

Welcome

[Atomium] One of the coolest buildings in the world, in my personal opinion, is the Atomium in Brussels. Originally constructed in 1958 for the Brussels World Expo, it was designed to represent nine atoms of Iron aligned into an iron crystal, magnified 165 *billion* times. Plus, six of the nine spheres are open to the public, housing everything from art exhibits to a film theater to a restaurant.

But the absolute coolest thing about the Atomium is that... [Josh interrupts]

<banter about how JR. doesn't know what he's talking about. JR. tries to leave stage. Josh calls him back.>

Today, we're going to talk about why we need each other to fully experience God's love for us!

Message

We're in a series called "Faith Under Construction". For the next month, we are asking, "What are the essential components of a strong faith? How do we build a faith that can weather the storms of life? A faith that keeps us secure no matter what comes our way, a faith that is open and courageous. How do we get that kind of faith that makes us infectious, that person who has a deep love of God, a person you just want to be around. A person who is actively making their world a better place.

[Scripture Slide 1] We're in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. This is a letter to a young congregation - maybe only a couple of years old at this point. And the Apostle Paul, who planted the church, is writing to address some cracks he's noticed in their congregation. Paul uses a building metaphor to advise the Corinthian Christians on what they need to grow stronger. We began where all good buildings begin: a strong foundation. According to Paul, the only foundation of a strong faith is Jesus.

When we say "Jesus is our foundation," we're making a powerful claim: that we enter into a life of faith because God sought us out. Our faith isn't about how good we can be, how many rules we follow or how hard we work. A strong faith, a true faith, a faith that's built to last is built on nothing but what Jesus has done for us.

<Josh responds to the idea of a foundation>

When we pour a foundation to build a home there's actually a lot of planning and foresight that goes into it. That's because we don't want to end up with a foundation that doesn't fit the building or isn't deep enough or isn't poured with the right concrete. This is the same with our spiritual life. If we start altering the foundation by adding things in or don't have the deep base of Jesus in our life then our building is going to end up all sorts of wrong. The tough part is that sometimes we don't see this until we start building. That's when we realize that "hey, none of my doors will close right" or "why is this entire corner of my house sinking. Some problems show up right away while others can take years to reveal themselves.

Then we asked, What kind of building are we building on the foundation? What is the shape of our faith? We saw that Paul envisions us as a Temple. The faith we're building transforms us into an overlap between heaven and earth. We become, like Jesus, a source of life and hope.

<Josh responds to the idea of building a temple>

And when we talk about what type of building we want to make, that makes a huge difference in what type of materials we use. Regular houses use wood, commercial buildings use a lot of concrete, and skyscrapers use a massive amount of steel. The foundation of Christ is meant to support building a temple. That our lives are meant to be the point where God and the world meet. And depending on how our faith has developed or is developing we may have built a tiny little shed, a massive tower or a wall. If we have that small shack then we aren't utilizing the full foundation that Jesus has given us. We are limiting the area in which God can impact the world through our lives. If we have a tower or wall then we are using Jesus as a basis upon which to build what WE want our spiritual lives to look like, not what God had desired.

Last week, we faced the reality that none of us builds a perfect building. We all make mistakes, or incorporate ideas, beliefs and behaviors that won't stand the test of time. That's why the process of deconstruction is a grace God participates in with us, to help us build a truly strong faith!

<Josh responds to the idea of deconstruction.>

This is the tough one right? This is the one I hate the most. But it's also possibly the most important, especially for those of us who have been Christians for a while. If I am laying a huge room of tile I have to layout and measure down to the 1/8th of an inch. If I am off more than that then the layout will end up crooked. But it's not something I notice at first. It usually doesn't show itself until much later. And then, I get to rip it all up and start over. Because there's no way I can just take up one row to fix it. I have to get back down to the root cause of my error. And these small errors or misunderstandings can be a real serious issue when it comes to the foundation. When we try and build on a flawed foundation everything in the house will be off. Then that means we have to go back to the beginning and figure out where we went wrong. And man that can be painful, but it's how we know we are being the true representation of Jesus to the world.

Today: a big idea (maybe the biggest idea?) that's hidden in the original Greek. At the end of this passage, Paul says this:

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? -- 1 Corinthians 3:16

If you've been in church, you've likely heard this verse used as justification for everything from why you shouldn't drink and smoke to why you shouldn't get tattoos. All those prohibitions are grounded in an individualistic reading of this text. You're a temple and I'm a temple and he's a temple and so is she.

The problem is that that's not how the Greek reads. Formal English doesn't have a different pronoun for second person singular and plural. If I want to know if you (singular) are having a good day or if you

(group) are feeling good, the word is the same. Fortunately, we're in Texas, and we definitely have a second person plural pronoun. So let me show you that verse again, this time in the New Living Texas version:

Do y'all not know that y'all are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in y'all? -- 1 Corinthians 3:16

The pronoun is plural, but the object - temple - is singular. Paul isn't saying that we're all a bunch of individual temples. He's saying that all of us, together, are God's temple.

In fact, if you read it in the NLT - the translation we usually use here, you can see the translators trying to preserve that sense:

Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? -- 1 Corinthians 3:16

According to Paul, we all need each other. I *can't* be God's temple on my own. I can't do this faith thing on my own. I need you and you need me.

[Josh: Corinth was divided. So are we.]

So the Corinthian church was having some issues with division. Kinda sounds a lot like today to be honest. But I mean it seems like we are just going to always have divisions in the church.

Josh, I have to ask: is it really so bad that we're divided? What's really so wrong with everyone just going to church where they're comfortable?

[Josh: Might be comfortable, but it's not GOOD. Like a house needs different materials.]

Imagine a church built of all one material - it's impossible!

Here's what I love about this building example. It lines up perfectly with the idea of us being the body of Christ. There are hundreds of types of materials that go into building a house. How sure you may be able to build your walls, ceilings, and roof out of 2x4s but what about having lights or a bathroom. There are so many things that we need to be fully functional. We may be able to survive in this homogeneous house but we are not truly living how God wants us to.

This is a make-or-break issue for Paul. He sees these divisions forming in Corinth along race lines, class lines, theology lines - and he sees not just a minor inconvenience, but a wholesale destruction of God's temple. Listen to the language he uses in the next verse:

God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. -- 1 Corinthians 3:17

A homogenous church is not much of a church, according to Paul. If everyone in my church looks, lives and thinks like me, then I'm missing out on a lot of who God is.

Of course Race is a big one: no one understands God's commitment to justice like Black theologians. And I've learned more about community and hospitality from Hispanic theologians and Christians. Native brothers and sisters have so much to teach us about how we care for the world God has given us, and what faith looks like in hopeless times. And I've learned from Asian believers to imagine a God who is bigger than I thought possible.

But of course that's not the only kind of diversity. If you've never let a kid teach you the Bible, or sat under the wisdom of someone who's been a believer longer than you've been alive, you're missing out.

If your faith isn't informed by people who don't look like you, who don't have the same background, you're missing the full picture of who God is. We need each other.

[Josh: so if I don't have a 'diverse church,' I'm not saved?]

So JR, it kind of feels like you are saying that I'm not really a Christian if I'm not surrounded by people who don't look like me. Like, I have definitely been a Christian for a long time even though I'm not part of a Hispanic church. Are we looking for like a quota or something? Why is Paul making such a big deal out of this?

We should be careful here. Diversity is a buzzword these days, and it's easy to think when we're talking about diversity that we're trying to be trendy. That we want to implement quotas.

But what we're talking about here isn't salvation. It's *holiness*. We're asking how we build a faith that stands the test of time. And what Paul tells us over and over is that we need each other. *We together* are God's temple.

A couple of times in our last series, Rooted, we shared the story of the blind men who encounter an elephant, and because they each touch a different part of the elephant, come to different conclusions. The takeaway was that we all need each other to know God fully.

[Josh talks about 1 Cor 12 and Paul's body metaphor.]

See, we all experience God in different ways. As different parts of the body we can experience God in vastly different ways. Some of us have a better vision of what God wants us to do and some of us are better at literally doing that. We need the feet to carry us to where God wants us to be but need hands to actually do the work. It would seem silly to get to where God wants us to be and not be able to actually do anything.

Question: what does this look like at Catalyst?]

Preaching team. Who's on the platform. Who's in leadership. Who leads our C-Groups. Who we're reading, befriending.

[Josh on the stakes for our faith: why we need each other.

Review: Foundation together

Temple together

Deconstructing together]

JR. ends with celebration of BBQ w/ Muslim friends. This is an example to the world of the faith we are building together, with Jesus.

Communion + Examen

[Communion Slide] Jesus invites us all to the table.

1. Who influences my faith that is different from me?
2. Which of my faith circles looks too much like me?
3. How can I seek out difference this week?

Assignment + Blessing

Understanding Exercise