

“Repairing Major Cracks”

1 Corinthians 1¹⁰⁻¹⁷

Before most people buy a home, they have a building inspector check it from top to bottom, looking for existing or potential problems. Small cracks in a garage floor usually aren't an issue, but evidence of major cracks anywhere in the home are a tell-tale sign of a major problem that needs to be properly diagnosed and repaired. When “some from Chloe’s household” (1¹¹) returned home to Ephesus (16⁸) from a business trip to Corinth, they brought with them news of splinter groups forming in the church there. As “an expert builder” (3¹⁰) who had laid a solid foundation in the Corinthian church, Paul was deeply concerned by this news. His response gives godly wisdom to all needing to repair major cracks.

Opening Question

- When you were 8 years old, who was your hero or favorite team? What did you say/do to show your support?

Study Questions

- 1) **Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.** What is the major problem that Paul identifies in the church at Corinth? How has he become aware of the problem?
- 2) What grade do you think Paul would give the Corinthian church on being “united in mind and thought” (v.10)?¹ What grade would he give your church?
- 3) What seems to have caused or sparked “the quarrels” among them (vv.11-12)? How do sparks of controversy tend to get fanned into flame? Why are church divisions² so damaging (cf. 3:1-4)?
- 4) Having diagnosed the problem in Corinth, what does Paul say and do to begin³ to try and mend it? Some people might be flattered to hear that they have a fan club, but not Paul. Which fan club does he address first and why?
- 5) How did the unifying common experience of Christian baptism (see Eph. 4⁵; Rom. 6³⁻⁵), become a point of division (vv.13-17)?
- 6) Is Paul downplaying the *importance* of baptism (v.17) or is he correcting a misplaced emphasis on the person who did the baptising (v.15)? Explain.
- 7) How do we know when other loyalties (e.g. to a person or leader, to a mode of baptism, to a denomination, to a political party, to a union, to a team or group, etc.) might be out pacing a Christian’s primary loyalty? What should we do if/when that is happening?
- 8) Are there ever appropriate issues over which Christians may be divided (see 1 Cor. 5¹⁻² & 6¹⁻⁸; cf. Acts 15³⁹)? If no, why not? If yes, what kind of issue(s)?
- 9) Identify one action item *and* one prayer item sparked by today’s study & discussion.

¹ Commentator Anthony Thiselton notes that “Paul does not require uniformity or replication in every detail of doctrine, but a non-competitive attitude that sets aside all hint of power play.”

² The word division (“split” or “tear” in the Greek) denotes a tear in a fishing net that needs to be mended (Mark 1:19), or a rending apart that has to be “put back to order” (2 Cor. 13:11). In John’s gospel the word also is used to describe how the preaching of Jesus provoked a split among the crowd of hearers (John 7:43; 9:16).

³ Since Paul returns to the divisions/quarrels over their leaders in 3:1-4, and continues to address leadership issues until the end of chapter 4, it seems apparent that he will have more to say and do to try and help them solve and resolve the issue(s) dividing them.