone, build on this, and nothing else, on Christ, and the message, of the gospel.

The message that Jesus, is God in human form, who came to, die on the cross, to, rescue, and forgive sinners like us, like me, like you, that Jesus came to, forgive us, and to restore us, and to, bring us back, into relationship with him.

That message, building on that, and remembering that, that's how the church, withstands, trials, and challenges, and difficulties, how the gospel, shapes the church.

And so, remember, at the end of chapter 2, Paul writes, and he says, he says, brothers, when I came to you, proclaiming the testimony of God, I didn't come with, lofty speech, or eloquent words, I decided to forget, about everything else, except, Jesus Christ, and him, crucified.

[24 : 48] This is, what the church stands on. Stands and falls on, this conviction, this message. See, the background here is, the church in Corinth, is having conflict with Paul.

And, some people in the church, are saying, you know that Paul guy, ah, let's move on from him, right? He's not such a good speaker, he's a bit slow, and he's not that smart.

Let's move on, let's move on to other guys. Apollos, he's a far more eloquent speaker. And some people in the church, are saying, no, no, Paul planted the church, we can't just abandon him now, and that's causing the division, right?

So, some people want to forget about Paul, and others want to stick with him. And Paul is saying this, he's saying, you can move on to other people, that are far more eloquent than me, far more smarter than me, far more brilliant than me, far more easy to listen to, but you will never find somebody, that will preach a better gospel than me.

You'll never find anybody, that could build more solidly, because what have I done? I've built on Christ. There's a funny story, Charles Spurgeon, greatest preacher 200 years ago, he was a young pastor, right?

[26 : 03] So in his 20s, he was a pastor's church, and one day, he walks into the prayer meeting at church, and his grandfather, is leading the prayer meeting. And so he walks in, and just as the prayer meeting is starting, and his grandfather from the stage says, ah, here is my son, here is my grandson, Charles Spurgeon.

He says, he can preach better than me, but he will never preach a better gospel than me, right? And it's a funny little story, but it's so true. You can get guys that preach way better, I mean, let's just be honest, right?

Okay, you are stuck with me and Niels. Sorry, okay? I'm telling you now, you can find a hundred people in Hong Kong, that will preach better than us. That's true. You will never find anyone, that can preach a better gospel.

Not because I preach well, but because the message, Christ and Christ crucified. And that's what Paul says, he says, okay, fine, Apollos, yeah, he's a better speaker than me. Sure, you can go with him.

But there's one thing I want to ask of you. One thing, is he going to tell you about Jesus? And if he is, okay, great. If he's not, you're building a shaky foundation. And so friends, here's the point.

[27 : 11] What makes a church good, or strong, or healthy, or mature, is not how eloquent the speakers are, how dynamic, or popular, or funny, or wince-en they are. The question is, what are they building on?

And what are they pointing us towards? Are they building, are they pointing us towards Christ and the gospel, or are they drawing people towards themselves? Are they building on the message, are they reminding us that Christ and Christ alone is our only hope in life and death?

Or are they appealing to the wisdom of this world, and the thinking of this age? Are they trying to be wise or impressive according to world standards? Or are they trusting in Christ and the Bible?

Are they teaching us God's word, knowing that God's word and God's spirit work together? Or are they teaching us their own ideas, the wisdom of this world? Friends, are they calling us out of spiritual immaturity to maturity by saying, focus on Christ?

Are they unifying us around Jesus and the gospel? Or are they sowing division by thinking worldly thinking? And so how should we think about church leaders? Well, on the one hand, they're not that special.

[28 : 21] They're just farm laborers. They're construction workers. Who cares about them? But on the other hand, they're not unimportant, because the consequence of their work and how they build has serious implications.

Okay, so, what are the implications of this? Well, let me just give us three brief implications. The first one is this. don't idolize your leaders, but do choose your leaders wisely.

Okay, and this is especially for the youth. Okay, it's true for all of us. At some stage, you may move overseas. Maybe your company relocates you to Singapore, or Australia, or Canada.

Okay, and just by the way, if that ever happens, you have to come and ask our permission, because we don't release you easily. Okay, that's a joke. That's a joke. But let's say you've got to move overseas, and you've got to find a church.

Or let's say you're in high school, and you're about to graduate, and you're going to go to uni somewhere overseas, and your first month, you're going to choose a church. What are the criteria? How are you going to choose a church?

[29 : 23] Friends, this is what Corinthians tells us. Don't idolize your leaders. They might not be that impressive. But find a church that will tell you about Jesus. That will week in, and week out, remind you again, and again, and again, your hope in life and death, and in this world, is Christ alone.

And maybe the music's not that great, and the hall's not that great. That's fine. Don't worry about that. But week in, and week out, they're going to say, don't look at me. Look to Christ.

Christ is enough. Don't idolize your leaders, but choose your leaders well. Here's the second thing. For those of us who are leaders, or aspire to be leaders, maybe you're a CG leader, or you're a deacon, or you're a missionary, or maybe you want to be a pastor one day, or you want to be a church planter, here's the question.

What is the fruit of your ministry? How mature are the people in your CG at the moment? In your CG, do you dispense worldly wisdom, or are you pointing people to Christ and the gospel, and the word?

Are people in your CG growing? Are they developing spiritual maturity? Are you as a leader, pointing them towards yourself, or towards Christ? Here's the third question.

[30 : 37] Maybe you are someone that's been hurt by church before. Maybe you've been mistreated by church leaders in the past, and you struggle to trust church leaders. Oh man, that is way too common, right?

What would Paul say to us? I think Paul would say something like this. He'd say, the church that you're attending, are those leaders building towards themselves?

Are they asking you to be more devoted, more disciplined, to give more to the church, and the church leaders? Are they asking you to serve the church leaders, and their little kingdom, or their endeavor?

Or are they pointing away from themselves, and say, don't look to me, look to Christ? If they are building towards their own kingdom, be very wary, because they will take advantage of you.

And when their kingdom comes crumbling down, they will abuse you, and blame you. But if they are able to say, don't look to me, look to Jesus, maybe, those leaders, you can let them serve you, by pointing you to Christ.

[31 : 41] In other words, leaders are always tempted, to build their own kingdom. That's a very shaky foundation. But if they want to serve you, by praying for you, and pointing you towards Christ, maybe let them do that, because that's how spiritual maturity takes place.

Okay. Are you tracking with me? Okay. So Paul's doing three things. He wants to help them expose their wrong thinking. Secondly, he wants to help them think about church leaders. Third thing is this. He wants to show us who we belong to. Okay. I said reorganization, organize the chart org, but let's think about this way. He wants to show us who we really belong to. This will be quick.

Look at verse 21 with me. Paul says this. Let no one boast in men, for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, the present, or the future, all things belong to you.

And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Remember the Corinthians, what are they saying? They're saying, I belong to Paul. I belong to Apollos.

[32 : 46] I belong to Cephas. And Paul says, no, you don't. You belong to Christ. We, the leaders, belong to you. You don't belong to us. You belong to Jesus.

We are merely servants who belong to you to help you hold on to Christ. So, they try to hold on to all these leaders, and they're finding their identity, by which leader they're attached to.

And he says, drop the leaders. Your identity is found in the fact that you belong to Jesus. If you're a Christian, who do you belong to?

You don't belong to Watermark Church. You don't belong to me or anyone else. You belong to Christ. Your life is secure in Christ. Christ is holding on to you. And friends, insecure people are often looking around for something else to prop up their ego, to prop them up, to give them a sense of security.

Paul says, don't look around. Look up. Look up. And who do you belong to? The one who died on the cross for you. The one who went through hell for you, and has risen, and will live for all eternity.

[33 : 55] Jesse, maybe we can get the chart up here. Friends, many people think that the structure of the church looks something like this, right? So you've got Jesus at the top, and then just under Jesus, you have the leader, and then under the leaders, you have the congregation.

And the congregation serve the leaders, and the leaders serve Jesus. Well, this is what Paul's actually saying. He's saying, no, there's Jesus at the top. Okay, we've got the next one. You've got Jesus at the top, and you've got the church.

And the church belongs to Jesus. And underneath the congregation, you've got these servants. And their job is to help the congregation hold on to Jesus. You don't belong to us.

We belong to you. You belong to Jesus. Friends, if you're in Christ, you have everything you need. So abandon the petty tribal differences, the arguments, the jealousies.

Throw yourself into Christ. Christ is all you need, and you have him. So friends, what should my email signature be? Should we change it? Let's go for an upgrade.

[34 : 57] How about chief servant? Senior laborer. Senior construction worker. Maybe lead nobody. Friends, don't idolize Christian leaders.

They're nothing but servants. But maybe let's not ignore them. Let's let them serve us by pointing us to Christ again, and again, and again, and reminding us where our hope really lies.

Let's pray together. In fact, maybe before we pray, we can reflect on two questions. I think Jesse, we've got them up there. Let's take a minute just to reflect on these questions.

What is God saying to us this morning? What is God saying to you? And then what does it look like to respond in faith? And the reason we ask these questions is we don't just want to fill our minds with information.

Okay, we know what 1 Corinthians 3 says. We actually want to respond in faith. That's how we grow from our minds to our hearts. And so, what is God saying to us? What does it look like for each one of us to respond to this in faith?

[36 : 08] Let's pray.

Father God, we come before you this morning and we're thankful for your word, God. Your word is so good. It's so clarifying. God, I would never have thought of coming up with these thoughts or arguments on my own, but your word speaks to us.

God, I want to pray for us as a church. Won't you help us to be the kind of church that Paul describes here that you want us to be? God, not impress with leaders, not trying to idolize leaders, not putting anybody on a pedestal, remembering that everything we have, everything we have, everything we need is in Christ and to hold on to Christ.

God, I pray for our youth. I pray for our high schoolers, those who maybe in coming years will maybe leave Hong Kong, go off to uni somewhere else. Maybe they'll go to university here in Hong Kong.

God, we pray that for those of us that need to move somewhere, relocate, help us to find a church. But more than that, God, help us at Watermark to be such a church. We've got the only name that's the only name that we revere and look up to and regard or have any interest in is the name of

Jesus.

[37 : 41] And God, we pray that by your spirit you will do a work in our hearts. Help us to be a mature church of mature believers whose lives are changing and being conformed to the image of Christ.

Help us, I pray in your wonderful and gracious name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.