

EXEGETICAL GUIDE



# 1 Corinthians 1:10-17



BE UNITED  
IN CHRIST

# Be United in Christ

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**Exegetical Guide**

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# BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

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# **Be United in Christ**

## **Exegetical Guide**

### **1 Corinthians 1:10–17**

#### **Unity around the Cross**

Believers must be united around Christ and not be divided over secondary issues like loyalty to other people. It is easy to become partial to certain church leaders—especially those who have had an important influence in our lives. This can lead to a feeling of superiority over others and cause division in the church based on pride.

The cross of Christ is the power that destroys people's pride and allows them to experience unity in the local church. When each person chooses to die to his need to be superior to someone else, a humble unity is formed. Loyalty to any one human cannot unite us; persuasive preaching without the gospel cannot unite us. It is only through a proper understanding of where our unity comes from that we can Be United in Christ.

**[beunitedinchrist.com](http://beunitedinchrist.com)**

## HOW TO USE A BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

An exegetical guide models how to study a passage of Scripture. The Introduction provides the context, while **Connection to Be United in Christ** highlights the text's importance for Christian unity. The Passage presents the Biblical text being studied.

We begin by **Studying the Passage** because God's messengers must convey God's words accurately. The Passage Comparison presents the text in its original Greek or Hebrew alongside seven English translations. Comparing translations allows for a better understanding of the passage and provides insight into the intent of the original Biblical manuscripts. The Structural Layout divides the passage into its component parts, because to understand what God said we must understand how He said it. It is an essential step in Bible study, but do not be discouraged if this section seems unfamiliar or daunting. The Narrative Flow explains the Biblical author's flow of thought through the passage. The Passage Overview then presents a simple outline that will form the foundation of subsequent outlines and the sermon manuscript itself. The Passage Focus distills the text into a statement that will be the main idea of the sermon. We then identify several Resources to further your study.

Having studied the passage, we are ready to begin **Preparing the Sermon**. Good preaching feeds God's people on God's Word, so our messages must be both healthful and appetizing. This is why this section begins by laying out several Sermon Ingredients that will be used to prepare a nutritious and appealing message. We must present God's Word accurately and clearly so that God's people will understand it with their minds, embrace it in their hearts, and apply it to their lives. The Passage Outline presents the passage's structure and flow, while the Passage Details provide the grammatical, historical, and theological information needed to understand and teach the passage. The message is then fortified with Applications and seasoned with Illustrations. These ingredients are combined to prepare a spiritual meal to feed God's children. The Sermon Outline rephrases the Passage Outline to make it more understandable to an audience. The Sermon Manuscript for Your Use then offers an example of how the passage might be preached. Then we identify several Sermon Examples that model good preaching on the text.

Thus, an exegetical guide presents both a comprehensive analysis of one particular Bible passage and a model for studying and preaching Scripture. We pray that God will use this guide to promote love for Him, fidelity to His Word, and unity in His church.

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## INTRODUCTION

The city of Corinth was located on a narrow land bridge between northern and southern Greece. The city had access to harbors on the Asian and Roman sides of the peninsula. These north-south and east-west crossroads made Corinth a wealthy city based on its perfect location for trade. The free flow of commerce, combined with a greedy desire by many to make money, led to a competitive, prideful spirit in the city as well as in the church. Paul addresses this competitiveness at the beginning of his letter because it hinders the unity and witness of the believers in Corinth.

Paul opens with a standard greeting (1 Corinthians 1:1–9), and verses 10–17 are the beginning of the letter’s main body. In this first passage, Paul addresses the disunity in the Corinthian church and how the gospel is the answer to this disunity. The rest of the first section of the letter (1 Corinthians 1:10–4:21) encourages the Corinthians to seek unity, embrace God’s wisdom, and put away their pride.

He next addresses several issues that stem from the church’s disunity and pride (1 Corinthians 5–6) and answers several questions that the Corinthian church had asked him in a previous letter (1 Corinthians 7–14). He begins this long section with the phrase “Now concerning the things about which you wrote” (1 Corinthians 7:1).

Paul concludes the body of the letter with a discussion of the gospel message and the necessity of the resurrection to the Christian life (1 Corinthians 15:1–58). Paul ends with an explanation of his future plans and final greetings to and from various people (1 Corinthians 16:1–24).

The host of problems addressed in the letter cannot be solved without the Corinthians first dealing with their disunity. So Paul tackles this issue at the beginning. It affects all aspects of their church life, from how they worship to how they understand God’s purpose for the gifts He gives. It is essential that the believers in Corinth be united so that they can be a true witness to the people around them.



## Connection to Be United in Christ

Since it is natural for all of us to unite around similar experiences or personal preferences, it is easy to forget the truth that our true unity is found in Christ alone. Since all teachers are temporary, none of us should boast of our relationship to a specific church leader. Since not everyone in the church shares the same preferences, any unity based on something other than Christ will not include the whole church. Only by putting the cross of Christ in its proper place will believers Be United in Christ.

### PASSAGE: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10–17

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While there are many fine Bible translations, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) is used here for its consistent, word-for-word translation.





# STUDYING THE PASSAGE

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**1 Corinthians 1:10–17**

**Unity around the Cross**

## PASSAGE COMPARISON

### 1 Corinthians 1:10–17

The Passage Comparison presents the original Greek text alongside seven English translations. Comparing translations allows for a better understanding of the passage and provides insight into the intent of the original Biblical manuscripts.

GREEK	NASB	ESV	KJV
<sup>10</sup> Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες καὶ μὴ ἦ ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα, ἥτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῖ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ.	<sup>10</sup> Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.	<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>10</sup> Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and <i>that</i> there be no divisions among you; but <i>that</i> ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.
<sup>11</sup> ἐδηλώθη γάρ μοι περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί μου, ὑπὸ τῶν Χλόης ὅτι ἐριδες ἐν ὑμῖν εἰσιν.	<sup>11</sup> For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's <i>people</i> , that there are quarrels among you.	<sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.	<sup>11</sup> For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them <i>which are of the house</i> of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.
<sup>12</sup> λέγω δὲ τοῦτο ὅτι ἕκαστος ὑμῶν λέγει· ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ.	<sup>12</sup> Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."	<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>12</sup> Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.
<sup>13</sup> μεμέρισται ὁ Χριστός; μὴ Παῦλος ἐσταυρώθη ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, ἢ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε;	<sup>13</sup> Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?	<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?	<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

NKJV	NRSV	NIV	NLT
<sup>10</sup> Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and <i>that</i> there be no divisions among you, but <i>that</i> you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.	<sup>10</sup> Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.	<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.	<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.
<sup>11</sup> For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's <i>household</i> , that there are contentions among you.	<sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters.	<sup>11</sup> My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.	<sup>11</sup> For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your quarrels, my dear brothers and sisters.
<sup>12</sup> Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."	<sup>12</sup> What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."	<sup>12</sup> What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."	<sup>12</sup> Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ."
<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?	<sup>13</sup> Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?	<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?	<sup>13</sup> Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not!

GREEK	NASB	ESV	KJV
<sup>14</sup> εὐχαριστῶ [τῷ θεῷ] ὅτι οὐδένα ὑμῶν ἐβάπτισα εἰ μὴ Κρίσπον καὶ Γάϊον,	<sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,	<sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,	<sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;
<sup>15</sup> ἵνα μὴ τις εἴπῃ ὅτι εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα ἐβαπτίσθητε.	<sup>15</sup> so that no one would say you were baptized in my name.	<sup>15</sup> so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.	<sup>15</sup> Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.
<sup>16</sup> ἐβάπτισα δὲ καὶ τὸν Στεφανᾶ οἶκον, λοιπὸν οὐκ οἶδα εἴ τινα ἄλλον ἐβάπτισα.	<sup>16</sup> Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.	<sup>16</sup> (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)	<sup>16</sup> And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.
<sup>17</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλén με Χριστὸς βαπτίζειν ἀλλὰ εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, οὐκ ἐν σοφία λόγου, ἵνα μὴ κενωθῇ ὁ σταυρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ.	<sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.	<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.	<sup>17</sup> For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

NKJV	NRSV	NIV	NLT
<sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,	<sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,	<sup>14</sup> I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,	<sup>14</sup> I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,
<sup>15</sup> lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.	<sup>15</sup> so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name.	<sup>15</sup> so no one can say that you were baptized in my name.	<sup>15</sup> for now no one can say they were baptized in my name.
<sup>16</sup> Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.	<sup>16</sup> (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)	<sup>16</sup> (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.)	<sup>16</sup> (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but I don't remember baptizing anyone else.)
<sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.	<sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.	<sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.	<sup>17</sup> For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.

## STRUCTURAL LAYOUT

The Structural Layout shows how the passage fits together. The left column contains the Biblical text divided into its structural elements. Main clauses are aligned left, related elements are highlighted in color, and words added for clarification are placed in brackets. The right column explains how the various elements function in context.

10	Now.....	“Now” joins verses 4–9 with verses 10–17 and gives a transition to a new topic.
	I exhort you, <b>brethren</b> ,.....	This is the main subject and verb of the first section of the passage where Paul is urging brothers and sisters in Christ.
	<b>by the name</b> of our Lord Jesus <b>Christ</b> ,.....	This phrase provides the authority by which Paul makes his appeal to the Corinthian church.
	that you all <b>agree</b> and	These three clauses explain the specific behavior Paul is urging the Corinthian church toward. The last clause is contrasted with the first two by “but” to show that unity is not just outward but inward.
	that there be <b>no divisions</b> among you, but .....	
	that you be <b>made complete</b>	
	in the <b>same mind</b> and .....	
	in the <b>same judgment</b> .	These two phrases refer to the last “that” clause above and tell how they should be made complete.
11	For I have been informed.....	This clause gives the reason why Paul urges the Corinthian church toward unity.
	concerning you, <b>my brethren</b> ,.....	These two phrases explain whom the information is about and indicates the source of this information.
	by Chloe’s people,	
	that there are quarrels among you. ....	This clause tells the content of what Paul was informed about and provides the main reason that he urges them to action.
12	Now I mean this, .....	This clause introduces an explanation of what Paul means by “quarrels.”
	that each one of you is saying,.....	This clause and its four “I” statements show the reason for the quarrels in the Corinthian church. They are divided over loyalty to different leaders.
	“I am of Paul,” and	
	“I of Apollos,” and	
	“I of Cephas,” and	
	“I of <b>Christ</b> .”	



- 13 Has Christ been divided?..... In the second section of the passage, Paul asks these three rhetorical questions to help the Corinthians move from the problem of quarrels to the solution of the cross.
- Paul was not crucified for you, was he?
- Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?
- 14 I thank God..... This is the main subject and verb of the third section of this passage.
- that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,..... This clause gives the reason for which Paul is thankful.
- 15 so that none of you would say you were baptized ..... This clause makes clear why Paul is thankful he baptized so few people. It's not that he's against baptizing; he's concerned that the Corinthian church has misunderstood baptism.
- 16 Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas;..... This sentence is not part of Paul's main argument but is used to clarify his statement about how many people he baptized.
- beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.
- 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, ..... This clause tells Paul's purpose in coming to Corinth and gives the reason why Paul's baptizing shouldn't affect the way the Corinthians behave toward one another.
- not in cleverness of speech, ..... This phrase tells how the gospel is not to be preached.
- so that the cross of..... This clause shows why it is important not to preach using "cleverness of speech."
- Christ would not be made void.

## NARRATIVE FLOW

Paul urges the members of the Corinthian church, by the authority of Christ, to not only be united in what they say and to avoid division but also to be united in their thinking (v. 10). He has received information from Chloe's people that they are quarrelling (v. 11) over their loyalties to various leaders in the early church: Paul, Peter, Apollos, and Christ (v. 12).

Paul then asks three questions to help them think about how childish their quarrels sound and how serious they actually are (v. 13). Paul uses this verse to move from the problem of disunity to the solution, which is the cross of Christ.

Paul is thankful that he baptized a small number of Corinthians so that there would not be more people who wanted to follow him instead of Christ (vv. 14–16). He concludes with a reminder that he was not sent to baptize but to preach the gospel. This preaching should be done without man's cleverness so that the power of the cross to change lives is not negated (v. 17).

## PASSAGE OVERVIEW

1 Corinthians 1:10–17 has three main sections:

- I. CHRISTIANS MUST BE UNITED AND AVOID DIVISIONS OVER DIFFERENT LEADERS (1:10–12)**
- II. CHRISTIANS MUST THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION AND THEIR OWN BAPTISM (1:13)**
- III. CHRISTIANS MUST ELEVATE THE CROSS OVER ANY EARTHLY NAME OR HUMAN WISDOM (1:14–17)**

## PASSAGE FOCUS

Disunity in the church can arise from loyalties to various leaders, but true unity in the church is based on a proper understanding of Christ's crucifixion and baptism into His name.

# RESOURCES

## Basic Resources

Johnson, Alan F. *1 Corinthians*. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

MacArthur, John F. *1 Corinthians*. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1984.

Morris, Leon. *1 Corinthians*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.

## Intermediate Resources

Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006.

## Advanced Resources

Garland, David E. *1 Corinthians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.



# PREPARING THE SERMON

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**1 Corinthians 1:10–17**

**Unity around the Cross**

# SERMON INGREDIENTS

## 1 Corinthians 1:10–17

### PASSAGE OUTLINE

#### **I. CHRISTIANS MUST BE UNITED AND AVOID DIVISIONS OVER DIFFERENT LEADERS (1:10–12)**

A. Believers are to be united (1:10)

1. They should agree in their speech
2. They should not have any division
3. They should agree in their thinking

B. Believers are to avoid divisions based on loyalties to different leaders (1:11–12)

#### **II. CHRISTIANS MUST THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT CHRIST’S CRUCIFIXION AND THEIR OWN BAPTISM (1:13)**

A. The body of Christ is not divided

B. Only Christ was crucified for the church

C. Believers are not baptized into any human name

#### **III. CHRISTIANS MUST ELEVATE THE CROSS OVER ANY EARTHLY NAME OR HUMAN WISDOM (1:14–17)**

A. Believers are not to act in a way that elevates themselves over Christ (1:14–16)

B. Believers are to teach so the cross of Christ is not emptied of its power (1:17)

1. The gospel, not baptism, changes lives
2. The gospel, not clever speech, changes lives
3. The gospel must be taught properly so the cross of Christ is not emptied of its power

## PASSAGE DETAILS

### 1 Corinthians 1:10

#### Now

“Now” shows the transition from Paul’s encouragement in 1 Corinthians 1:4–9 to the disunity in the church discussed in verses 10–17.

#### I exhort you, brethren,

“Exhort” means “to urge strongly, appeal to, ... or encourage.”<sup>2</sup> Paul is passionate about the instruction he is about to give.

The pronoun “you” is plural. Paul is speaking to all believers in the Corinthian church.

Paul uses the familial term “brethren,” which in Greek can refer to both men and women, not only as a reminder to the Corinthian church of his love and care for them but also of the family unity they have because they are all Christians.

#### by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

“By the name of” expresses “the person’s qualities and powers.”<sup>3</sup> Paul is encouraging the Corinthians toward unity not because of who he is but because of who Christ is.

Jesus uses a similar phrase, “in My name,” to tell the disciples how to ask the Father for things (John 16:23–24). They are able to ask the Father for things not because of who they are but because of who Jesus is.

#### that you all agree and there be no divisions among you,

“That you all agree” literally means that you all “speak the same thing.” Words are important. They reveal the state of one’s heart. Paul knows that the words the Corinthians are using about certain leaders like Apollos and Paul reveal a misunderstanding of the gospel.

“Divisions” is a word that can be used for a tear in a garment (Matthew 9:16) or division among people who have different opinions about someone (John 7:43). Paul will use it later in 1 Corinthians to describe the social divisions that have occurred over how the church celebrates the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17–32). Here the divisions are based on opinions certain Corinthian believers have about different teachers, and the divisions are tearing apart the body of Christ.

Paul combines “that you all agree” and “divisions” with “and” because he wants the Corinthian church to understand that the way they speak about leaders in the early church is causing divisions.

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Fredrick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 765. This important reference work is the standard dictionary of New Testament Greek and is commonly referred to as BDAG after its four editors.

<sup>3</sup> BDAG, 712.



**but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

The reader might expect Paul to use “and” here in this list of things he encourages them toward. “But” is used because Paul wants their unity to be more than the proper use of speech or even silence, which could make the Corinthian church appear more unified. True unity does not consist in merely adopting the same words.

“To be made complete” means “to put into a proper condition.”<sup>4</sup> It is used of fishing nets being mended by the disciples (Mark 1:19) and of people being restored to spiritual health after being caught in sin (Galatians 6:1).

“Mind” is a word that usually means “thoughts.”

“Judgment” is a word used most often in the New Testament to mean “purpose” or “intention.”<sup>5</sup> It is used in Acts 20:3 for Paul deciding to return to Macedonia. It is used in Revelation 17:17 for God putting something in the hearts of people to do His will or purpose. True unity will have its foundation not in the Corinthians’ speech but in their thoughts and purposes. Healthy relationships are formed and maintained when people’s thinking and purposes are the same.

## 1 Corinthians 1:11

**For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people,**

Verse 11 reveals the source of Paul’s knowledge about the Corinthians’ troubles. Despite what he has heard, he uses the word “brethren” for the second time in two verses to reinforce the unity they have because they are all one in God’s family no matter what divisions exist.

This is the only time that “Chloe” appears in the New Testament. We don’t know anything about her or her role in the Corinthian church. Scholars have many ideas about who she might be, but we have no conclusive evidence either way.

**that there are quarrels among you.**

The word “quarrels” means “engaged in rivalry.”<sup>6</sup> Paul uses it regularly in lists of sins. It is most often translated as “strife” in the New Testament. Each time Paul uses it in his writing, he attaches severe warnings to those who practice it.

God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with ... *strife*, ... and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death. (Romans 1:28–29, 32)

For since there is jealousy and *strife* among you, ... are you not walking like mere men [that is, not spiritual]?<sup>7</sup> (1 Corinthians 3:3)

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: ... *strife*, ... of which I forewarn you, ... that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19–21)

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<sup>4</sup> BDAG, 526.

<sup>5</sup> BDAG, 202.

<sup>6</sup> BDAG, 392.

<sup>7</sup> The apostle Paul addresses the same issue of unity and disunity in chapter 3 as he does here in 1 Corinthians 1:10–17.

If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, ... he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise ... *strife*. (1 Timothy 6:3–4)

But avoid ... *strife* ... for [it is] unprofitable and worthless. (Titus 3:9)

In Paul's mind, the Corinthian church is not engaged in minor squabbles like two children. They are participating in serious strife that threatens the true meaning of the gospel.

## 1 Corinthians 1:12

**Now I mean this, that each of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.”**

“Now I mean this” begins Paul's explanation of what he means by “quarrels.”

Apollos was a Jew born in Egypt. He was a gifted teacher who began teaching about Christ in Ephesus (Acts 18:24–25). After further instruction by Priscilla and Aquila, he traveled to Corinth after Paul had already left. Apollos was helpful in encouraging the Corinthian church (Acts 18:27–19:1). Paul said that Apollos watered the seeds of faith that Paul had planted (1 Corinthians 3:5–6).

Cephas is the Aramaic name for Peter and means “rock.” Cephas is Paul's usual name for Peter. It is unknown if Peter ever visited Corinth, though clearly the church knew who he was as Paul mentions him more than once in his letter to them (1 Corinthians 3:22; 9:5; 15:5).

People in the Corinthian church were choosing favorites among different leaders they knew. Their pride in these teachers led to quarrels in the church. A modern-day example of this might be one person in church claiming he has a stronger faith based on having read all of a certain author's books. Another believer claims his faith is stronger because he attended the church of a famous preacher. A third believer claims his faith is stronger because he simply reads the Bible.

One would think that Paul would applaud those who were saying, “I of Christ,” yet those saying “I of Christ” weren't using it to show their devotion to Christ. They were using the phrase to show they were superior to the others. Also, they didn't appear to be seeking to encourage others to embrace Christ. It was simply a power play. It would be foolish to think that Christ “could become the exclusive property of some specific group.”<sup>8</sup>

## 1 Corinthians 1:13

This verse includes three questions that Paul asks the members of the Corinthian church so they will think about the foolishness of their divisions. While the quarrels are about loyalties to different church leaders, the solution to the quarrels has its basis in the cross of Christ. Paul uses this verse to transition from the problem of divisions in the first half of the passage (1 Corinthians 1:10–12) to the solution in the second half of the passage (1 Corinthians 1:14–17).

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<sup>8</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 133.

## Has Christ been divided?

“Divided” is the same word Jesus uses in Matthew 12:25 when He says, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste.” It means to “separate into parts.”<sup>9</sup> If Christ is not divided, how could His followers be divided if they are all the body of Christ? This question, according to Fee, is absurd. What Paul is really asking is “‘Can Christ be made a party in the same breath as the others?’ or ‘Do you mean to say that Christ has been apportioned out so that only one group has Him?’”<sup>10</sup>

## Paul was not crucified for you, was he?

Paul wants the Corinthians to think about who actually died for them. Was it Paul? The obvious answer to this question is “Of course not; it was Jesus.” He wants them to see that the only person they should be following or claiming loyalty to is the one who died for them. This, coupled with the previous question, should cause the Corinthians to set their minds on the same person: Jesus.

## Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Baptism is the outward sign of the inward reality that we spiritually died with Jesus. Paul says, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?” (Romans 6:3). It is uniting oneself with Jesus and finding one’s identity in Him (see Galatians 2:20). It is the believer saying, “I am one with Jesus in His death with the hope of being one with Him in His resurrection.”<sup>11</sup> Since Paul has not died, one can’t have been baptized into Paul’s name. And if one can’t be baptized into Paul’s name, one can’t identify with Paul. It would then be foolish to claim superiority over another believer by saying, “I follow Paul.” It would be foolish, and “baptism ‘into Paul’s name’ would signify nothing but an idolatrous attachment to a mortal.”<sup>12</sup>

## 1 Corinthians 1:14

### I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

Paul is thankful that he only baptized a small number of people. It is not clear who would have baptized most of the Corinthians. Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5), so they could have baptized some people. Priscilla and Aquila were also in Corinth with Paul.

It is probable that Crispus is the same Crispus who was the ruler of the synagogue and who came to faith through Paul’s preaching in Corinth (Acts 18:8).

It is possible that Gaius is the same Gaius that Paul was staying with when he wrote his letter to the Romans (Romans 16:23), as it is believed that Paul was in Corinth when he wrote Romans. There are three other references to a Gaius in the New Testament, but none of these can be conclusively linked to the Gaius in Corinth.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> BDAG, 631.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 62.

<sup>11</sup> See Romans 6:5.

<sup>12</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 53.

<sup>13</sup> For the other uses of Gaius, see Acts 19:29, Acts 20:24, and 3 John 1:1.

## 1 Corinthians 1:15

**so that no one would say you were baptized in my name.**

In hopes that very few of the Corinthians would claim superiority over others in the church because of their relationship with Paul, he is thankful that he only baptized a small number of people. Today we should carry no pride based on what famous Christians we've read or what church we belong to or which Christian conference we've attended. Christians should also be careful that when they encourage and help one another to grow they are pointing people to Jesus and not seeking to gain a following for themselves.

## 1 Corinthians 1:16

**Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.**

Paul stops his argument to clarify something as he is reminded about other baptisms. He does not want to be accused of misleading his readers, so he includes another group of people whom he baptized. Since it appears that Stephanas was with Paul when he wrote the letter (1 Corinthians 16:17), it may have been Stephanas himself who reminded Paul about his baptism.

“Know” can mean “remember.”<sup>14</sup> To cover any other forgetfulness, Paul makes a general statement about his uncertainty of any others he might have baptized.

## 1 Corinthians 1:17

**For Christ did not send me to baptize,**

Paul is not downplaying the importance of baptism here, but baptism follows a right understanding of the gospel and the cross. Baptism, for Paul, clearly proclaims the gospel,<sup>15</sup> and “he really does feel a need to put [baptism] into proper perspective, at least in relationship to the proclamation of the gospel.”<sup>16</sup> The whole idea of baptism, which seems to be at least partially at the root of the Corinthians' problem, is off topic compared to the centrality of the cross.<sup>17</sup> Since Paul was more of a church starter than a local pastor, it is possible that he purposefully left baptism to others who would play more of a pastoral role after Paul was gone. They would be the ones responsible to see that the Corinthian church lived out their baptismal confession in their daily lives.

**but to preach the gospel,**

Christ called Paul to “bear My [His] name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

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<sup>14</sup> BDAG, 694. See also the NIV and NLT translations.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 6 is Paul's clear explanation of what baptism shows about our relationship with Christ.

<sup>16</sup> Fee, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Fee, 65–66.

The general definition of “gospel” is “good news.” However, Paul gives a specific definition of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”<sup>18</sup> Paul’s purpose was to preach this good news. Without the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection there is no need for baptism.

### **not in cleverness of speech,**

“Cleverness of speech” is literally “wisdom of speech.” In the context of Corinth, many scholars feel the word “wisdom” should be translated as “cleverness” or “skill.” The consensus is that Paul is referring to “manipulative rhetoric.”<sup>19</sup> The gospel doesn’t need man’s wisdom or cleverness to make it effective. It is powerful enough on its own to change hearts. Paul is going to speak more to this issue of man’s wisdom in the next section of the letter (1 Corinthians 1:18–2:16) before returning to the issue of the lack of unity in the church (1 Corinthians 3).

### **so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.**

The “cross of Christ” is not referring to the piece of wood on which Jesus was crucified. It is a phrase Paul uses to include what happened on the cross: man’s sins were paid for by Christ’s sacrifice so that all who repented and believed would be united with Him in His death and resurrection, becoming one body. It is critical for the Corinthians and us to understand the power of the cross—and the cross alone—to unite God’s people.

The phrase “be made void” is one word in the Greek and means “to cause to be without result or effect.”<sup>20</sup> Paul knows that if he convinces people to follow Jesus through manipulation or emotional appeals, the power of the cross would be replaced by the power of Paul. This isn’t true conversion. When the difficulties of life come, this person may fall away.<sup>21</sup> If the Corinthians’ unity is based on Paul’s clever words when he is with them, then when he is absent nothing would keep the Corinthians from reverting back to their quarrels. This is why Paul does not preach with “cleverness of speech.” Paul ends with this statement to show the Corinthians what is most important. Their division over various teachers is doing exactly what Paul hoped to avoid in his preaching: negating the power of the cross of Christ.

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<sup>18</sup> While the word “gospel” is not used in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, it is clear from the context of 1 Corinthians 15:1 that this is the definition of the gospel.

<sup>19</sup> Thiselton, 143.

<sup>20</sup> BDAG, 539.

<sup>21</sup> This is not unlike the parable of the sower when the seed fell on rocky places without any depth to the soil (Matthew 13:1–23). Difficulties make this plant wither.

## APPLICATIONS

- Believers must find their identity in Christ alone. When they look to other people to give them importance they will be tempted to compare their lives with other people. This leads to pride, boasting, and quarrels. When we know that we all are united in Christ, this leads to the unity God wants for His children. Right thinking leads to right actions when empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- Unity is not based on mere words. We may all say the Lord's Prayer or the Apostle's Creed or sing the same songs together every Sunday in church, but if some think they are better than others, the church is not unified. Believers not only need to say the same things about who Jesus is, but they must also be unified in their understanding of what Jesus has done for them and in their intentions about following Christ alone.
- Believers need to trust in the power of the gospel to change lives rather than using fancy words, depending on their personality, or using engaging presentations. Believers should be clear when presenting the gospel, but they must rely on the power of the Spirit to change people as they hear the truth.
- Church leaders must make sure they are not doing anything in the church that would encourage another believer to place their trust in him or her over Christ.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

- In 2015 two men got into a fight over whether LeBron James or Michael Jordan was the greatest basketball player of all time. One of the men ended up in jail because he chose to use his fists to convince his friend that he was right.
- Adolph Hitler convinced many people that his message was right through persuasive speech, not because of the truth of his message.
- Paul (Romans 7:14–25; Philippians 3:12–14), Peter (Galatians 2:11–14), and Apollos (Acts 18:24–26) each fell short of perfection. To follow any of them above Christ is settling for less than perfection.
- Repairing a car with a quick fix to just get it down the road or have it appear to be in working order is not helpful in the long term and does not solve the underlying issue.

# **SERMON OUTLINE**

## **Unity around the Cross (1 Corinthians 1:10–17)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **I. ENCOURAGEMENT TOWARD UNITY (1:10–12)**

- A. Be unified in our speech (v. 10a)
- B. Be unified in our purposes (v. 10b)
- C. Avoid disunity over loyalties (vv. 11–12)

#### **II. LOOK TO THE CROSS (1:13)**

- A. Christ is not divided (v. 13a)
- B. Paul was not crucified for the Corinthians (v. 13b)
- C. The Corinthians were not baptized in the name of Paul (v. 13c)

#### **III. ELEVATE THE CROSS (1:14–17)**

- A. Baptism without the gospel makes the cross useless (vv. 14–17a)
- B. Man's clever speech without the gospel makes the cross useless (v. 17b)

### **CONCLUSION**



# SERMON MANUSCRIPT FOR YOUR USE

## Unity around the Cross (1 Corinthians 1:10–17)

### INTRODUCTION

Every church faces problems because every church is made up of people who are selfish and petty, stubborn and shortsighted. Churches are also meant to be diverse—we are to make disciples of all people, not just the ones like us. So tension and conflict are inevitable. But every church, no matter how diverse, can solve problems with greater success and joy if they face them united around the cross.

The Corinthian church has lots of problems. From theological concerns to relational ones, from cultural issues dealing with food and sexuality to misunderstandings about the resurrection, the Corinthian church is struggling. The apostle Paul begins by addressing the disunity that exists in the church. He knows that none of the other issues can be dealt with until the church faces each one as a unified church.

Paul is not seeking unity for the sake of unity. He knows, and we need to know, that the true unity that affects everything else is unity around the gospel of Jesus. When we are united around Jesus, this speaks loudly to a world that longs for peace. Our unity as believers is a concrete example of how the power of the cross can fix not only our brokenness but also the brokenness that ails the world. 1 Corinthians 1:10–17 will help us think about true Christian unity in a way that can move us to be the kind of church that overcomes obstacles in a God-honoring manner.

### I. ENCOURAGEMENT TOWARD UNITY (1:10–12)

#### A. Be unified in our speech (v. 10a)

**Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and there be no divisions among you,**

Paul begins by strongly urging the Corinthians to agree. This urging doesn't come from his own authority as the one who first brought them the gospel. Instead, he challenges them with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what he means when he says at the beginning of verse 10, “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This call to agreement is not Paul's idea or hope. Jesus Himself desires it. We know this because of the prayer Jesus prayed for the church in John 17:20–21, “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” Paul's goal for the Corinthian church is actually Jesus' goal for His church.

So what does “that you all agree” mean? Is Paul hoping that they all like the same kind of music and the same kind of food and all prefer the same kind of chairs for the sanctuary? No. While this clause literally means “that you all say the same thing,” he's not just talking about them using the same types of words or agreeing on every aspect of life. He wants their speech to reflect where their true loyalty lies. Words are very powerful, and Jesus says they can reveal what's in our heart. According to Matthew 7:17, bad trees produce bad fruit. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus also points out that the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. Paul is going to deal with their hearts soon enough, but he begins with their words because that is what everyone hears.

Paul does not want the reputation of the church to be damaged because the Corinthians' words reveal a deep disagreement. This is the second thing he encourages them toward in verse 10: no divisions. In Greek, the word "division" is used to refer to a tear in a garment or when people have differing opinions about a matter. Paul knows that the words people use can and do cause divisions in the church. Not only do divisions go against Jesus' prayer in John 17, but they also are a bad testimony to the nature of God to a watching world.

### **B. Be unified in our purposes (v. 10b)**

**but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

What Paul does next is important to catch. He uses the word "but" to contrast the visible unity of being in agreement with being of the same mind and judgment. The contrast is meant to highlight that he is not seeking skin-deep unity. Paul is urging far more than clean-looking outward behavior.

You know what that's like. A neighbor calls and says she's coming over to borrow some eggs, and you quickly stuff unfolded laundry in a drawer, get the dirty breakfast dishes from the table to the sink, and close your kid's bedroom door to hide their mess. Paul doesn't want the Corinthian church to merely look and sound unified but in reality be a divided mess. So he tells them to "be made complete in the same mind and the same judgment."

"To be made complete" means "to be put into proper condition." I had an air conditioning problem in my van one time, and the mechanic wanted to try an inexpensive fix to get me down the road. While it saved money at the time, it ultimately didn't solve the problem and required further work. That's not what Paul is after here. He knows they don't need a quick, temporary fix. He wants their thinking put into proper condition, to align with the factory specifications.

We are made in the image of God, but sin damaged that image. So when Paul says he wants their thinking and judgment to be in proper working condition, he means he wants their purposes and intentions that guide the way they live life to resemble the only human being who hasn't been affected by sin—Jesus.

What about you? Do you strive to be unified with your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do your purposes for your church have more to do with your own wants or desires or with the purposes God has for your church? While we will look in a moment at some specifics of what Paul is urging the Corinthians toward, we must begin here. Are my purposes aligned with God's, or do I have my own purpose? Is this the church of God or is it my church? Every choice to pursue unity will require us to die to something in ourselves: some preference, some choice, some habit, some feeling. Am I willing to do that for the sake of honoring Jesus' prayer for true Christian unity? Do I know that pursuing this kind of God-honoring unity will reveal Jesus to watching eyes?

### **C. Avoid disunity over loyalties (vv. 11–12)**

**For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people,**

The world is watching. People see the good the church does and also the troubles we experience. As Jesus says in Matthew 5:16, we are to let the world see our good works and glorify God because of them. Here in verse 11, we see the Corinthian church is confronted with this truth. Chloe's people have been watching and have reported to Paul what they have seen. This is the only time Chloe is mentioned in the New Testament, and while scholars have frequently offered theories on who she was and on what her role

was in the church, her true identity remains mere speculation. The point Paul is making here is that the Corinthians' behavior has caught the attention of someone. Our words and actions are noticed.

This should be a reminder to all of us that the world is watching. Unbelievers outside the church watch how we relate to one another and notice the words we use and the actions we take and the tone of our voices. Believers are watching and listening as well, both adults and children, maybe especially children. It is not just their own parents that children watch in the church. They notice how other adults behave and speak. Our daily interactions directly affect the next generation in ways—good and bad—that we can't imagine. We all need to be reminded often that we are daily modeling to everyone in the church what it means to follow Christ. If our words and actions cause division, others will take notice. What kind of testimony do we want to have in front of a watching world—or, more pointedly, a teenager in our church?

### **that there are quarrels among you.**

So what did Chloe notice? Quarrels. It's a word that means "rivalries" and is most often translated "strife." Paul uses it in lists of sins he wants his readers to avoid. Each time it is used, it comes with a severe warning. In Romans 1:32 Paul says that those who practice strife are worthy of death. He defines strife in 1 Corinthians 3:3 as not walking like spiritual men. Paul declares in Galatians 5:20–21 that those who practice strife will not inherit the kingdom of God. And in Titus 3:9, he describes strife as unprofitable and worthless.

Their quarrels are not a minor issue. Quarrels are an indication that something is seriously wrong. This sin has infected the church to such a degree that Paul will shortly challenge their understanding and living out of the gospel.

Paul's challenge does not question their salvation. Notice his use of the term "brethren"—a word Paul uses for believers in the church that includes both men and women—in verses 10 and 11. He wants to make sure they realize they aren't acting like brethren. He then explains what the quarrels are about.

### **Now I mean this, that each of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."**

Several groups of people in the church have proclaimed loyalty to various church leaders: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Jesus. Paul, of course, is the apostle who spent a year and a half in Corinth teaching and preaching and living life with the Corinthians. He was instrumental in establishing and growing the church. We learn in Acts 18:24–25 that Apollos was an Egyptian Jew who began his teaching ministry in Ephesus. We see in Acts 18:27–19:1 that he traveled to Corinth after Paul left and was helpful in encouraging the church. Paul praises Apollos for his ministry in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 3:5. Cephas is another name for Peter. It is not clear if Peter ever visited Corinth, but it seems clear that the Corinthians knew about him as Paul refers to him in this letter in 1 Corinthians 3:22, 9:5, and 15:5.

The people in Corinth were claiming loyalty to various leaders. One group would seek to elevate themselves over another group based on their favorite church leader. This favoritism was the cause of the quarrels. Division naturally ensued.

You and I were made to worship, and because we were made to worship, the temptation to worship other people and objects is ever present. We worship athletes, rock stars, and movie stars. We worship science and creation. We worship cars and computers and culture. All of these objects of worship distract us from the only one worthy of worship—God.

The church is not immune from this misplaced worship today. Our celebrity culture encourages hero worship. People follow pastors on social media, drop names of people they've met at conferences, and boast about being a member of a church where a famous pastor preaches. With so many big-name speakers, authors, and pastors for us to look up to, we need to be careful that our preference for one or another of these church leaders does not cause division in the church. We must refrain from boasting or belittling someone who has not been influenced by our own particular favorite.

The last item in Paul's list of what the Corinthians are accused of saying might, at first, seem a little strange. One would think Paul would be happy that people in the church were following Christ, but this group was undoubtedly claiming a special position. Instead of encouraging their fellow believers to seek Christ, they were using His name to show their superior faith, laying claim to Him as their own by some exclusive right. They weren't interested in sharing Jesus; they were interested in using Jesus to appear better than others.

## **II. LOOK TO THE CROSS (1:13)**

Paul now transitions from talking about what the problem is to helping the Corinthian church solve the problem. He does this by asking them three questions that point to the foolishness of their positions. In doing so, the questions point to the root of the problem. Paul could just demand that they stop quarreling. Parents will, at times, tell fighting siblings to make up, apologize, be friends, or stop bickering. A parent's authority or tone might bring temporary peace to the situation, but unless the parent gets to the root of the problem, the cause of the initial conflict has not been resolved. As we saw from verse 10, Paul does not want to solve only the outward signs of division. These three questions help him get to the root of the issue.

### **A. Christ is not divided (v. 13a)**

#### **Has Christ been divided?**

The purpose of the first question, "Has Christ been divided?" is to get them to think about the nature of Christ. Paul's favorite designation for Christians in the Bible is "in Christ." If Christ is divided and they are all "in Christ," then they also are all divided, but Christ is not divided. A moment's reflection will show the Corinthian church that they should have no divisions either. Paul reminded them in verse 9, "you were called into fellowship with His Son." So Paul is saying, "Since Christ is not divided, how can your fellowship be divided?"

We would do well, as we encourage our friends in the faith to walk worthily of Christ, to point people to Jesus' nature instead of just reminding them about the rules they are supposed to follow. It's not that Paul doesn't talk about right behavior. He does—often. But he always grounds that behavior in Christ and our relationship with Him. In Philippians 2:14–16, Paul tells the Philippians not to grumble like the world but rather be God's children by "holding fast to the word of life." Paul tells the church to "consider the members of their body as dead to immorality" in Colossians 3:5. He says this because Christ is their life. In Colossians 3:13, we are to forgive one another because God forgave us in Christ.

## **B. Paul was not crucified for the Corinthians (v. 13b)**

### **Paul was not crucified for you, was he?**

The next question is similar and is used to show the foolishness of their divisions over various church leaders. Paul uses himself as the example: “Paul was not crucified for you, was he?”

The reason we follow Jesus and not men is because Jesus has done for us what no one else could do. He died for our sins. One man may choose to die for another, like when someone steps in and takes a bullet for someone else. Jesus did that but on a much deeper level. He endured the wrath of God that believers deserved for their sin and rebellion against a holy God. No man could do that for another. There is also another aspect to what Jesus did: He gave us His righteousness. Could Paul have done that? Or Apollos? Or Cephas? No. Then why would the Corinthians quarrel over which leader to follow? No one but Christ deserves our worship and loyalty.

The same is true for us. While you may never argue with another believer about which Christian leader is better than another, do you ever elevate men to a position only Christ should occupy? Do you ever become so enamored with a pastor, author, speaker, or artist that you begin to believe that all his words are right? Do you ever think he is the one responsible for your Christian growth? Other believers often encourage our spiritual growth, but we truly change by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. Even if we never argue with other believers about our various allegiances, we should be careful not to elevate anyone in the church above Christ.

## **C. The Corinthians were not baptized in the name of Paul (v. 13c)**

### **Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?**

The final question Paul asks encourages them to think about their initial commitment to Christ at their baptism: “were you baptized in the name of Paul?” At baptism, a person is testifying that they are identifying themselves with the death of Christ. Paul says in Romans 6:3, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?” We are testifying at our baptism that we choose to die to self in the hope that “as Christ was raised from the dead ... so we too might walk in newness of life” as Paul says in verse 4. Does a mere man have the ability to give us new life? Or to raise us from the dead? For Paul goes on to say in verse 5, “For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death [through baptism], certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.” No leader in the church can raise us from the dead.

## **III. ELEVATE THE CROSS (1:14–17)**

### **A. Baptism without the gospel makes the cross useless (vv. 14–17a)**

Now, it is a special thing to baptize someone. What a privilege it is to be a part of the ceremony where someone publically proclaims his loyalty to Jesus! But let us never think there is something special about the one doing the baptism. It is the relationship between Christ and the person being baptized that takes priority.



**I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name.**

Paul is actually thankful that he baptized a very small number of people in the Corinthian church. We need to be careful not to misunderstand what Paul is saying here. He is not downplaying the role of baptism at all or of leaders who do baptisms. In 1 Corinthians 4:15, he portrays himself as a spiritual father: “For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.” In Philippians 3:17, he portrays himself as a spiritual example: “Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”

Paul understands that he is a mentor to the people he ministers to. Yet here he is thankful that he has not participated in the wonderful ceremony of baptism. This is a sad statement. What should have been a joyful remembrance of a public confession of someone’s union with Christ has turned to fear for Paul that they have misunderstood the whole point. It has turned, for the Corinthians, into a rivalry over who baptized whom. Paul wants nothing to do with it.

**Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel,**

Verse 16 is an aside where Paul remembers that he did baptize at least one other group of people. It’s possible that Stephanas himself reminded Paul about this as it is likely, according to 1 Corinthians 16:17, that Stephanas was with Paul as he wrote. It’s easy to picture him standing over Paul’s shoulder and saying, “Um, Paul, you forgot someone.”

Paul concludes this section with a focus on the gospel. His purpose in coming to Corinth was not to baptize but to preach the gospel. As Paul will remind them in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, the gospel is the good news “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ... and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” Paul is not lessening the role of baptism but rather elevating the gospel.

**B. Man’s clever speech without the gospel makes the cross useless (v. 17b)**

**not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.**

The gospel is powerful in itself. It doesn’t need Paul’s or anyone else’s clever speech. The phrase “cleverness of speech” here refers to “manipulative rhetoric.”<sup>22</sup> The gospel changes lives not by manipulating people through stirring up their emotions or with a flashy presentation. People are easily convinced of things when their emotions are involved or when a powerful speaker wows them.

The gospel doesn’t work that way because it changes people at the core of who they are. The reason clever speech makes the gospel void, or of no effect, is because a devotion begun through only an emotional response often needs a return to that same level of emotion—or an even higher one—to sustain the same devotion. The power of the gospel changes us on the inside. We slowly conform to the image of Christ as we remain in Him.

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<sup>22</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 143.

## CONCLUSION

In 2015 two men got into a fight over whether LeBron James or Michael Jordan was the greatest basketball player of all time. One of the men ended up in jail because he chose to use his fists to convince his friend that he was right. His reputation was tarnished over a silly argument. There is no indication that the believers in Corinth ever came to blows over Paul or Apollos, but it doesn't take jail time to tarnish Christ's reputation.

When believers are not united, the power of the gospel to change lives is put into question and Jesus appears unable to solve our problems. He becomes no better than a failed government or education system helpless to fix society's pressing issues. When believers are united, the world will take notice. We then have the opportunity to tell them about the power of the gospel to unite us despite our differences.

How then do we live out this text? As believers, we need to make sure that our boast is only in Jesus Christ. It must not be in another person. However wonderful a pastor or author or speaker may be, he cannot forgive your sin. He cannot make you more Christlike. He cannot secure your place in eternity. Boast only in Christ.

We must also never take pride in our own wisdom or ability to speak well. No matter how persuasive we may be, only the Holy Spirit transfers someone from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of God as that person trusts in Christ. Any time we attempt to communicate with others about Jesus, we need to depend upon the Holy Spirit in prayer to reveal Christ to the one we speak to. Depend only on Christ's Spirit.

We need to know that we can only achieve the unity that God requires of His children when we are united around Christ's death and resurrection. When we repent and put our faith in the death and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sins, we become one with Him. Any unity we may find outside of Christ is not strong enough to unite people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. A unity outside of Christ is either based on characteristics that are limited to a certain group of people or based on characteristics that are not permanent. Be united only in Christ.

## Prayer

Father, we confess that it is only because of the blood of Christ that we can, as a church, come into Your presence. We thank You that You gave Your Son that we might be one in Him. We thank You that Jesus is the only one worthy of our allegiance. Help us through the power of Your Spirit to love one another with Your love. Help us to put away any idols we have made of men. Help us to be men and women of prayer and trust in Your work in people's lives rather than our own words. Father, as we seek our unity in the cross of Christ, we look forward to seeing how You will use that unity to draw others to Yourself. It is in the name of our precious Savior Jesus that we pray. Amen.



## SERMON EXAMPLES

Begg, Alistair. “Dealing with Division, Parts 1–2 (1 Corinthians 1:10–17).” Truth for Life. [www.truthforlife.org](http://www.truthforlife.org).

This experienced Bible preacher at Parkside Church in Cleveland, OH encourages his church toward Christian unity by considering division and unity according to the following four sermon sections: the pattern of division, the problem of division, the principle of Christian unity, and the priority of Christian unity.

Dever, Mark. “Division (1 Corinthians 1:10–3:23).” Capitol Hill Baptist Church. [www.capitolhillbaptist.org](http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org).

This sermon is an excellent example of preaching a large portion of Scripture. The pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church and founder of 9Marks considers seven expressions of disunity in the first three chapters of the letter to the Corinthians, including a good deal from 1:10–17.

Donnelly, Edward. “Quarreling Church and Crucified Savior (1 Corinthians 1:10–17).” Monergism. [www.monergism.com](http://www.monergism.com).

This Irish Presbyterian pastor considers the four parts of this passage: an obvious problem, an underlying danger, devastating questions, and a solemn appeal. He concludes with three relevant applications that come from the passage.

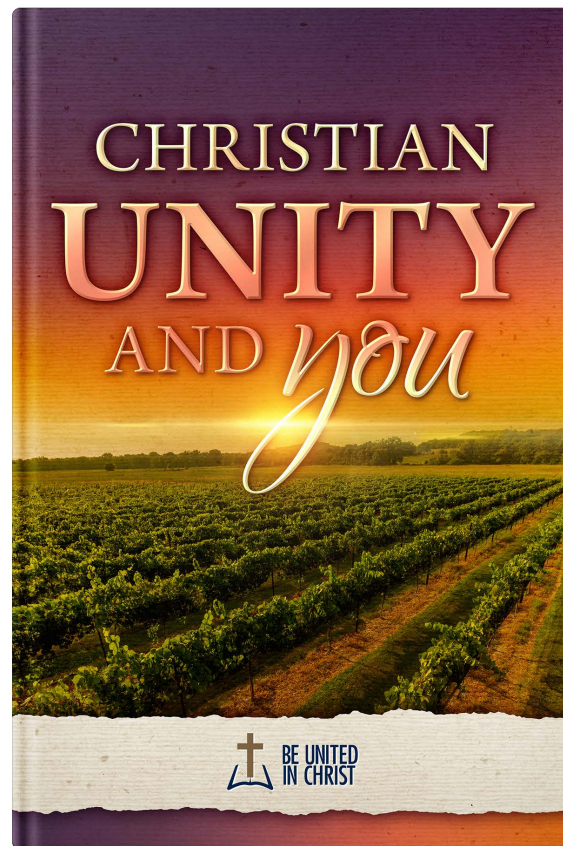
Piper, John. “Christian Unity and the Cross (1 Corinthians 1:10–17).” Desiring God. [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org).

This former pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN describes the nature of disunity, examines how to undermine disunity, and looks at the goal of Christian unity with great Biblical clarity. Piper identifies six “truths” from the text that create the foundation for Christian unity.

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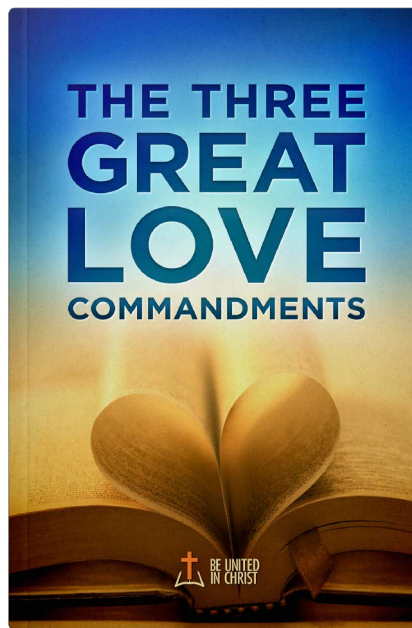


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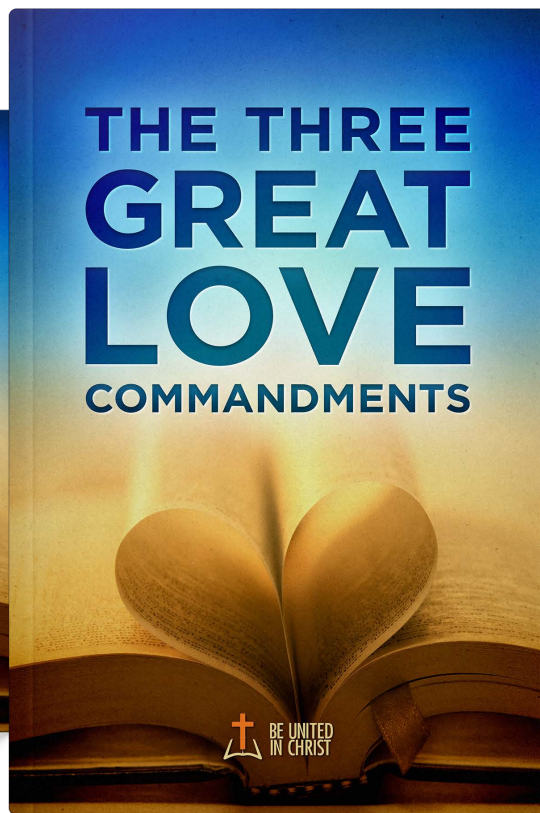
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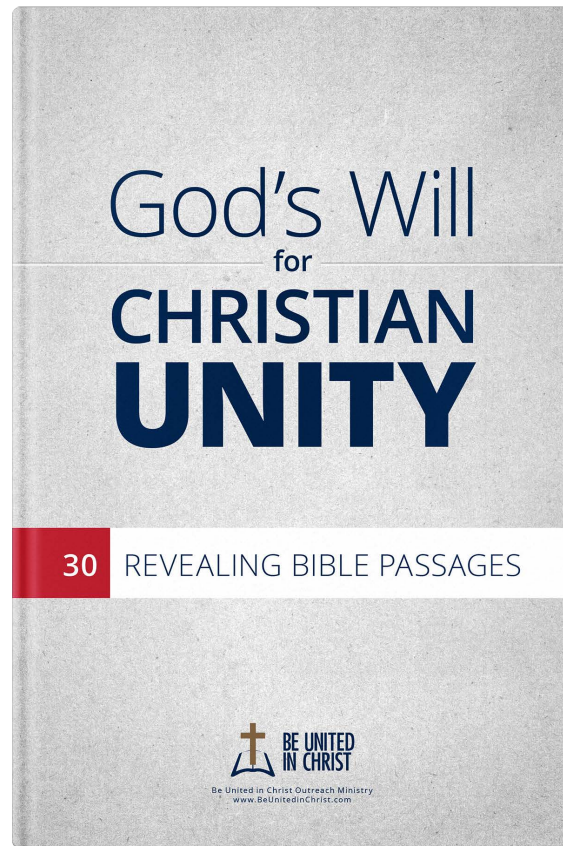
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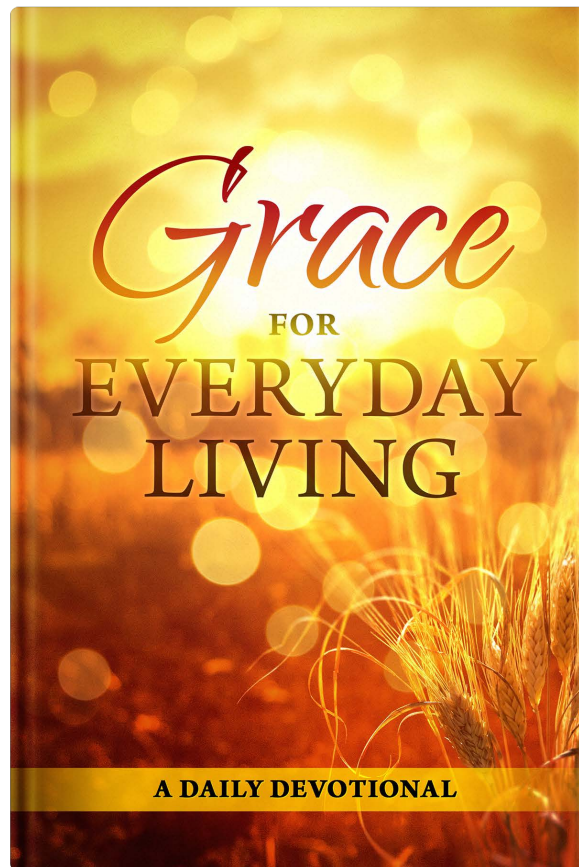
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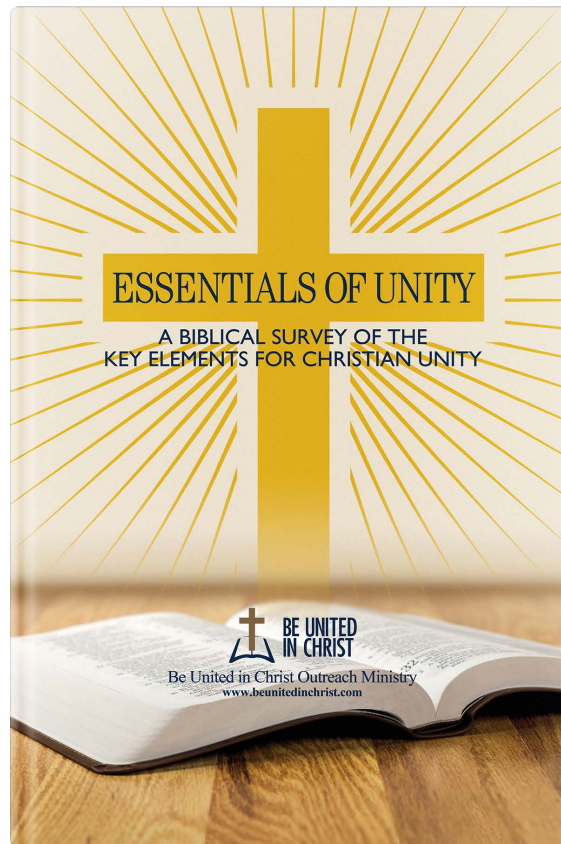
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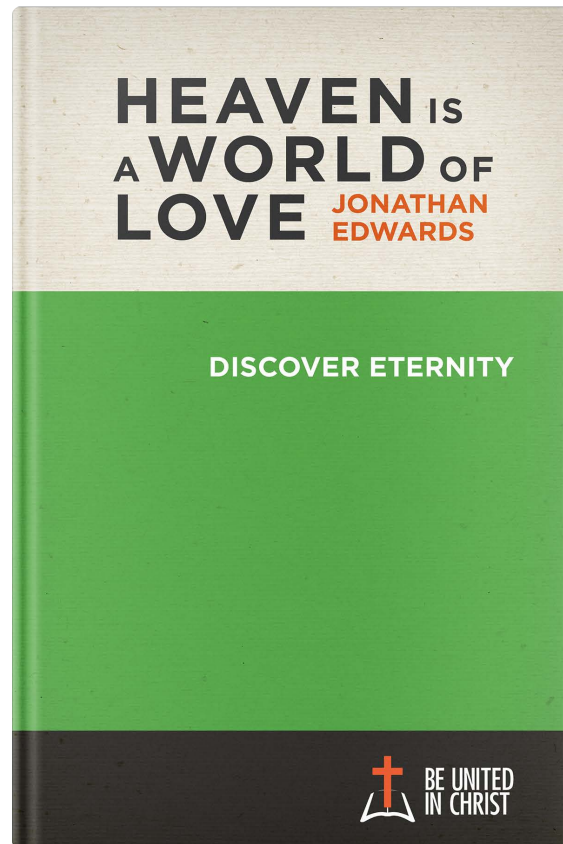
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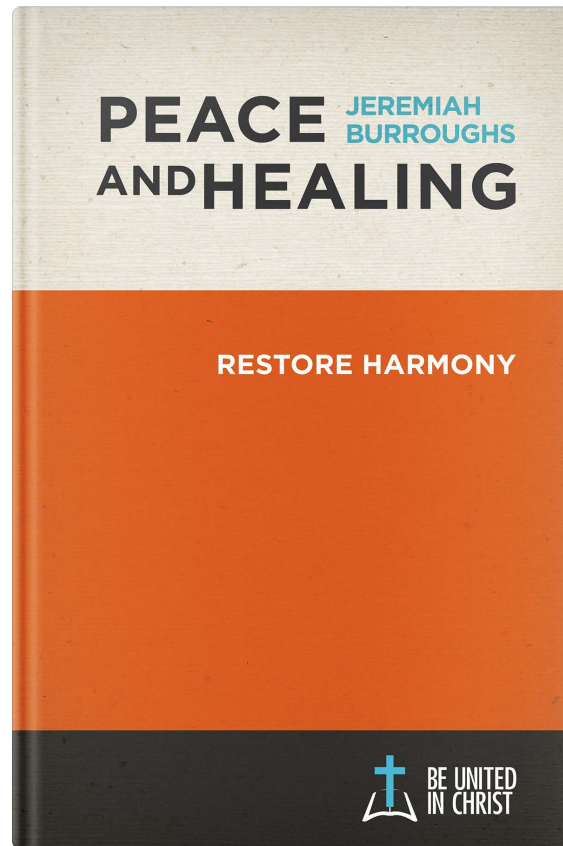
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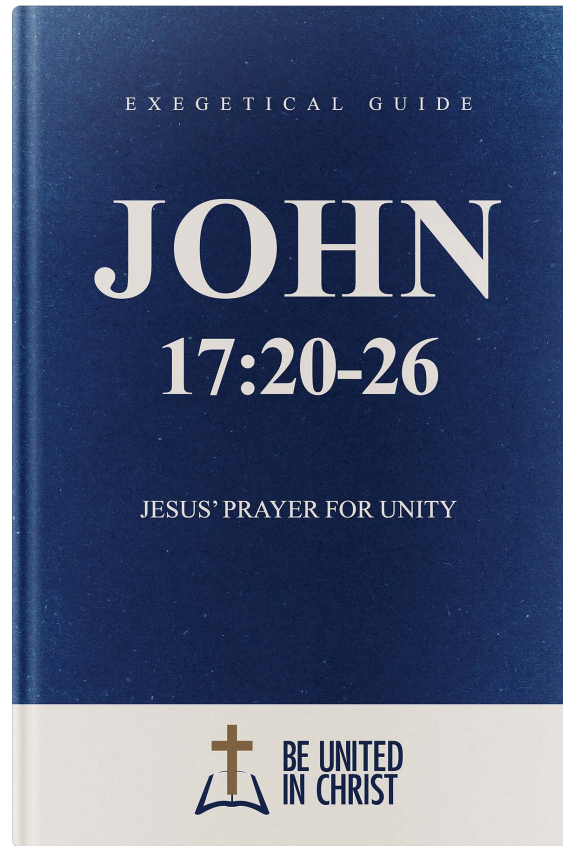
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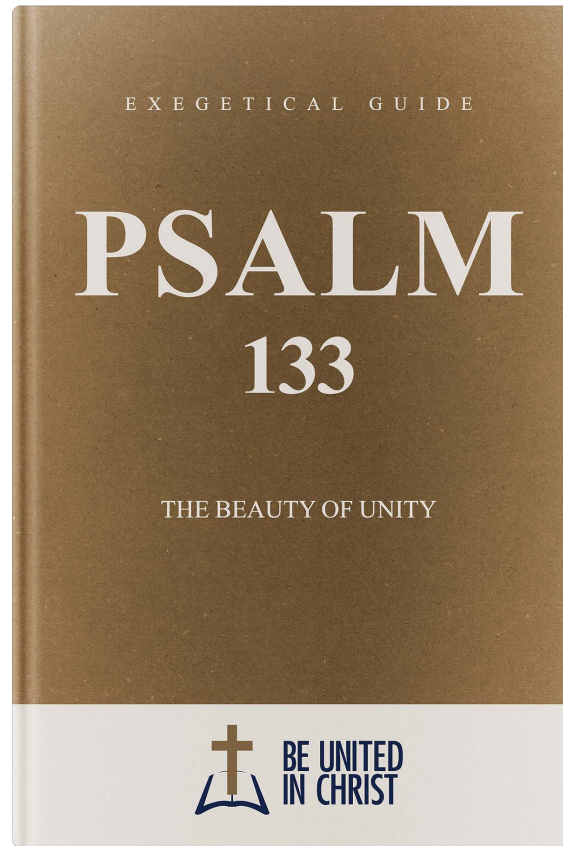


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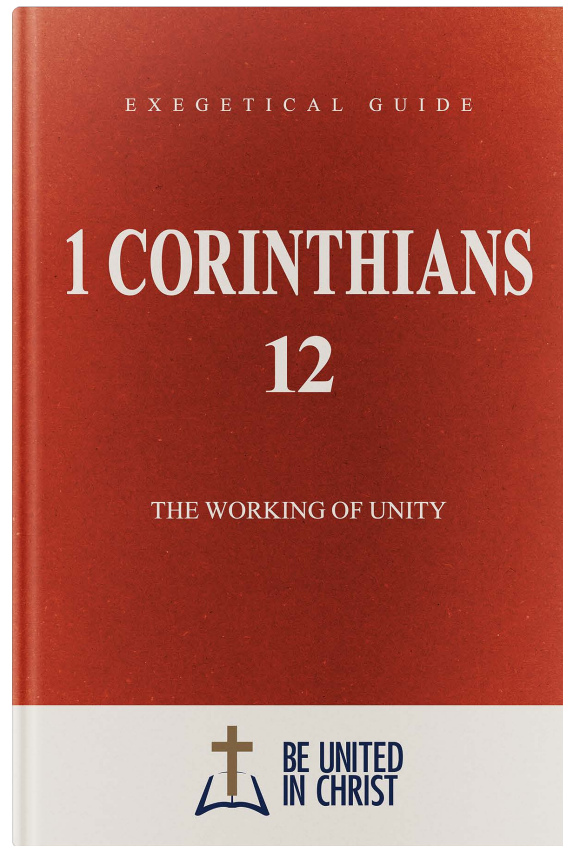


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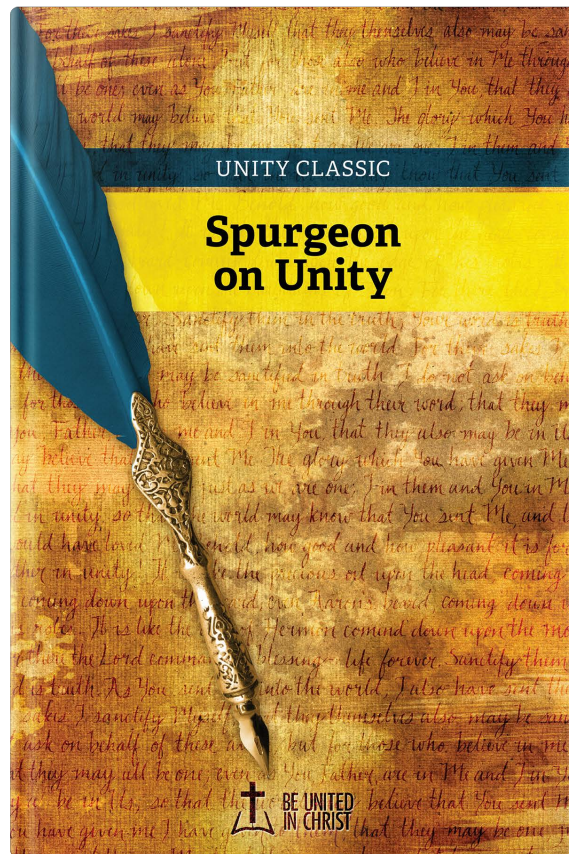
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