United in Christ

Believers can trust in God’s strength even when they are weak.

1 Corinthians 1:10-25

The New Testament church in Corinth had many problems. We may have the same problems in our churches today. Paul wrote to help the church in Corinth.

Paul went to Corinth for the first time on his second missionary journey (see Acts 18:1-18). He started a church and stayed there with them for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). Later, while he was in Ephesus, Paul heard from several people about problems in the church in Corinth.

The Corinthian church was doing wrong. The people were arguing about the Christian leaders, and moral issues, and about what they believed. They were causing division in the church. Paul decided to write a letter to the believers living in Corinth. Paul encouraged people to stay together in unity. Paul told the people to keep their focus on Christ and His crucifixion. The Corinthians would find answers in Christ, not in human wisdom.
1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-25

10 I beg you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that all of you agree with each other and not be split into groups. I beg that you be completely joined together by having the same kind of thinking and the same purpose. 11 My brothers and sisters, some people from Chloe’s family have told me quite plainly that there are quarrels among you. 12 This is what I mean: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another says, “I follow Apollos”; another says, “I follow Peter”; and another says, “I follow Christ.” 13 Christ has been divided up into different groups! Did Paul die on the cross for you? No! Were you baptized in the name of Paul? No! 14 I thank God I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius 15 so that now no one can say you were baptized in my name. 16 (I also baptized the family of Stephanas, but I do not remember that I baptized anyone else.) 17 Christ did not send me to baptize people but to preach the Good News. And he sent me to preach the Good News without using words of human wisdom so that the cross of Christ would not lose its power. 18 The teaching about the cross is foolishness to those who are being lost, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 It is written in the Scriptures: “I will cause the wise to lose their wisdom; I will make the wise unable to understand.” 20 Where is the wise person? Where is the educated person? Where is the skilled talker of this world? God has made the wisdom of the world foolish. 21 In the wisdom of God the world did not know God through its own wisdom. So God chose to use the message that sounds foolish to save those who believe. 22 The Jews ask for miracles, and the Greeks want wisdom. 23 But we preach a crucified Christ. This causes the Jews to stumble and is foolishness to non-Jews. 24 But Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God to those people God has called—Jews and Greeks. 25 Even the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.
EXPLORE THE TEXT

What are some things that believers do together?

What kind of thinking do Christians have in common? What purposes do Christians share?

What problem did the Corinthian church have?

Can a body be divided and still work well?

What does unity mean? Why would people follow various leaders with more passion than they follow Christ?

What did Paul mean when he said, “God has made the wisdom of the world foolish”?

Why is the cross foolishness to so many people? How is the cross the power of God for believers?

Do you know people who seem very smart but do not believe in God? How do these verses help you understand them?

What is the right way to think about human wisdom and human strength?

How can Christians understand the things of God? How do we have “the mind of Christ”?

BIBLE SKILL: Read and explain Bible verses.

Read the verses below. Then write a couple of sentences that explain what they teach about the church.

John 17: 23

Galatians 3:26-28

Colossians 3:13-14

1 Peter 3:8
IN MY CONTEXT

- Christians believe in Jesus Christ as their savior. This belief should give us unity.
- If we choose sides and follow our favorite leaders in church, we can expect to see pride and divisions.
- There is a line that divides people who are saved and people who are not saved. But there should not be lines of division among believers.

Discuss as a group ways we can show love to each other.

What can you do to make sure you are not causing a division in your church? How can you help others keep from causing a division in your church?

How can Jews, Greeks, and all the peoples of the world come to know the power and wisdom of God? What can the members of your class do to help the world know this power and wisdom?

MEMORY VERSE

But we preach a crucified Christ. This causes the Jews to stumble and is foolishness to non-Jews.

–1 Corinthians 1:23
DAY ONE

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10.

It is interesting to look in different translations of the Bible. In the New Century Version, verse 10 begins with “I beg you.” The Holman Christian Standard Bible says “I urge you,” the New Living Translation says “I appeal to you.” The New American Standard Bible says “I exhort you,” and the New Life Version says “I ask you.” All these translations have the same meaning. Paul begged the believers to stay together in unity with God.

Believers must be completely joined together with one hope, one faith, and one God. Paul DID NOT teach anyone to split into opposing groups in the church. He wanted brothers and sisters in Christ to stay together and worship the one true God. There is one God and Father of everything. He rules everything and is everywhere and is in everything (Ephesians 4:6).

Paul did not mean that Christians cannot have different opinions about things. Paul did mean that Christians should be in unity about the basic Christian truths and should agree on our work in the world.

What kind of thinking do Christians have in common? What purposes do Christians share?

DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 1:11.

When Paul wrote the letter to the Corinthians, he was in Ephesus. Some people told Paul what happened in the city of Corinth. Today we keep up with the news in the Deaf community through social media. We get good news or bad news from our friends, leaders, and others in the community. When there is bad news, we become concerned. We check on people to make sure they are all right. We are responsible to help people. We care about the people who are in serious situations. That is how Paul felt when he wrote the letter to the Corinthians. He encouraged them to stay in unity with each other and with God.
You can share Bible verses with friends through the videophone. You could get in touch with the person on Facebook messenger or send an email. You could even sign a message on video and send it to your friend. Paul wrote a letter because it was the best way to reach friends during his time. He wrote his letter to try to stop the quarreling in Corinth. It would be so good if Deaf Christians would use VP to encourage each other to live in Christian unity.

What can you do to bring unity in your church today?

**DAY THREE**

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:12-16.**

In Acts 18:24-26 we learn Apollos was a Jew and was born in Alexandria. He knew the Scripture very well and taught the truth about Jesus. He was a strong speaker in the synagogue. That is how people from the church knew Apollos. It seems some people followed him. Others followed Paul. The people were divided. Paul said Christ was not divided. Christ died on the cross for us. We are all baptized in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

We experience problems in churches today like the people in Corinth did. When someone says that a person is wrong, sometimes people believe him without checking the facts. They follow the wrong people. Following people divides us. Keep in mind, Jesus died on the cross for us. Our belief in Him unites us.

Acts 18:8 tells us about Paul’s time in Corinth. He taught many people about Christ. Crispus was the leader in a synagogue. People who lived in Crispus’ house accepted Jesus. There were others in Corinth that believed in Jesus, too. Paul baptized some of them. However, Paul did not want the people to say they were baptized in his name.

How does the death of Christ on the cross lead us to unity as believers?
DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 1: 17-19.

In Acts 9:3-6 Paul (at that time his name was Saul) was on the way to the city of Damascus. Jesus sent a bright light from heaven that blinded him. Saul’s life changed forever. Jesus told him to go on to Damascus and there he would meet someone. This person would tell him what to do. Saul became Paul. He became a great missionary for Christ. He went to different cities to preach and teach about Jesus. This was the most important job to Paul. Paul believed it was important to be baptized, but the heart of his call was to preach about Jesus and to lead people to faith. Baptism was of secondary importance.

Paul used the Scripture from Isaiah to teach people in Corinth that godly wisdom had always been different from worldly wisdom. He explained that worldly thinking caused division in the church. The wisdom of God is very different from the wisdom of the world. Paul said worldly people look at the message of the cross and think it is foolish. However, people who believe in God are blessed. They believe Jesus died on the cross and have wisdom from God.

What is the difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom? How do you show godly wisdom in your life?
DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 1: 20-25.

In earlier verses Paul begged the Corinthian believers to be united. There should be no division in the church. But in these verses we see there is a division between believers and unbelievers. What they believe about Jesus and His death on the cross divides the two groups.

In the world today people believe ideas that are opposite of what the Bible teaches. They think they are smarter than God. But God’s ways and His wisdom are higher and better than anything in the world. Some unbelievers make fun of Christian beliefs. They do not understand that God’s plan gives salvation.

How are the ways of the world (unbelievers) different from the ways of Christians?

Why do unbelievers have a hard time understanding spiritual things?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 1 Corinthians 1. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How have you added to the divisions in your church in the past? How have you helped make unity this week?

What has God been sending you to do this past week? How have you been obeying Him?

Has the crucified Christ been the center of your life this week? How has belief in the cross of Christ made you wise?
United in Christ

1 Corinthians 1:10-25

Plan Ahead

Pray for group members. Pray they will desire unity in the body of Christ.

Ask a member to study the Introduction to the Books of 1 and 2 Corinthians and summarize it for the class.

Make the lesson come alive! Find pictures of the following: 1) a group of people studying the Bible together, 2) a baptism, 3) people praying together, and 4) people eating together. Post them in the meeting room.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 and prepare to discuss how the body of Christ needs to work together.

Focus Attention

Call attention to the pictures of activities you have posted on the wall.

Ask: What are the people doing? Why are these things important? What are some other things believers do together?

Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17. Read verses 20-21. Ask: What does it mean to “be one”? Why is it important (see verse 21)?

Explore the Text

1. Call for Unity (1 Corinthians 1:10)
Ask the volunteer to share the introduction to 1 and 2 Corinthians.
Sign 1 Corinthians 1:10. Ask: What kind of thinking do Christians have in common? (We all agree that Jesus is the Son of God, He is our Savior.) What purpose do Christians share? (We all have a purpose to share Jesus with others, we want to give God glory in our lives.)

2. Contempt for Divisions (1 Corinthians 1:11-16)
Sign 1 Corinthians 1:11-16. Ask: What problem did the Corinthian church have?
Following people instead of Christ hurts the church. It also causes pride and boasting. In 1 Corinthians 1:31 Paul told the Corinthians they should only boast about God.

**EXPLAIN:** In 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 Paul used the picture of a body and its parts. We understand this is about the body of Christ. **ASK:** Can a body be divided? Does a body work well if the parts do not cooperate together?

In the same way, church members should work together. Paul explained how he and Apollos did the work God gave them to do. Sign 1 Corinthians 3:5-8. **ASK:** Who is important? Who gives growth?

### 3. The Cross that Divides (1 Corinthians 1:17-25)
Paul emphasized the cross in these verses. Belief in Jesus’ death on the cross for our sins brings Christians together. For other people, the cross does not make sense. Many of the Jews did not believe the Messiah would suffer. They did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. Paul said the cross was foolishness to the non-Jews.

Sign 1 Corinthians 1:17-25. **ASK:** Do you know people who seem very smart but do not believe in God? How do these verses help you understand them?

**EXPLAIN:** In 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul explained more about the problem unbelievers have. People who are not Christians do not have the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, a person cannot understand the truths of God. **Ask a volunteer to sign 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.** **ASK:** How can Christians understand the things of God? How do we have “the mind of Christ”?

### IN MY CONTEXT
Ask members to find John 13:34-35 in their Bibles. After they have time to read it, ask one member to sign the verses. **ASK:** What are some ways we can show love to each other? **Discuss.**

Spend a few minutes in quiet prayer. Encourage members to ask God to show them what they need to do to keep unity in the church.

Remind members to do the readings for the week in the personal study guide.