

**Message #12****I Corinthians 3:5-9**

There are some people and there are some churches who want to debate with God and His Word. There are those who are stubborn, proud, arrogant and ignorant and think arguing in the church is something that pleases God. It was exactly that way in Corinth.

The Corinthians were truly God's people and the Corinthian Church was a true church of God. But the Corinthians had many problems and instead of being spiritual, they were carnal. One of the areas of debate which was splitting the church was in that of the minister. The Corinthians were in heated arguments over who was the best minister.

**GOD WANTS HIS CHURCH TO UNDERSTAND THE PLACE OF MINISTERS, OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS CHURCH IN HIS MINISTRY.**

Ministry is God's ministry. Ministers are God's men. People are God's people. Growth is God's growth. Callings are God's callings. Every minister and every believer has an important role to play in the program of God, but IT IS God's program.

**CONCEPT #1** – The responsibilities of the minister in ministry. **3:5-7**

You will notice that **verse 5** begins with the pronoun “what,” or some texts have the pronoun “who.”

The pronoun “what” refers to the function of a minister and the pronoun “who” refers to the identification of the minister.

To simply state the point, the opening pronoun asks the question “Who are ministers and what do they do?”

**Fact #1** – A minister is one who ministers for God in serving Him. **3:5a, 9a**

The term “servant” is the Greek word which is sometimes translated deacon. In this context it IS NOT referring to a minister's office, but to a minister's service. The word itself is one that emphasizes one who is an attendant, one who is a servant worker for God.

Paul uses this word “servant” many times in connection with ministry. He taught that ministry was an enablement of God (I Tim. 1:12a). He taught that ministry was an entrustment for faithfulness (I Tim. 1:12b). He taught that ministry was an appointment by God (I Tim. 1:12c). He taught that ministry was for the purpose of communicating God's truth (Col. 1:23). The term “fellow worker” is one that refers to one's work, one's employment, one's task being that of working for God and with God.

**Fact #2** – A minister is one who ministers for God in developing faith. **3:5b**

Ministry is about proclaiming the Word of God so that God can produce faith in people.

**Fact #3** – A minister is one who ministers for God in cultivating people. **3:6**

Paul chooses to use a farming analogy in giving us insight into Biblical ministry. Notice carefully in this analogy that the minister IS NOT used for harvesting the crop, but IS used for cultivating it.

**Verse 9** makes it clear that the field where this cultivating work is to take place is the people of God. The minister's primary job is to either plant the seed or water the seed so that God can produce His increase.

**Fact #4** – A minister IS NOT one who ministers for God in increasing people. **3:7a**

Growth is NOT determined by the planter or the waterer; it is determined by God. Numbers, when related to a minister and ministry, mean nothing.

**CONCEPT #2** – The responsibility of God in ministry. **3:6-7**

The word “growth” is a word which means to cause to grow, to cause to become larger.

The verb “causes growth” in **verses 6-7** are in tenses that indicated God is the one who has always caused growth in the past and continues to cause it in the present. Although planting and watering are a necessary part of the process, the cause of any growth is ALWAYS God.

**CONCEPT #3** – The unity among ministers in the ministry. **3:8a**

In the mind of God, all ministers connected to a specific church are one. There is one body, one faith, one work. What this practically means is that different ministers are used at different times in the history of people's lives to minister God's Word to them.

**CONCEPT #4** – The accountability of ministers in the ministry. **3:8b**

Two key nouns are important in this verse: “reward” which refers to a divine reward, divine wages given for earthly work, and “labor” which refers to difficult, strenuous work to the point of fatigue.

If he worked hard to the point of fatigue in ministry, he will receive great rewards and a great paycheck.

Notice carefully what determines the rewards for a minister. It is not determined by numbers. It is not determined by buildings. It is not determined by success. Rewards are determined by hard work. God's ministers will be rewarded on the basis of their hard labor. If a minister diligently worked to plant or water the Word of God, he will be highly rewarded. If he didn't he will lost rewards (i.e. I Cor. 3:14-15).

**CONCEPT #5** – The affiliation of people to the ministry. **3:9**

Ministers are fellow workers of God and the church is God's field and God's building. What this tells us is that ministry is all about caring for God's field and God's building, which are God's people.

If we are growing in our spiritual life, thank God for He is the One causing the growth.