



**Title:** Cross-centered Unity (First Corinthians #3)

**Text:** 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

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**Intro:** Unity is a beautiful but often elusive thing in church culture. Congregations can start out well only to splinter into divisive factions leaving a trail of pain, bitterness, and, most tragically, a poor witness for the Gospel. Against the Corinthian church's divided background, Paul urges the church in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 to lay down their petty preferences and focus on the simple beauty and power of the Gospel.

**Text: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17**

*10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.*

- The preacher's only authority is Jesus and His word. Paul makes his appeal on the name of Christ, not in anything else.
- What's at stake is Jesus' glory.

*11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. 12 What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."*

- Paul's followers: probably the Gentile converts.
- Peter's followers: probably Jewish converts.
- Apollos' followers: probably also Gentile converts but not as impressed with Paul's preaching because Apollos was more sophisticated and eloquent which was a value of the contemporary culture that was heavily influenced by the Sophists.
- Christ's followers: This was maybe some super spiritual claim of a group of people who had seen him in person or claimed some experience that they deemed made them closer to Jesus.

*13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,*

- Unhealthy dependence: It's bad for a church when one personality or leader becomes the only one whose shepherding "counts." You will kill your pastor if you insist that he has to be at every special event, baptize you, marry you, counsel you, pray for you, visit you when you are sick, dedicate your child, etc. and then expect that same man to also study, pray, and prepare messages that are God inspired and effective. Impossible.
- The best way I can serve you is to keep my face in the Bible listening to God, not by being the central spiritual figure or close friend of everyone in the church. And the best way you can serve me is to joyfully allow me to do that, realizing that it is better for the entire church and you. In fact, that's exactly what Paul is alluding when he says in a few verses that he was not sent to baptize but to preach the Gospel.

- Plurality of Elders: This is why we believe in a plurality of elders and we are trying to build towards that as opposed to a senior pastor model. Jesus is the senior pastor of CrossPointe, the elders are under-shepherds.

*15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

## **SUMMARY POINTS:**

### **1. Unity doesn't mean we have no differences but rather no divisions.**

A. The Bible gives us principles, and often times much latitude in how to live them out.

B. We must be careful that our preferences don't become prejudices.

C. How does this work itself out at CrossPointe?

1. Theologically: Open-hand / Closed-hand
2. Stylistically: Worship style,
3. Ministry Philosophy: Bible-saturated, Small-groups, Not building centered.

D. Three Questions that drive us:

1. Who is Jesus? (Gospel)
2. How has he told us to live together as a church? (Community)
3. How is he calling us to reach our city and world? (Mission)

### **2. Differences drift into divisions unless we humble ourselves and remember the Gospel.**

A. We must actively seek to kill the consumerism that lurks in each of our hearts.

B. The Cross calls us to die to ourselves and live to Christ and his purposes!

- We should outdo one another in showing honor!
- Romans 12:9-21

C. We must continually examine the motivation behind our preferences—much of Jesus, or us?

- Galatians 2:20
- We find our worth by making much of Jesus, not ourselves.

### **3. At stake is our effectiveness for the Gospel.**

A. Our selfish motivations that lead to division empty the cross of its power.

B. Division obscures the Gospel.