



**COMMUNITY ALIVE! QUESTIONS for the week of May 2, 2021**  
**Sermon: "Only Human" by Rev. Dr. Doug Rumford**  
**1 Corinthians 3:1-4, 16-23**

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**Theme/concept**

True community depends on realistic expectations for life together. Unrealistic high ideals for others cause disappointment and conflict. We must not be naive about both the wonder and mystery of human nature. We are a mix of both sinful self-centeredness and awe-inspiring generosity, of both confidence and insecurity, and of both sensitivity and insensitivity. This message presents three basic principles we need to grasp in order to develop realistic, biblical expectations.

**Icebreaker**

Are you generally more inclined to have high expectations or low expectations of the people around you? How does that usually work out?

**Reflecting on the sermon**

How did this week's sermon shift your thinking in regard to your expectations for Christian community?

**Scripture**

**1 Corinthians 3:1-4, 16-23 (New International Version)**

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. <sup>3</sup>You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? <sup>4</sup>For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings?

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<sup>16</sup>Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? <sup>17</sup>If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

<sup>18</sup>Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise. <sup>19</sup>For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"<sup>[a]</sup>; <sup>20</sup>and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>21</sup>So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, <sup>22</sup>whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas<sup>[a]</sup> or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, <sup>23</sup>and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

### **Reviewing the Scripture**

1. How does Paul describe the brothers and sisters in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4? What does it mean to think of this as part of the human condition, rather than as character flaws of certain individuals?
2. What two specific problems with relationships among the Corinthians does Paul cite in 1 Corinthians 3:3? What is the problem related to human leaders in verse 4? How could all of these issues damage the community?
3. In Ephesians 3:1-4, Paul contrasts living by the Spirit with being worldly. (The Common English Bible refers to “spiritual people” and “unspiritual people.”) Can you give some examples of what those two opposite ways of living might look like? Hint: think about motivations, priorities, habits, etc.
4. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, what positive description of his audience does Paul offer? How might that affect the way we view other believers (and ourselves)?

5. In 1 Corinthians 3:18-19a, how does Paul describe the wisdom of this world? How do you think the “standards of this age” indicate that we should view other people? How does that differ from God’s view?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Given the mixed picture we get from Paul’s description of the believers in Corinth, what do you think we can expect to happen—both positive and negative—in our shared life?

**Building community**

1. Describe a time when the reality of a community didn’t match your expectations (either in a positive or negative way).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the risk of having an idealized view of Christian community?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. In *The Imitation of Christ*, a 15<sup>th</sup>-century classic book on the spiritual life, Thomas à Kempis writes, “Try to bear patiently with the defects and infirmities of others, whatever they may be, because you also have many a fault which others must endure.” How might this way of thinking change our shared life?

### **Practicing community—a few ideas**

1. Participate as a group in one of Trinity's Community Alive! Serve Days, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays at the Double R Ranch, the Orange County Rescue Mission's new ministry location. Visit <https://trinityconnection.com/serve/> to sign up. There will be plenty of work for everyone who shows up, regardless of skill level (and a free lunch)!
2. Work together to identify some reasonable expectations for your group, e.g., punctuality, confidentiality, etc. (If your group already has a group covenant, you may want to review it to determine whether you're adhering to it—or whether you need to add or subtract anything.)
3. The Apostle Paul offers this advice in Ephesians 4:31-32: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." If you have been harboring bitterness or anger toward someone, ask God to help you forgive that person. And if you need forgiveness from someone you wronged, ask that person to forgive you. Share your experience at your next group gathering.

### **Closing prayer**

Gracious God, we confess that we often expect too much of others and too little of ourselves. Consequently, we often end up frustrated and disappointed. Remind us that even though Christian community is a spiritual reality, it's made up of humans who are both deeply flawed and deeply loved. Help us to set aside our unrealistic expectations, so that we might be attentive to each person's contribution to our shared life. In Jesus' name, amen.