

## **DISCOURAGING DIVISIONS AND ENCOURAGING UNITY**

**Scripture: 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. [ESV]

### **1) KNOWING PEOPLE:**

**i) Paul [v.1]**—apostle of Christ and the one whom God used to found the church at Corinth.

**ii) Brothers [v.10,11]**—Corinthians believers. ESV study notes, "The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, adelphoi may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church."

**iii) Chloe's people [v.11]**—a woman, perhaps members of her family or servants.

Gordon D. Fee (b. 1934) summarizes:

- Most likely, therefore, Chloe was a wealthy Asian—whether a Christian or not cannot be known—whose business interests caused her agents to travel between Ephesus and Corinth. Some of them had become Christians and members of the church in Ephesus. (*Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (New International Commentary on the New Testament), 54*)

**iv) Apollos [v.12]**—Acts 18:24ff records that Apollos was a Jew, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus and defended the gospel of Christ. He was a learned man, thorough with the Scriptures and a skillful orator.

**v) Cephas [v.12]**—That is Peter, one among the twelve apostles of Christ Jesus.

**vi) Christ [v.12]**—The Creator and Redeemer.

**vii) Crispus [v.14]**—Acts 18:8, "Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized."

**viii) Gaius [v.14]**—Paul's fellow companion from Macedonia. In Ephesus, Acts 19:29, "So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius

and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel." And in Rom. 16:23, "Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you."

**ix) Household of Stephanas [v.16]**— 1 Cor. <sup>15</sup> "Now I urge you, brothers —you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints— <sup>16</sup> be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. <sup>17</sup> I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, <sup>18</sup> for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such people."

## 2) KNOWING PROBLEM:

1: <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."

What was the problem in Corinthian church? Divisions [σχίσμα, schism] and quarreling among them.

- The church is meant to be one body but they have ripped apart the body of Christ. Divisions and quarrels ruins the essence of the church.

### How did divisions and quarrels creep into Corinthian church?

#### ❖ Four Parties:

1: <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."

#### a) Paul's Party

Paul came to Corinth, preached the gospel to the people and established the church. Some might have become strongly attached to Paul, seeing him as their spiritual founder and father, and claimed to be his followers.

- This could be an adoring party.

#### b) Apollos Party

Apollos also preached at Corinth. It is said that he is a learned man, had thorough knowledge of the Scripture and a skillful orator. Acts 18:27-19:1, <sup>27</sup> "And when he [Apollos] wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, <sup>28</sup> for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus." 19: <sup>1</sup> "And it happened that while

Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples.”

Some might have been strongly impressed with his knowledge and oratory and claimed to be his followers.

- This could be an intellectual party.

### c) Peter's Party

Peter might have also visited Corinth and ministered to those people for a while. He was an apostle to the Jews. He had a strong inclination to please the Jews (Gal. 2). Some Jewish people might have become strongly attached to Peter and claimed to be his followers.

- This could be a Jewish party.

### d) Christ's Party

This sounds strange, for this could be perceived in a positive sense. However, these people could have claimed their allegiance only to Christ, rejecting the importance of church and disregarding the leadership of church. They might have focused only on their personal relationship and experience of Christ, neglecting His words to love the church and submit to its leadership.

- This could be an over-spiritual party.

## 3) KNOWING HOW TO DISCOURAGE DIVISIONS AND ENCOURAGE UNITY

**Note:** Divisions and quarrels are unavoidable in church, but we need to know how to deal with them.

### i) Emphasize and plead for unity in the church in the name of Christ Jesus.

1:10, “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.”

- *For Christ's sake* [because it was the prayer of Jesus in His high priestly prayer], *for brotherhood sake* [because we are members of one family, God's family], both the leaders and believers should encourage each other to live in unity.
- When any talk and conduct in the church encourages divisions, don't entertain them but emphasize and plead for unity and love.

### ii) Inform the leadership of the church to resolve divisions and disunity.

1:11, "For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers."

- This isn't gossip and should be done with a concerned heart for the unity of the church.
- Leaders don't know all things that are happening. Generally, people behave well before them. So, it is good to inform them to help the church.

### iii) Don't idolize leaders.

1:12 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."

- It is good to learn from leaders and imitate them but don't speak too much about them. Speak often about Christ and the Word of God.
- It is virtuous to be grateful to leaders but beware of excessive devotion. If a leader is a blessing, say, "God used...God did through..."
- Don't compare one leader with another leader. Remember, everyone is different. Appreciate without comparison.
- Don't focus on building relationship with one leader. Build relationship with various leaders to learn various lessons from them and to avoid excessive attention towards one person.
- Don't focus just on building personal relationship with a leader but also focus on building personal relationship with the church. 1 Cor. 14:26, "All should be done for the edification of the church."
  - Even in the church, don't just focus on building relationship with your favorites. See how you together can love and serve the church.

### iv) Christian focus should be only on Christ balanced with love for the church and submission to leadership.

<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

- Focus on the Unity of Christ [Is Christ divided?] Christ is all and for all. One Christ.
- Focus on the Crucifixion of Christ [Was Paul crucified for you?]
- Focus on the Lordship of Christ [Were you baptized in the name of Paul?]
- Remember, focusing on people brings divisions, rivalry, quarrels. Focusing on Christ brings unity, peace and love.

### v) Ministry should be shared, lest one person becomes a centre of attraction to people.

1:14 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.

- Paul might have avoided giving baptism to all, lest he become the centre of attention.
- Teaching, Counseling, Visiting, Helping, Baptism, Leading celebrations [birthdays, marriages..etc], in short—all church activities should be shared with others. This builds body ministry than one-man show and one-man attraction.

**Life Application Study Bible notes:**

- When Paul said that Christ didn't send him to baptize, he wasn't minimizing the importance of baptism. Baptism was commanded by Jesus himself (Matt. 28:19) and practiced by the early church (Acts 2:41). Paul was emphasizing that no one person should do everything . . . Christian ministry should be a team effort.

**Summary:**

- i) Emphasize and plead for unity in the church in the name of Christ Jesus.
- ii) Inform the leadership of the church to resolve divisions and disunity.
- iii) Don't idolize leaders.
- iv) Christian focus should be only on Christ balanced with love for the church and submission to leadership.
- v) Ministry should be shared, lest one person becomes a centre of attraction to people.

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- 1) How many people [write their names] are mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:11-17?
  
- 2) What is the core problem that Paul talks about in the Corinthian church?
  
- 3) What should you do when you hear talk or conduct that encourages divisions?
  
- 4) What should you do when you see the increase of divisions and conflicts in church?
  
- 5) What cautions we need to consider in our attachment towards church leaders?
  
- 6) Our focus should be on Christ but with what should you balance this?
  
- 7) What should we do in order to avoid one-man show and one-man attention?
  
- 8) How did God use this teaching to speak and encourage your heart?
  
- 9) Do you have any doubts or questions regarding the teaching?