Session 11

A Divided CHURCH

CENTRAL TRUTH | Believers are called to be unified because of our faith in Christ.

If you ask for a book or TV show rec from your friends, you'll probably get a bunch of different answers. And all of them likely believe—and try to convince you—why their favorite book or TV show is the best one. But it's not just your friends who try to influence your opinions anymore; people all across social media try to convince you to try their favorite product, food, book, TV show, or travel destination. Honestly, people even have opinions about which of those influencers you should listen to. If we're not careful, we can become so laser-focused on what we like and believe to be best that we close ourselves off from even hearing others' opinions. There are so many things we can disagree on or be divided over these days, and so much of the world is. But Jesus calls us to be different. Believers are not supposed to be divided but united. As different as we are, and even if we follow different Christian leaders and attend different churches, we follow the same Jesus. And He calls us to be unified, to work together, because of our faith in Him.

REFLECT

What questions do I have about God?

What questions do I have about myself?

What questions do I have about the world and those around me?

Explore SCRIPTURE

Memorize 1 CORINTHIANS 1:9

1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9

4 I always thank my God for you because of
the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus,
5 that you were enriched in him in every way, in
all speech and all knowledge. 6 In this way, the
testimony about Christ was confirmed among
you, 7 so that you do not lack any spiritual gift
as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our
Lord Jesus Christ. 8 He will also strengthen
you to the end, so that you will be blameless
in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is
faithful; you were called by him into fellowship
with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-12

10 Now I urge you, brothers and sisters,
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that
all of you agree in what you say, that there
be no divisions among you, and that you be
united with the same understanding and the
same conviction. 11 For it has been reported
to me about you, my brothers and sisters,
by members of Chloe's people, that there
is rivalry among you. 12 What I am saying is
this: One of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I
belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or
"I belong to Christ."

1 CORINTHIANS 1:13-17

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for
you? Or were you baptized in Paul's name?
14 I thank God that I baptized none of you
except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one
can say you were baptized in my name. 16 I did,
in fact, baptize the household of Stephanas;
beyond that, I don't recall if I baptized anyone
else. 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize,
but to preach the gospel—not with eloquent
wisdom, so that the cross of Christ will not be
emptied of its effect.

Refer to page 5 for a description of the 7 Arrows of Bible Reading.

Day 01

JOHN 15:9-14

READ & RESPOND

Are you a rule follower? Maybe you pride yourself on being a rule breaker? We often follow the rules because we don't want the consequences of breaking them. Those who break rules often do so because they feel the penalty is worth whatever joy they might get from breaking the rule. But Jesus doesn't ask us to follow a set of rules. He doesn't tell us to obey or else. Jesus asks us to follow His commands and the commands of His Father because we love Him. Our obedience is the evidence of our love for Him. In verse 12, Jesus gives us a specific command: "Love one another as I have loved you." The evidence of our love for Jesus is to love one another.

← Why do you think Jesus told His disciples this right before He went to the cross?

→ What is one specific way you can obey Jesus's command to love others this week?

↔ How should this change the way you treat people who are hard to get along with?

MEMORIZE

Write out **1 Corinthians 1:9** on a notecard. Read the passage out loud five times. Next, read it in a whisper five times. Finally, say it in your head with your eyes closed five times.

PRAY

Jesus, thank You for loving me with an unchanging, perfect love. Teach me to obey You and to love others as You do. Give me the strength to put others first today.

Day 02

1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9

READ & RESPOND

The Corinthian church was diverse, full of both Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul wrote his letter to the church because he had heard of the unity and morality issues happening in the church. Today's passage is part of the greeting, where Paul gave thanks for the believers, but in doing so reminded them to be unified in Christ. Jesus is the center of the church, and if we're focusing on Him over our preferences, unity—even among great diversity—is not just possible, but it's a blessing. Modern churches face many of the same issues that the Corinthian church struggled with, so we must remain unified in our faith in Jesus.

← Why was it important for this divided, struggling church to be reminded of their status in Christ?

↑ How does this passage describe God's commitment to finishing what He starts in us?

← How does recognizing that others are also called into fellowship with Jesus change the way you treat difficult people?

MEMORIZE

Write out **1 Corinthians 1:9** on a piece of paper or notecard. On the back, write only the first letter of every word, including punctuation. Keep attempting this until you can use only the first letters to say the verse.

PRAY

Lord, thank You for being faithful even when I am not. Please sustain me, strengthen my faith, and help me stay focused on Your promise until Jesus returns.

Day 03

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-12

READ & RESPOND

Many people have “heroes in the faith” like John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, Augustine, John Piper, and so forth. We emulate them, study their works, and post their quotes, but if our admiration becomes worship, we have a huge problem. The Corinthian church was dealing with factions who aligned themselves with one preacher, including Paul himself. Paul was horrified by these rivalries and reminded the church that they must be “united with the same understanding and the same conviction,” which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have to be careful not to make idols of faith leaders . Our worship belongs only to Jesus because He is the only one worthy of it!

What exactly is Paul asking the church in Corinth to do?

Why do we naturally want to pick sides and create cliques?

How would my school or group change if we focused on Christ instead of our differences?

MEMORIZE

Instead of writing out **1 Corinthians 1:9** in words, draw the verse using icons or symbols. Translating the passage into images helps you to process the meaning of the words.

PRAY

Lord, break down the walls I’ve built between myself and others. Help me put You at the center of my life, so I can see my peers through Your eyes rather than through my own biases.

Day 04

1 CORINTHIANS 1:13-17

READ & RESPOND

The factions within the Corinthian church seemed to be divided by who baptized them. Paul reminded them that it is the *gospel* that matters. Who does the baptizing is insignificant. Paul couldn't even remember all the ones he baptized in Corinth. His point was that the gospel message was most important, not the messenger nor the baptizer. While we can look at this situation, roll our eyes, and call them ridiculous, we've all been guilty of division over insignificant things. We let preferences dictate our worship instead of focusing on who we are worshiping. Want to be unified as a group of believers? Keep the main thing the main thing—stay focused on Jesus.

↑ What does this tell us about God's heart for unity rather than popularity?

↔ How can you prioritize your connection with other believers over being "right" or being on the winning side?

↷ What area of your life do you need to make less about yourself and more about Him?

MEMORIZE

Record yourself reading **1 Corinthians 1:9** different ways: (1) in a normal voice, (2) in a whisper, (3) as fast as you possibly can. Can you think of other ways? Be sure to listen back to the recordings this week.

PRAY

Jesus, forgive me for chasing labels and status instead of You. Help me prioritize unity in my friendships and keep my focus fixed on the cross. May my life point people to You, not to me.

Day 05

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

READ & RESPOND

Paul offered practical advice on how to live the Christian life in today's passage: Be humble, gentle, patient, and unified in love. We are called to the same body of believers, the same church, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We must work together peacefully. How do we do that with difficult people? Be humble, gentle, patient, and unified in love. Humility prioritizes Jesus, others, and then ourselves. Gentleness is a characteristic modeled by Jesus in His even-temperedness. Patience calls us to endure others, even when it's uncomfortable. And we are unified in the love we cultivate. We aren't so far removed from the early church that we don't understand disunity among believers, but Christ (and Paul) calls us to be unified in Him.

Paul tells us to live a life worthy of our calling. What specific attitudes—like humility and gentleness—does he list to make that happen?

How does this passage describe God's desire for order and connection?

Why is it so hard for us to be patient with people naturally?

MEMORIZE

Rewrite **1 Corinthians 1:9** in today's modern language. You could even text-speak it, but be sure to keep the theology accurate! Paraphrasing in everyday language ensures we comprehend what we're memorizing.

PRAY

Jesus, help me live a life that reflects Your call. Replace my pride with humility and my impatience with Your love. May my life draw others closer to You today.