

## “Unite and Conquer” (1 Corinthians 1:10-17)

C.S. Lewis has written a book entitled *The Screwtape Letters*. In this haunting work a senior demon advises his young nephew, Wormwood, how to afflict Christians. At one point, he challenges Wormwood to focus in on what he calls “purely indifferent things” (e.g., clothes, candles, the semantics of “mass” and “holy communion”).<sup>1</sup> This demon believes that if Wormwood persuades Christians to focus on “purely indifferent things” that they will be distracted from their mission.

Today, there are many “purely indifferent things” that distract Christians and churches from their mission. We call these indifferent things “non-essential issues,” meaning that they have nothing to do with salvation. There are doctrinal, philosophical, and practical non-essentials.<sup>2</sup> While all of these non-essentials are different, they all share one thing in common: Satan loves to use these issues to polarize and divide Christians. His goal has always been to turn Christians against each other. Not only has Satan’s strategy worked for centuries, with every year he learns how to divide us more effectively. He has become so good at his craft that today the greatest problems that face the church come not from the world, but from the church! Satan’s strategy is to divide and conquer, but we must turn the tables on him. We must choose to *unite and conquer*. In 1 Cor 1:10-17, Paul will exhort us to unite and conquer by majoring on the majors. Our two majors are: the right person and the right passion.

**1. Major on the right person (1:10-12).** Paul will argue that we can only have true and lasting unity when we are focused on the right person. Therefore, Paul will argue that we must major on Jesus Christ. In 1:10, Paul begins the body of his letter by expressing his earnest desire for unity.<sup>3</sup> He writes, “**Now<sup>4</sup> I exhort<sup>5</sup> 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.**” Notice three ways Paul approaches the issue of maintaining unity. He does not begin with the problem of disunity, but with a positive exhortation to be unified.

- **Paul’s words are an exhortation, not a command.**<sup>6</sup> He is not going to boss his readers around with his apostolic authority. The flavor of the word “exhort” is very important. An exhortation is an appeal to make a willing choice. Paul wants to convince his readers to make the right choice based on an understanding of truth, not based on his throwing his weight around. One of the lessons I’ve learned in my ministry is that commanding people to do things generally doesn’t work. “Thus saith Keith” seems to have limited impact. There are many times I wish a simple command would work. It would simplify ministry. It would remove lots of frustration and stress. However, lasting change only comes about when people are persuaded in their own minds and hearts. Thus, I can’t command you to be unified because unity is truly a matter of the heart. But I can and will appeal for you to unite.
- **Paul addresses his readers as “brethren.”** Again, he is subtly softening the rebuke that he has to deliver. He identifies himself with them: “We are in this together as brothers and sisters in Christ.”<sup>7</sup> He is also reminding them that they belong together and have a common identity in Jesus Christ. It argues the wrongness of their divisions, because such things deny who they are. Likewise, we are brothers and sisters—we are family! When I am concluding emails, I will occasionally sign “Your brother, Keith.” I am not speaking biologically, I am speaking spiritually. The person I am writing to is my brother or sister in Christ. Since that is true, I need to seek to be unified with that person. In the Krell family, one of the principles that we are trying to teach our three children is mutual respect for one another. As parents, Lori and I will come down on each of our children when (not if) they treat one another disrespectfully. We will typically say, “‘He is your brother’ or ‘She is your sister.’ We don’t treat one another like that. We are a family!” This same type of exhortation needs to resound in the body of Christ. Our bond as spiritual brothers and sisters is even greater than our biological bond as family. Therefore, we have an obligation before God and to one another to act as if this is so.

- ***Paul's appeal is grounded in the authority of "our Lord Jesus Christ."*** By exhorting his readers in the name of their Lord Jesus Christ, Paul was putting what he was about to say on the highest level of authority. The Corinthians were to regard Paul's words as coming from the Lord Himself. In 1:9, the Corinthians had been called into fellowship with God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And now they are being lovingly exhorted to live in unity "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Because they're one in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, they ought to be one in fellowship with each other. Paul could be confident in this exhortation because he understood the heartbeat of Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

After these endearing words, Paul jumps right into his primary exhortation. In 1:10, he makes two positive appeals and one negative appeal. The first positive appeal is that "they all agree." But what does this mean? Must we all have identical cookie cutter theology? Do votes taken at a congregational business meeting need to be unanimous? Should all dress alike, sport the same haircut, and never ask questions? Unfortunately, this is not the most helpful translation. It gives the impression that we must all see things the same way. Fortunately, there is a marginal note that tells us that this phrase literally reads "speak the same thing."<sup>9</sup> Now this is quite different from agreeing on everything.<sup>10</sup> This term is an idiom from classical Greek. It was always used to describe political parties or communities that were free from factions. All agreed on what the party platform was, and there was no competition. We commonly hear the same kind of language today from Democrats and Republicans who call for party unity, because disunity undermines their effectiveness. While politicians disagree, they are careful how they do so. They want to present a "united front." As parents, we also understand that we must present a united front. If we aren't united, our kids will play us against each other. If they sense any division, they will work it to their full advantage. This principle of "speaking the same thing" also applies in the church. While we are free to disagree, we must do so respectfully. And when it becomes clear that the church and leadership have arrived at a decision, it must be the commitment of every member to unite and support the direction of the church. This is how we can *unite and conquer*.

The other positive appeal is in the phrase "that you be made complete in the same mind"<sup>11</sup> and in the same judgment."<sup>12</sup> The word translated "made complete" (*katartizo*) is used in the gospels to describe the mending of fishing nets.<sup>13</sup> The mending process had to be done regularly to make sure they didn't lose their livelihood by losing fish! Relationships have gaps like holes in a net. We must always look out for these holes and be ready to mend them.<sup>14</sup> The Greek verb is also used of restoring bones that are broken.<sup>15</sup> This past week, we traveled to Children's Hospital in Seattle to talk to a surgeon about performing surgery on Joshua's shoulder. We were disappointed to learn that surgery was discouraged. Instead, the doctor recommended steroid injections that, Lord willing, will fill in his shoulder with bone. Our goal is to restore his shoulder to full strength by uniting or joining the bones. That is a picture of what this word means. As a church family, we are to come together as one.<sup>16</sup>

Please notice that the only way Paul envisions being "made complete" is to be involved in the local church. There are millions of western Christians who don't attend church who assume that they are mature and walking with God. Nothing could be further from the truth. Maturity only takes place when we are in fellowship with others because spirituality demands community. You will never know if you are spiritual if you avoid relationships with other Christians. A few weeks ago, I read that Sylvester Stallone of Rocky fame has become a Christian. In an interview, he talked about his tendency to be independent and self-sufficient. But he says he now recognizes his need for the church. Stallone states, "The church is the gym of the soul."<sup>17</sup> He's right; this is where true spirituality works itself out.

So I must ask you: Do you attend church regularly? By regularly, I do not mean once or twice a month, if your schedule permits. I mean every week unless you are sick. When you are out of town, do you seek to fellowship with other Christians so that you can learn from them or vice versa? Are you currently involved in a small group of some kind? There are many options at our church. Have you chosen one? Are you seeking to enter into deep friendships with people in our church?

Paul's point is simple. If oneness of mind and judgment marks the church, it is because Christ is one. Oneness is a basic principle of the Christian church, and that principle should affect our attitude about the church. So often, though, the church is run down most by people who should be building it up.<sup>18</sup> This leads to Paul's lone negative appeal that the church has no divisions. The word "divisions" (*schismata*) recalls furrows created by plowing. This word is used in the gospels to depict a tear in a garment or a wrong opinion about Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup> Paul is saying that these are not minor things. They have no place in the body of Christ. No matter how minor it may seem to us—what we're differing over—the ultimate effect will be destructive to the health of relationships in the church.

Before we move on we must recognize two very important principles:<sup>20</sup>

- ***Disagreement can be healthy.*** While the Bible warns about the dangers of bitter disputes it also urges us to cultivate the art of gracious disagreement. I have found that if I am humble and responsible I can learn a great deal from those who disagree with me. When I graduated from seminary I took a position at a church that did not share many of my doctrinal beliefs, yet I found that this experience helped shape me into who I am today. It instilled in me a love for people who disagree with me on various matters. It developed humility in me, reminding me that I don't have a corner on the truth market. When disagreements arose I learned how to work out issues.
- ***Conflict is unavoidable.*** We don't need to feel guilty just because we are involved in church conflict. Trouble is unavoidable. Conflict will come. It comes to the best of churches, to the best of spiritual elders, to the best of church boards, to the best of friends. Conflict came to Jesus and His inner circle. It came between Paul and Barnabas, and Paul and Peter. Conflict came not only to the immature church of Corinth, but to the much more mature church in Philippi. So the question is not, will conflict come, but *when* will conflict come.

It may help to realize that conflict is like dynamite. It can be helpful if used in the right way, but can also be destructive if used at the wrong time or in the wrong manner. It is quite possible for conflict to be managed for good. Conflict can expose problems that need to be worked out. Conflict can deepen relationships in marriage, family, and church.

In 1:11, Paul explains the problem behind the disunity. Paul writes, **"For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you."** Today, no one knows exactly who Chloe was. She evidently had a household or business that included servants, some of whom had traveled to Corinth and had returned to Ephesus carrying reports of conditions in the Corinthian church. They shared with Paul that there were "quarrels"<sup>21</sup> in the church over various preferences. Please notice that as Paul rebukes the Corinthian church, he gives up his source. He doesn't try to protect her identity. He puts the weight of a reliable testimony behind his words. Our tendency is to say, "There has been a rumor flying around" or "Someone told me..." We try so hard to protect an informant's identity that we blunt our rebuke. Ideally, it should be the "informant" that is going directly to the brother or sister. If he or she is unwilling, then we must get permission to use his or her name.

In 1:12, Paul informs us that the church was picking and choosing preachers based upon personality or giftedness.<sup>22</sup> Paul writes, **"Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas'<sup>23</sup> [Peter], and 'I of Christ.'"** Let's examine for a moment the specific personality cults that had invaded the Corinthian church. First, there was the Paul Party. It was normal that some would appreciate Paul since he had founded the church and had ministered in Corinth with God's blessing for 18 months. This group probably represented the charter members of the Church—those who were the original core group established by Paul, the first pastor. I can just hear some of them crying ruefully, "We'll never have another pastor like Paul. Would that the good ole' days would return!"

Opposing the Paul Party was a second group known as the Apollos Party. Apollos was an Alexandrian Jew, an eloquent preacher, a skillful defender of the faith, and apparently the second pastor of the Corinthian church (Acts 18:24-28).<sup>24</sup> Apollos was mentored and discipled by Paul, but he had a very different personality and style. While Paul was a teacher; Apollos was a gifted preacher. While Paul was a very analytical thinker; Apollos was more of a synthetic thinker.

Then there was the Peter Party. Apparently Peter never visited Corinth, but his name was well-known in Christian circles everywhere, since he was one of Christ's three closest companions. Since Peter was the leading apostle to the Jews, it is understandable that many of the early Christians, especially the Jewish believers, would have venerated him. I suspect the issue at stake here may have been legalism. In Galatians 2 we read about a real heavyweight bout between Paul and Peter. Paul denounced Peter for hypocritically kowtowing to the Jewish legalists in the church. It may very well be that due to that incident Peter acquired a reputation as a champion for the traditionalists, as opposed to Paul's emphasis upon Christian liberty.

The most dangerous group of all in these four examples is the last. Surely Paul means for us to assume "guilt by association" here in 1:12. Paul uses the same words, only changing the name in the case of the last group. It is true that we all should be followers of Christ. But we should not be proud of ourselves for doing so. This fourth group is no less proud or arrogant than the others who are condemned. I am afraid that I understand Paul all too well in this fourth example. Those who think of themselves as being "of Christ" also think of the rest as not being "of Christ." Exclusivism is wrong, even the exclusiveness of those who think themselves superior to all other believers because they follow Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or Christ. Those who boast of their following Christ are effectively declaring themselves to be the leader. Those who are "of Christ" do not need Paul, or Apollos, or Peter. They do not need an apostle. They can discern Christ's mind by themselves, without any outside help from others. These autonomous folks are the most frightening group of all, and Paul makes this clear. This group apparently professed loyalty to no human leader but boasted of their allegiance to Christ alone. They appear to have regarded themselves as the most spiritual element in the church. They had devised their own brand of spiritual elitism that made them no better than the others. The Christ Party felt they had a corner on truth, that they had Christ on a leash and God in a box.<sup>25</sup>

It is appropriate to be grateful for those who are faithful in ministering the Word to us. It is even appropriate to look to them as personal examples and spiritual role models (Heb 13:7). There is no place in the church, however, for celebrity worship. Whenever someone is enamored with my preaching or personality, I can almost always assure you that things will not end well. In eleven years of full-time pastoring, I have seen this again and again. People put me on a pedestal only to have their hopes and expectations dashed. I have almost developed a healthy sense of paranoia, wondering what friend or supporter is going to turn on me next. I think the Lord often allows this to happen when people's hearts are not fixed on Him. That is why it is so important for us to major on the right person. Our focus must be Jesus Christ. He is the only One who will never disappoint.<sup>26</sup>

Verse 13 reveals a side of Paul normally hidden from view. With eyes flashing and voice cracking, a deeply troubled apostle unleashes three rhetorically loaded questions:<sup>27</sup> **"Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"**<sup>28</sup> We might ask similar questions today: Is Billy Graham your Creator? Is Chuck Swindoll the one who sanctified you? Did Charles Stanley die for your sins? Was it Calvin or Arminius who was resurrected from the dead for your justification? Paul's point is that we should not trust in any man, but in Christ. He is the only dependable, trustworthy One. If Christians today placed their eyes upon Christ instead of pastors and leaders, there would be a whole lot of Christians filling our churches. Depending on who you read, there are anywhere from 50-100 million Christians who do not attend church. In many cases, they have dropped out of church due to disappointment with a pastor or various conflicts within the leadership of the church.

This is a crying shame! It is this travesty that is rendering the church so powerless. We take ourselves and others so seriously and we take God so lightly. Today, will you make a commitment to *unite and conquer*? Will you major on Christ and not His followers?

[Paul wants us to unite and conquer. To do so, we must major on the right person, but we must also...]

**2. Major on the right passion (1:14-17).** In 1:14-16 Paul writes, **“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup> Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.”<sup>29</sup>** Crispus was the ruler of the synagogue in which Paul preached when he first came to Corinth (Acts 18:8). Crispus was won to faith through Paul’s teaching. Gaius may be the same person as Titus Justus. This man was a Gentile convert who lived next door to the synagogue and opened his home to the church after the Christians could no longer meet in the synagogue (Acts 18:7; Rom 16:23). Paul deliberately did not baptize his converts so there would be no question as to whose disciples they were. This was one way he kept Christ central in his ministry. Paul believed baptism was important, but it was valid whether he or any other believer administered it. He was not superior to other believers in this respect. The members of Stephanus’ family were the first converts in the Roman province of Achaia (16:15). It was unimportant to Paul whom he personally baptized. This is clear because he temporarily forgot that he had baptized these people. As he continued to write, the Lord brought them to mind.

Obviously, baptism is a very prominent theme in these verses, mentioned six times here by Paul. I take it that some, at least, took pride in the person who baptized them. Some people appear to have been proud and looked down on others who were not baptized by as great a celebrity as their baptizer. Paul lets the air out of the tires of these proud name droppers by telling them that baptism is not a celebrity affair, and compared to the preaching of the gospel, baptizing is a lower priority to him. Do they take pride in the one who baptizes them? Paul is glad he has not made baptizing a priority, and thus that he has baptized very few of the Corinthians.

Paul, Peter (Acts 10:48), and Jesus (John 4:1-2) seem to have delegated the responsibility of baptism to others.<sup>30</sup> I do the very same thing. I try not to baptize people unless I have been instrumental in their spiritual lives. Instead, my goal is to have parents, siblings, friends, and disciplers conduct baptisms. This can be more meaningful to the person being baptized and it empowers those who aren’t pastors to lead. Furthermore, there is biblical precedence for it.

Paul closes our passage in 1:17 with these powerful words: **“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.”** Paul’s mission was not dunking converts; it was preaching the gospel! It is thus evident that Paul viewed his preaching of the gospel as having a much higher priority than baptizing new converts. It can hardly be overlooked that Paul saw salvation as something which occurs independently of baptism. Baptism is important. It is the believer’s public identification with Jesus Christ. But baptism is not viewed as the means of one’s salvation; rather it is the outward manifestation of salvation. Paul rejects the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Otherwise, if he thought baptism was the means of salvation, he would have made it a much higher priority than he did. People are saved by believing the gospel, and it was Paul’s priority to preach it. Baptism took second place to preaching in Paul’s life and ministry.

Disunity causes the greatest threat to our survival as a church. Jesus Christ is the one ground of unity.<sup>31</sup> The gospel is the primary mission of the church. We are called to divide and conquer. This will happen when we major on the majors—the right person and the right mission.

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**Scripture Reference**

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

1 Corinthians 11:18

John 17:20-26

Romans 12:16

Philippians 1:27

Philippians 2:2; 4:2

1 Peter 3:8-9

**Study Questions**

1. How important is unity in the church? What proactive actions have I taken to maintain unity in the church? How have I responded when I have heard or seen a fellow Christian breeding disunity?
2. If I disagree with the leadership of the church on a non-essential point, how should I appropriately respond? How can I be true to my conscience, yet “speak the same thing” and “be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment?” What does this practically look like? Ultimately, what is more important, my personal preference or the overall health of the church?
3. Is my view of the leadership of our church healthy? Why or why not? Hebrews 13:7, 17 states: “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith...Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” What can I do to ensure that I am heeding these Scriptures? How can I balance these commands while not thinking too highly of my leaders?
4. Do contentious cliques exist in our church? If so, who or what defines these cliques? Should we attempt to eradicate them? Before answering that question, what is the difference between a contentious clique and a group of people in the same stage of life who share common interests?
5. Why is Christian unity a witness to the world? How does our unity affect the spread of the gospel? Read John 17 and Ephesians 4. What can I do to maintain the unity in my church and county church?
6. Do I honestly believe water baptism is important? If so, when and how have I encouraged others to be baptized? What was the result? Do I really believe that preaching is important? Why or why not? What is my view of preaching? What is my view of the Scriptures? How do I pass this on to my spouse, children, and friends?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996), Letter 16, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> For a helpful book see Gerald L. Sittser, *Loving Across Our Differences* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> See also Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians: Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 21.

<sup>4</sup> The adversative conjunction *de* (“now,” “but,” “and”) sets what follows in contrasts to the preceding. The NET, NIV, ESV, and NLT omit this. Fortunately, the NASB, NRSV, HSB, and NKJV include it.

<sup>5</sup> The verb *parakalo* (“I exhort”) appears in the final unit (4:14-21) of this section (4:16), so that Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians brackets 1:10-4:21. See David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 41 and Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 111-115.

<sup>6</sup> I would expect an imperative; instead *parakaleo* is in the indicative mood.

<sup>7</sup> Paul uses the term “brethren” (*adelphos*) 39 times in 1 Corinthians. This is far and away the most frequent use in any of his letters (next are Romans and 1 Thessalonians, each with 19). Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1958] 1990), 39.

<sup>8</sup> The apostle John records the final words that Jesus shared with His 12 disciples in John 13-17. These were urgent words because in only a few hours He would be arrested. A terrible death would follow. Yet, with death breathing down His neck, it was unity that occupied the mind of Christ. Jesus said, “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. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me” (John 17:20-23). Jesus’ most critical concerns were for the unity of His disciples. This must be our dying wish as well. For an excellent article, see Paul Thigpen, “Why Should I Care about Unity?” *Discipleship Journal* Issue 101, 1997, pp. 34-39.

<sup>9</sup> The HSB (“say the same thing”) and NKJV (“speak the same thing”) render this appropriately.

<sup>10</sup> Paul believed strongly in diversity in the church. In chapter 12 he will stress that there are varieties of gifts, varieties of ministries, and varieties of results. And later he states specifically that “the Body is not one member but many.” What the Apostle is seeking is *not* group-think in the church; he’s *not* suggesting that we should all be carbon-copies of one another. Rather he’s seeking a united testimony and inward harmony. There *can* be legitimate difference of opinion and difference of view-point without treating those with whom we disagree as enemies.

<sup>11</sup> Fee has this helpful insight when he indicates the Greek term rendered “mind” (*nous*) “... here means something close to ‘disposition’ (J. Beam, TANT IV, 958) or ‘way of thinking’ (BAGD), cf. 2:16, where in contrast to the people of the world who do not have the Spirit, Paul says, ‘But *we* have the *nous* Christ,’ which in this case means something closer to the actual thinking or plans of Christ.” Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 53 n. 29.

<sup>12</sup> When the apostles and the rest of the 120 saints gathered in the upper room (Acts 1:12-14), they were all like-minded. They were one in spirit and in focus. And when they (rightly or wrongly) selected Matthias as the replacement for Judas, they came to the “same judgment.” They reached a particular decision with unity. The same kind of decision-making process can be seen in Acts 6:1-6 and 15:1-35. Paul likewise desired that they would unanimously agree on some particular judgments which he had indicated, such as the excommunication of the wayward brother in 1 Corinthians 5. Bob Deffinbaugh, “Multiplying Divisions” (1 Cor 1:10-31):

[http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=781](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=781).

<sup>13</sup> See Matt 4:21; Mark 1:19.

<sup>14</sup> Richard L. Ganz, *20 Controversies that Almost Killed a Church: Paul’s Counsel to the Corinthians and the Church Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 42.

<sup>16</sup> See Paul’s words in 2 Cor 13:11: “Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete [*katartizo*], be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

<sup>17</sup> Stuart Shepard, “The Gym of the Soul,” Citizenlink.com (11-15-06); submitted by David Slagle, Atlanta, GA.

<sup>18</sup> Ganz, *20 Controversies that Almost Killed a Church*, 19.

<sup>19</sup> “Although the Greek word for ‘divisions’ (is that from which we derive the English word ‘schism,’) it does not in fact mean that, at least not in the sense of a ‘party’ or ‘faction.’ The word properly means ‘tear/rent’ (cf. Mark 2:21) or the ‘plowing’ of a field. The best illustration of the present usage is found in the Gospel of John (7:40-43; 9:16; 10:19-21), where various groups are said to have divided opinions about Jesus, meaning they were arguing with one another as to his significance. Thus Paul does not refer to distinctly formed groups of ‘parties’ here, but to divided

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opinions over their various leaders, which according to v. 11 and 3:3 have developed into jealousy and quarrels.” Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* 54.

<sup>20</sup> See Martin R. De Haan II, “How Can We Work Through Our Differences?” *Radio Bible Class Discovery Series* (Grand Rapids: RBC, 1992), 3-5.

<sup>21</sup> The word *eris* (“quarrels”) occurs in many of Paul’s vice lists (Rom 1:29; 13:13; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; 1 Tim 6:4; Titus 3:9).

<sup>22</sup> Paul is far more concerned to challenge the very idea of factions within the church than to spell out in television-talk show detail, who thought what and why. Bruce N. Fisk, *First Corinthians: Interpretation Bible Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2000), 6.

<sup>23</sup> Cephas is the Hellenized form of the Aramaic *kepa*, meaning “rock” (cf. John 1:42).

<sup>24</sup> Acts 18:24 states that Apollos was “an eloquent speaker, well-versed in the scriptures” (NET).

<sup>25</sup> Andrus, “Contentious Christians.”

<sup>26</sup> E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973) once said, “Talk about *what* you believe and you have disunity. Talk about *who* you believe and you have unity.” Edward K. Rowell ed. *Quotes & Idea Starters for Preaching & Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 170.

<sup>27</sup> Fisk, *First Corinthians*, 7.

<sup>28</sup> The form of these questions in the Greek indicates they are rhetorical questions that demand a negative answer.

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps Sosthenes or Stephanas himself jogged Paul’s memory. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1971), 34.

<sup>30</sup> Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 42.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Eph 4:3-5: “...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”