

This is an old problem. The Corinthian church was one started by St. Paul. After he moved on from Corinth, members from the church brought him bad news. Things there were a mess. They told Paul there was *factionalism, arrogance, false doctrine, immorality*, and a general *lack of love* among the members. And since there was only one church in town, if anyone wanted to go somewhere else, they were out of luck.

How did the Corinthian church get in that shape? They lost sight of the main thing, the Gospel, the good news of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ that saves sinners. They were all about who their favorite pastor was and who baptized them. Some loved Paul. Others Peter. A few thought Apollos was best of all. They were a fractured bunch of fan clubs.

It still happens. In one of our congregations a member was convinced that her cousin, a pastor in St. Louis, was a far better and more knowledgeable pastor than her new pastor. So when she didn't like something her new pastor said, she'd be on the phone Monday morning asking her cousin his opinion.

How do we get beyond this? We get beyond this by realizing that the church isn't a fan club for this preacher or that. It's bunch of beggars telling other beggars where to find bread. Once we were all helpless starving beggars, lost in sin. But then, through the message of the cross, Jesus, the Bread of Life, found us, called us, saved us from sin, and brought us into God's family.

Since we all have the same need, and since the only way that need can be filled is through the message of the cross, Paul *appeals* to us to be of the same mind. (*v 10*) The word Paul uses in appealing for unity is *PARAKALEO*. It's related to the word John uses in his Gospel for the Holy Spirit, the *Paraclete*. *A paraclete is someone called alongside to help.* So maybe Paul sees himself as an agent of the Holy Spirit as he comes alongside the Corinthians, appealing for them to be united.

The unity Paul calls for is the same thing Jesus prays for in the Garden of Gethsemane just before he's arrested. Over and over again Jesus prays that his disciples be *"one,"* and not just one, but *"perfectly one."* (*John 17:23*) Since this is one of the last prayers of Jesus, unity must be *really* important.