

01/31/10

The Cross Centered Family – 1 Corinthians 1:1-25

- In his book **Not the Way It's Supposed to Be**, author and theologian **Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.** introduces his discussion on the nature of sin by recalling a scene from the movie Grand Canyon... he says...
 - **In the film, an immigration attorney breaks out of a traffic jam and attempts to bypass it. His route takes him along streets that seem progressively darker and more deserted. Then the predictable *Bonfire of the Vanities* nightmare: his expensive car stalls on one of those alarming streets whose teenage guardians favor expensive guns and sneakers. The attorney does manage to phone for a tow truck, but before it arrives, five young street toughs surround his disabled car and threaten him with considerable bodily harm. Then, just in time, the tow truck shows up and its driver—an earnest, genial man—begins to hook up to the disabled car. The toughs protest: the truck driver is interrupting their meal. So the driver takes the leader of the group aside and attempts a five-sentence introduction to metaphysics: "Man," he says, "the world ain't supposed to work like this. Maybe you don't know that. But this ain't the way it's supposed to be. I'm supposed to be able to do my job without askin' you if I can. And that dude is supposed to be able to wait with his car without you rippin' him off. Everything's supposed to be different than what it is here."**
 - Then Plantinga says, **The tow truck driver is an heir of St. Augustine, and his summary of the human predicament belongs in every book of theology. For central in the classic Christian understanding of the world is a concept of the way things are supposed to be. They ought to be as designed and intended by God, both in creation and in graceful restoration of creation. They are supposed to include peace that adorns and completes justice, mutual respect, and deliberate and widespread attention to the public good.**
- This was also the problem at the church of Corinth...things were not the way they were supposed to be...
 - Paul had taught them the gospel...the good news about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ...
 - and many had repented and believed...and as a result, a baby church was planted in that important center of bustling commerce, and exciting athletics, and idolatrous and immoral religion...
 - the problem was – the baby was not growing up...instead of maturing in the things of God...and allowing the gospel to continue to direct their relationships with one another...after Paul left they had become petty, and divided, and therefore unable to accomplish the mission as individuals, as families, and as a church that God had ordained for them in their city and in their world...
 - things were not the way they were supposed to be...because needless division dishonors God...and at the heart of that division lies the sinful pride of man...
 - Plantinga went on to say...
 - **As the great writing prophets of the Bible knew, sin has a thousand faces. The prophets knew how many ways human life can go wrong because they knew how many ways human life can go right. (You need the concept of a wall on plumb to tell when one is off.) These prophets kept dreaming of a time when God would put things right again.**

- They dreamed of a new age in which human crookedness would be straightened out, rough places made plain. The foolish would be made wise, and the wise, humble. They dreamed of a time when the deserts would flower, the mountains would run with wine, weeping would cease, and people would go to sleep without weapons on their laps. People would work in peace and work to fruitful effect. Lambs could lie down with lions. All nature would be fruitful, benign, and filled with wonder upon wonder; all humans would be knit together in brotherhood and sisterhood; and all nature and all humans would look to God, walk with God, lean toward God, and delight in God. Shouts of joy and recognition would well up from valleys and seas, from women in streets and from men on ships.
- The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call *shalom*. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, *shalom* means *universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight*—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. *Shalom*, in other word is the way things ought to be (Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, pp. 7-10).
- Our church's theme this year is **Taking the Next Step...with Joy**
 - so two weeks ago, we began a verse-by-verse study of the book of 1 Corinthians to help us move toward the way things are supposed to be...
 - I explained when we laid all of this out that there would be times in this study where we would take pit-stops, or field trips...and this is one of those days...
 - because the information we've studied from chapter 1 gives us a marvelous opportunity to think about what it means to have a **Cross Centered Family**...because regrettably, far too often, the family is the place where things are especially not the way they're supposed to be...
- with that in mind, please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 1...page 130 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...I realize that I've gone through these verses at a fairly rapid rate...so we're going to go back today and pick out some of the emphases that can especially direct us in this particular topic...
- now, here are a couple of other thoughts before we read this passage...
 1. I understand, and am glad, that we have many men and women with us who are single today...but much of what we're going to study about the family can be carried right over to your friendships, and your interactions at work, etc...We also have a couple of places this morning that are directed specifically to men and women who are single...(so be looking for them)
 2. We understand that "strengthening families" has to be a core concern and emphasis right now...the Lord has blessed us with many people who are new [cf. our attendance in January]...and the concept of the family is under attack in many ways...so we have to zero in on this topic if we are going to be the church God wants us to be...
- also, many of our ABF's will be doing an extended study on marriage and the family that Pastor Dutton is preparing – that is slated to begin next month...so we really are serious about this issue of Taking the Next Step...With Joy...

3. Let me say one more thing to you about this that is an area of concern for our pastors...
- many of the persons who are new to our church come with a fair amount of baggage...but what we are observing as a pastoral staff is that in many cases, those same individuals are often quite ready to learn what Scripture says and then repent and begin heading the right direction...that's fine – that's the way the process ought to work...
 - what really concerns us is the number of folks who have been followers of Christ for a long time, or part of this church family for a long time...who frankly are wrestling with sinful tendencies in their families that long ago should have been put behind them...
 - so what we're talking about today isn't just for those new people – it's for all of us...it's the expectation around here that wherever we find ourselves in our spiritual journey, we will all make serious attempts this year to get to a better place to take the next step...and we'll actually come to the place of enjoying it as we do...

- with that in mind, let's read some of our core verses for today...**read 1 Corinthians 1:10-18**
- we're talking about "the Cross-Centered Family"...and let's look for **3 characteristics of the family developing peace and unity the way it's supposed to be.**

I. They Agree that Jesus Christ is the Head of Their Home.

- Paul made a series of statements in verse 10 that need to be carefully considered...

A. Learn the beauty of agreement.

1 Corinthians 1:10 - Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree...

- let's break that down very carefully...

1. The nature of Paul's appeal

- the word "**exhort**" – **parakaleo** – from the same root that we have one of the greatest names of the Holy Spirit, the **Comforter, Helper**, the One who comes alongside and aides God's people in their struggles...
- that is what Paul is doing here...He exhorts them, he's coming alongside to help...
- as a complete aside, we often speak about the noutheteo word group when discussing personal ministry – which often emphasizes the need for confrontation...but we are equally if not committed to parakaleo---comforting those who are suffering, or coming alongside those who are sinning and helping them in their struggle...
- that's the way Paul is coming to the Corinthians...as someone seeking to help them overcome their lack of unity...
- this is the same word, by the way, that we find in the book of Philemon...when Paul said to his friend... **Philemon 8-9 - Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—**
- that is the nature of the way Paul is addressing this issue with the Corinthians...please also think about the basis of this appeal to learn the beauty of agreement...

2. The basis of Paul's appeal

- **v. 10 - by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...**
- that too is a delightful study in Scripture...the power of the name of Jesus...
- for example, in Acts 5, when the high priest hauled the apostles into their court and said...**Acts 5:28 - We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.**

- later in the text we read...that...**Acts 5:40** - ...after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them.
- and the hope was that a good beating would make them rethink their commitment to living and ministering in the name of Jesus...but in the very next verse you read...
Acts 5:41 - **So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name.**
- they took the issue of being a Christian, a “little Christ” seriously...they were so committed to it that “suffering shame for His name” was a cause for rejoicing...
 - well, that’s the basis of Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians...
 - you should seek peace, you should seek shalom, you should seek unity—the way it’s supposed to be...by/for the name...of Jesus...// what about...

3. The content of Paul’s appeal

- v. 10 – that you all agree.

- now, you might say – what does that mean?...the original text literally says this – that you all say the same thing...
 - now, chew on that for a minute...say the same thing about what?...about their favorite football team, about their preference in restaurants, about who they voted for in the last election?...
 - of course not – “say the same thing about how Jesus Christ is your head...Lord...He’s the One for whom you’re living... He’s the One in charge...
 - **Gordon Fee – “...’in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ’. This phrase picks up the Christological emphasis from the thanksgiving, and thus serves as the ground of the appeal. Possibly the use of the phrase ‘in the name of’ anticipates the baptismal argument in v. 13. That is, they belong to Christ alone, having been baptized in his name, not in the name of Paul or one of the others. (Fee, p. 53)**
- see, how do you achieve unity in a family...it’s certainly not in trying to make everyone carbon copies of one another---and anyone who’s raised children knows how different your children can be...
- but what draws all that diversity together is a common commitment to a unified head, namely the Lord Jesus Christ...
- here’s the principle – show me a family where each person is trying to submit themselves to Christ and His Word, and I’ll show you a family that is moving toward shalom...peace...unity...the way it’s supposed...
- conversely – when people have not figured out the “who’s in charge of this piece”...it’s practically impossible to have any kind of unity in that home...
- now, the other phrases in the verse just reinforce the point...

B. Seek to avoid divisions.

- v. 10 that there be no divisions among you.

- some people drip division...it would appear that they like to fight...
- and as you watch those people operate, they have some sort of argument going in their family, and something at work, and a running argument with the neighbors and the in-laws...
- and at some point you have to conclude...there’s no possible way every person in that individuals life could be so consistently wrong...
- and the interesting thing is – since people like that tend to eventually trash so many relationships...after a while, they change out the people in their lives...
 - so they have a new spouse, and a new job, and a new town, and a new church...

- and guess what – the same old division...it's still not the way it's supposed to be...

C. Be made complete in the same mind and the same judgment – v. 10.

- Paul's just stacking idea on top of idea in this verse with the hope of getting our attention...

- and again, it's not – we have to be of the same mind on every subject...

- but when the family decides that Jesus is first...it is amazing how many of those other issues fall in place...and when he's not, families like that can't even figure out where to go to lunch...

- a great verse for this part of the discussion is **Colossians 1:18 - He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.**

- now let me ask you this – whose job is it to stand in front of the line labeled “Jesus has first place in this family” and model what it means to live that way?...

- the answer?...the father...the husband...the man of the house...

- when we get to chapter 11, we are going to see some of the clearest teaching of anywhere in Scripture about male headship in the home...

- and I realize that may not be a particularly popular topic in our culture...but being politically correct is not a particularly high value around here...

- in fact, it's ignoring Scripture's teaching on such topics that have gotten our culture into the mess we're in...

- but we're not here to talk about how bad culture is – we're here to talk about whether we are contributing to unity in our families by joyfully agreeing that Jesus is going to be the head of this home...

- husbands/fathers – if your wife, or worse—your kids, are the ones who are most concerned about spiritual things in your family...that needs to change...

- if they're having to drag you to church...or having to beg you to pray, and on and on---that is the polar opposite of the way God wants it to be...

- and I'm glad for the many men in our church who get this – and if you happen to be married to such a man, or if your father's such a man...I hope you are joyfully following that lead...

- another idea we can bring into this discussion is – you never know when you might be called into account...we had some very sad news from a sister church in Crawfordsville this week...

- many of you remember Terry Thompson, who has spoken here in our services and is a tremendous pastor – in fact, we just had Terry come and speak to our seminary students about preaching a couple of months ago...

- God has blessed their church numerically and they have just completed a new church building and last Sunday was scheduled to be their dedication Sunday...

- they also have a pastoral staff member named Kurt Glancy who oversees their counseling ministry...

- Kurt has been to our biblical counseling training program here on Mondays – he's been to many of our Biblical Counseling Training Conferences in February – in fact I went out to dinner with Kurt and several others from their staff at one of our recent conferences...

- Kurt was 41 years old, young wife and 2 small children – the Monday before they were to dedicate their new building, Kurt was playing in a community basketball league and collapsed and died of a heart attack...

- the first funeral they held in their new building was for one of their pastors....a man who has been on this campus many times...

- and for anyone who is thinking – I know Jesus is not first in my life or in my family right now, but as soon as I get that degree, or as soon as I get that promotion, or as soon as we get that bigger house or better car...then we'll get our spiritual house in order...
- the lesson from Kurt's story is – there may not be a "then"...and some Christian families are wasting an incredible amount of time arguing and bickering as if they'll always have another day to turn it around...

D. A word to singles.

- I hope you'll make it your goal to be sure that Christ is first place in your life and your relationships...
- and instead of being argumentative, God would want you to do everything you can to be a peacemaker, a unifier whenever possible...
- and if you ever are in a dating relationship – the essential characteristic that should be on the top of your list of qualifications is – is Jesus Christ the name for which this person is living...

E. A word to the church.

- obviously these verses are written in the context of relationships inside the church...
- and I just want to say – I am so glad for the many people around here who get this...
- God has blessed us with a tremendous sense of unity here...I hope we never take that for granted...
- [could talk about – how powerful a model that will be to many of our conference guests---no longer here on Sundays, but they'll pick it up throughout the week)

- here's another characteristic of the family developing peace and unity the way it's supposed to be...

II. They Find Power in the Cross of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:18 - For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- I think we would add an addendum to that..."if we let it be"...
- the cross can be the power of God in our families if we let it be...

A. Instead of petty power grabs in the family.

- if you ask yourself, what is the source of disunity in many families...
- here's the answer – there's this ongoing power struggle...oftentimes between multiple family members...
- and it comes out in all sorts of ways...
- obviously the most insidious would be physical abuse...when the power in the family is one person's abusive words, or actions...
- there are few things worse than a person using their might or their power to physically intimidate another member of the family...
- the Christian home should be the safest place on earth...
- and if you say – but what if it's not....what if my husband is physically abusive to me?...and the assumption that you have confronted him about that and he has not genuinely repented, and I'm sure you have...then you need to come and tell someone at the church right now...
- and if you say – but isn't there supposed to be a second step of church discipline?...the first two deacons who box your husband's ears will be considered the second step of church discipline...
- and I'm obviously exaggerating for purposes of effect...but submission does not mean that a person has to quietly tolerate abusive treatment...and this church has a very clear track record of dealing with spousal abuse rapidly...

- and that's true for a hundred reasons, including the fact that the power of the cross is obscured when a person abuses their own power in the home...
- now, these power grabs take on a lot of other forms...
 - some people vie for power by moodiness, or doing just enough to get by, or bargaining for sex, or out of control spending...
 - "you're not going to tell me what to do"...is the mantra of the person who is living for their own power instead of the power of the cross...
 - this can even be true of children who absolutely refuse to obey their parents...
 - and this text is pretty clear about what God promises to do to people who will not let the cross be their source of strength and power...
- now, what's the positive side of the discussion...

B. Seek the power of Christ's death.

1. Regarding your sinful desires.

- In his book *I Really Want to Change...So Help Me God*, James MacDonald has a chapter entitled "I'm Dead to That."
- and if you've read that book, you know he begins each chapter with a "Say it in a sentence." -- here's the summary sentence for that chapter... **For life change to happen, we must apply the power of our identification to Christ at the specific point of temptation.** (James MacDonald, *I Really Want to Change...So Help Me God*, p. 119)
- many of the arguments in the home aren't about anything particularly important – it's just people insisting that they have to have their way...
- the irony is, some Christians live that way while wearing a cross around their neck...you need to connect your jewelry with your working theology...
- what about learning the power of putting that desire to death?...
- **Philippians 2:3-4 - Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**
- it can be such a beautiful thing when people live that way in the home...
 - Kris and I have been talking about our long-range housing plans with Drew...
 - we don't know if we should make some modifications to our home to care for him long term...
 - should we look for another house – think about building some-day...
 - but she said something interesting as we were discussing this – I've very thankful for our home, I certainly don't need anything bigger or nicer, we just need to be sure we can care for our son the best way possible...
 - I publically praise God for a wife who doesn't live for material things, or put constant pressure on our budget by outrageous spending or unreasonable demands or just an incessant desire for more and more stuff...
- all of that sucks shalom right out of the room...and conversely, when people put it to death...it provides an opportunity for the power of God to be put on display...

2. Regarding your sinful thoughts.

- some homes are in a constant state of turmoil because family members think the worst of each other...

- they interpret one another's actions in the worst possible light and assign the worst possible motivation to each/every action...
- that is a very unloving and powerless thing to do...
- **1 Corinthians 13:7 – Love...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

3. Regarding your sinful words.

- if one of the reasons there is a lack of unity in the home is because of divisive speech, those kinds of words need to be put to death...
 - **Colossians 4:6 - Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.**
 - and learning to crucify words that don't fit that description is a very powerful thing...
- I realize the world might see this as giving in, and losing your position and all of that...
- C. Seek the power of Christ's wisdom.**
- when you choose to let the cross be your source of power...there's a kind of godly wisdom that results...
 - **1 Corinthians 1:25 - Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**
 - and when all of this is happening – people are finding their power in the cross of Christ, the resultant unity is a wonderful thing...

- [talk to the church family about the BCC...and ask them to be praying...could quote Dave's e-mail]

D. A word to singles.

- rejoice in the power of Christ [could talk about the way so many singles serve at the BCTC]

E. A word to the church.

- there aren't power struggles around here...or power players...
- when that's absent...there's plenty of room for the power of the cross...

III. They Find Humility in the Cross as Well.

- verses 26-31 encourage the Corinthians to remember that the cross should help them remember the tremendous price that had to be paid for their salvation...and as a result, help us grow in humility...
- **1 Corinthians 1:29 - so that no man may boast before God.**
- Evaluate your family
 - are you taking steps to becoming a cross-centered family?
 - and therefore things are becoming the way they are suppose to be.