

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS for the Week of May 7, 2017

LIFE TOGETHER IN A DIVIDED WORLD *“A Call for Unity in the Community”* 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

1. “My dad can beat up your dad!” . . . “My team is better (faster, stronger, or more talented) than yours!” . . . “My class is smarter than your class!” Did you ever get into these types of arguments when you were a kid? Were you the instigator or the defender at the time? How did you resolve the debate?

What we find amusing in a child’s behavior, we often find quite disturbing and unseemly when an adult acts in the same way. Why is it rarely enough for us humans simply to be “*the best person I can be*”? Why must we also be “*better than*” someone else (see Lk 9:46)? How do you explain this basic human instinct? Where does it come from and why do we often (secretly) feel this way?

2. After his very gracious and encouraging greeting and salutation (1 Cor. 1:1-9), Paul must now deal with some very serious and disturbing problems at Corinth that are splitting the church and hurting Christ’s reputation in the city. **Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.** How would you describe Paul’s “tone” here? Angry? Hurt? Disappointed? Frustrated? Concerned, but gracious? Other?

What difference does someone’s “tone” make when addressing difficult issues? What are the dangers of writing, or texting, or emailing someone rather than meeting with them face-to-face when you’re discussing personal grievances?

3. What is so significant about Paul’s opening words here: “I *appeal* to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”? (1:10; cf Lk 15:28)
4. Why is it so important to Paul that there are “*no divisions*” among the Corinthian Christians (cf. **John 17:20-23**)? How do such divisions impact our relationship with God? with our brothers and sisters in Christ? with those outside the church?

5. What does it mean to “agree with one another” and to be “perfectly united in mind and thought,” to find our unity “in the *name* (singular) of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 10)?

Is it ever right or proper for Christians to differ and disagree with one another? Under what circumstances? What is the difference between “unity” and “uniformity”?

6. Notice that Paul, Apollos, Cephas (Peter), and Jesus all preached the same gospel. So why, then, do you think people are dividing into competing camps at Corinth (“*I follow Paul*”; “*I follow Apollos*”; “*I follow Cephas*”? If their message is the same, ***what are they really arguing about?*** Why do so many Christians today align themselves with various pastors and evangelists, while criticizing other ministers or Christians outside their own particular group?

What’s wrong with saying “*I follow Christ*” in the context of this passage (1:12)? What is the “Christ Party” at Corinth implying here that is so divisive?

7. How does Paul counter or undercut these divisions (vv. 13-17)? What facts about Jesus are essential for a church facing internal strife? What does this have to do with the cross and our baptism?
8. Today many Christians declare (whether in word or in attitude): “I am of John Calvin!” (Presbyterian founder); “I am of Martin Luther!” (Lutheran founder); “I am of John Wimber!” (Vineyard founder); “I am of Chuck Smith!” (Calvary Chapel founder), etc., etc. What do you think Paul would say to contemporary Christians who identify themselves *first of all* as Presbyterians, or Baptists, or Charismatics, or Roman Catholics, etc.? How does this type of thinking and attitude “empty” the cross of Christ of its power (1:17; cf. Phil. 2:1-11)?
9. What is your particular denominational background? Is there anything positive or good about the fact that there are so many diverse Protestant churches to choose from? What has God taught you, and how has he blessed you, through your own journey and experience with various denominations?