

Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

Unity in the Church

July 5, 2020



During the early first century, the city of Corinth was a thriving cosmopolitan. It was quite prosperous, large in size, hosted a mix of people from varying backgrounds, and was a key city in the Roman empire.

When Paul writes his first letter to the Corinthians, one of the main issues he addresses is division in the church. In the first chapter of his letter he writes, “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no division among you, and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” (1 Cor. 1:10) These are strong words - no division, perfectly united... is Paul saying that we should not think critically and just accept what we are told for the sake of same thinking? Not at all.

As Paul goes on to unpack in the rest of his letter, the thing that we must keep at the forefront of our minds is knowing the Jesus has died for our sins, and by accepting that He becomes Lord of our lives and we are brought into the Kingdom of God. When we reflect on that, and remember that those who are within the church are our brothers and sisters, it puts differences of opinion in their proper place. We are recipients of God’s amazing grace and as one author says, this brings about “a new value system that emphasizes self-expending love and respect for the less-esteemed other, especially the other who is unlike ourselves.” (Alan Johnson, *1 Corinthians*)

In our world right now there are no shortage of things that have the potential to divide us. We are experiencing tension around racial injustice and inequality, a global pandemic with polarizing opinions on how we should go about handling it, economic hardship and instability in the workplace, politics, and varying opinions on how the church should handle all of it! But before we criticize those who disagree with us, let us first remember that we are children of God, and that the blood that Jesus shed for you he shed for the person that you disagree with too.

The enemy wants to create division among us and distract the church from its mission. We cannot allow for that to happen. So let us approach each other with love, grace, and humility. When differences arise, let us remember what God has done for us, the unity that we have as brothers and sisters in the Lord, and let us strive to preserve and operate out of that unity, because of the Spirit among us.

SO, CONSIDER:

1. How do we remain in “perfect unity” with each other, when we all have our own minds and opinions?
2. What steps can we take as the church to lessen division and strive toward unity?
3. How can we stay connected and unified as a body, when we are still in a season that is limiting how much interaction we are able to have with one another?

TAKE ACTION: This week - when you hear an opinion that is in opposition to your own, whether it is in the news, in a conversation, overhearing someone at the store, or in an email - before you get frustrated or respond, stop and remind yourself that Jesus loves you, Jesus loves them, and that we are to follow His model and love in all situations. Then let that mindset, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, direct you to act in love and unity.