



# THE VALUE OF UNITY IN THE CHURCH

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## OPENING COMMENT

The Corinthian church had a quarrelling problem. The reports to Paul from those who had visited the church exposed the church as petty, combative, comparative, and full of disunity. They disagreed on which preacher was the best (1:12, 3:4), who was worthy to wait for (11:18-19), and which gifts were useful (12:12-20). They were so focussed on these relatively inconsequential things that they lost sight of the unity found in Christ as his body.

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## READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. <sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. <sup>12</sup> What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." <sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? <sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup> (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) <sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.



## UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. Where does Paul draw his exhortation from? (vs. 10)
2. What is the desired outcome for the Corinthian church? (vs. 10)
3. What is the church to be unified in? (vs. 10)
4. What is the reported quarrel about? (vs 12)
5. Why is Paul thankful that he did not baptize too many of the Corinthian church? (vs. 15)
6. Paul identifies the main purpose to his ministry. What is it? (vs. 17)
7. How does Paul qualify his preaching ministry? (vs. 17)
8. What does Paul mean by “words of eloquent wisdom”? (See 1 Corinthians 1:20 - 2:5)
9. Why is the qualifier of “not with words of eloquent wisdom” in place? (vs. 17)

## APPLYING THE TEXT

1. 1 Corinthians 11:18-19 indicate that division among the church can expose who is genuine and who is not, yet Paul, in our text, indicates that unity is to be sought. What then are we to be unified around? (Paul’s questions in vs. 13 provide a glimpse into where Paul thinks unity is found)
2. How might this nuanced understanding of unity inform our relationships?
3. It is possible to read verse 17 and think that no effort or strategy needs to go into preaching the gospel, but this would make Acts 17:16-34 and 1 Peter 3:13-17 difficult to understand. What emphasis is Paul making with his statement in verse 17?
4. Verse 17 is a summary verse for the argument found in 1 Corinthians 1:26-3:23. How might we be “demonstrations of the Spirit and of Power” so that those around us (neighbors, co-workers, family, friends) might “rest on the power of God”?
5. Paul provides clarity to the problem he outlines in vs. 12 later in chapter 3 (verse 1-9). How does this same problem arise today? How might we combat that same urges the Corinthian church had to elevate one teacher over another?

## BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Psalm 133 - the blessing of the Lord found in unity.
2. John 17:20-26 - Jesus’ high priestly prayer, where he prays that those who would come to him would be unified as He and the Father are unified.
3. Galatians 2:11-14 - Paul opposes Peter, seeking unity on that which matters.



4. Ephesians 4:1-16 - Paul outlines what unity in the body looks like and what the outcome should be.
5. Philippians 2:1-11 - unity in mind, considering other better than yourself because of the example of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

It is tempting to swing the pendulum too far in one direction when it comes to considering when we need to be unified and when we need to clearly differentiate ourselves from those who are doing a disservice to Christ. Paul's is not advocating for a "unity at all cost" but a unity around the power of the cross. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (Peter) are all simply servants to and proclaimers of the gospel of Christ. There is no power found in them, or their words, only in the mystery and wonder of the cross. It is there we find the unity to walk alongside and lovingly correct and encourage each other to maturity in Christ.

## SHARE & PRAY

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### LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

