

What has God called you to do in his Kingdom work? 1 Corinthians 3:6-15

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 Cor. 3:5-9, ESV)

In this text Paul uses a farming metaphor to speak about gifts or abilities and opportunities, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (3:6). God uses his servants to plant and to water. The text speaks of planting in the context of the establishment and growth of the Corinthian church. Paul preached the gospel and planted the church in Corinth; Apollos had helped it grow. In other places, Paul planted and also went back to water.

Some Christians have the gift of evangelism and church planting. Other Christians function better in edifying and maturing. Some, like Paul, can do both. What is your gift? Where has God put you? What opportunities do you have? What is the yearning and passion of your heart? What kind of spiritual farmer are you?

All of us are merely servants—God's fellow workers, God's field, God's building. Things grow only because God works in us and through us. He guides us and enables us. No Christian can choose non-participation in God's work. Ultimately the mission is God's, and we are servants.

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. (1 Cor. 3:10-15)

Paul changes metaphors—from agriculture to construction. What type of builder are you in the kingdom of God? Are you a foundation layer or one who builds on an existing foundation? Regardless of the work you do, construction work is not easy work. Mistakes are made; things break; things don't always come out exactly according to the blueprint. Because one sometimes works with fragile materials, one must think carefully about how one builds. Discouragement is common. We must remind ourselves often that it is God's work, not ours. Paul says that one day the quality of the work will become obvious.

Some of the construction work will survive, some will be lost. Such loss is felt personally; it is our loss as builders. All of us minister because of God's grace in our own lives. We are simply sharing God's grace—whether we plant or whether we water, whether we construct foundations or build on a foundation already in place. The most important thing is that we do what God has called us and equipped us to do!