

Maintaining a United House

(1 Corinthians 1:10-17)

The church at Corinth was experiencing all kinds of problems. As mentioned in the last lesson, Paul uses the “sandwich approach” to deal with problems. To use this approach, begin with a compliment, address the problem, and then end with another compliment. In the first nine verses, Paul began with a compliment, but now, starting in verse ten, he begins to address one of the problems in the church—divisions. Paul knows this problem must be solved. What does our Lord say about divisions in Luke 11:17b-c?

Maintaining a united house requires at least **three** actions.

Concentrate on Jesus (1:10)

We have a tendency to think of New Testament churches as being ideal or perfect. However, they were not because they were made up of imperfect people, just like you and me. Remember the old saying, “If you find a perfect church, don’t join it or it won’t be perfect anymore.” The church at Corinth has many problems and Paul begins by addressing the problem of divisions. He writes: *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:10a-b)*.

This is the tenth reference to Jesus in the first ten verses of this chapter. When we take our eyes off Jesus Christ, we start having the same problems they had in the church at Corinth. To solve any problem, you must first obey what command in Hebrews 12:2a-b?

When we don’t focus on Jesus, we become selfish and difficult at church, as well as in our homes, because we are more concerned with ourselves than anyone else. The result is divisions, which cause splits in churches and divorces in marriages.

Paul appeals in the name of Jesus *that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you (1:10c)*. They were to *speak the same thing* regarding the basics of the faith. Genuine Christian unity is based upon agreement with the fundamentals of the Gospel, as revealed in the Bible. To prevent divisions, we must believe *the same thing* about salvation by grace, the Bible, marriage, baptism, etc. Therefore, what does Jude urge his readers to do in the last phrase of Jude 3?

The word *contend* means to continually and vigorously defend the basics of the faith, as expressed in the Bible. The word translated *once* refers to something that is complete, valid, and never changes. We are to defend the faith and *be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1:10d)* regarding the basics of the faith.

This doesn't mean we are to be "carbon copies" of each other. As someone has said, "We don't have to be twins to be brothers and sisters in Christ." However, we must agree on the fundamentals, or there will be divisions.

To maintain a united house, **concentrate on Jesus** and ...

Cultivate unity (1:11-12)

Paul had received a report from someone in the household of a woman named Chloe (kloh'-ee), about whom we know nothing. This report informed Paul about *contentions* among the believers in the church at Corinth (1:11). These quarrels were not about the basics of the faith, but about personalities. What is causing the *contentions* (1:12)?

There were four cliques in this church. There was the *Paul* clique, probably because he established the church. Next, there was the *Apollos* clique—he was an eloquent speaker and knew Scripture well (Acts 18:24). He probably appealed to the Greek believers, who loved eloquent speaking skills. Then, there was the *Cephas*, or Peter, clique. Some probably followed him because he was one of the original Twelve and the "hero" of Pentecost. These three were all great servants of Christ. However, none of them promoted themselves to cause this kind of division.

The fourth clique was the *Christ* clique. At first glance, this might appear to be the right crowd, but they were probably spiritually arrogant. Paul likely includes them in this list because they were a "super-spiritual" clique, who thought they were spiritually superior to everyone else.

We all have people who are special to us because they led us to Christ or helped us grow spiritually. It's only natural to have a special affection for such people. However, if that affection causes division in the church, it becomes a sin. If you are a spiritual person who has been taught by a spiritual believer, you will bring unity, not disunity, to your church. Therefore, you will obey what command in Ephesians 4:3?

The third component of the fruit of the Spirit is *peace* (Gal. 5:22). Believers filled with the Holy Spirit always promote peace and unity.

If you want to maintain a united house, **concentrate on Jesus, cultivate unity**, and ...

Elevate the Cross (1:13-17)

Paul destroys the validity of following personalities by asking three rhetorical questions in verse 13: *Is Christ divided?* Does He want His church divided? No! What does our Lord pray for His followers in John 17:22b?

Christ is not divided, and His spiritual followers shouldn't be either. Next, Paul asks: *Was Paul crucified for you?* No, Christ was crucified for us! Then, Paul asks: *or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* No! In what is called "The Great Commission," Jesus says we should go *and teach all nations* (Mt 28:19a). Then, what does He say (28:19b)?

Notice Jesus says, in the *name* (singular), not "names." God's full name is *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*. However, what is the one name that best sums up His full name—the name through which He best reveals Himself? Jesus! In the book of Acts, when people are being baptized in the name of the Trinity, God's full name is sometimes abbreviated. At those times, people are baptized *in the name of Jesus* (Acts 2:38, 19:5).

The point is: don't follow people—follow Jesus—because sooner or later, most people will disappoint you. To emphasize this, Paul writes he is thankful he only baptized *Crispus and Gaius* (1:14). *Crispus* was the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth. His whole household believed and was baptized (Acts 18:8). Since the letter to the Romans was written from Corinth, we know *Gaius* is the person in whose home Paul stayed and the church originally met (Rom. 16:23). Besides these two, Paul also remembers baptizing *the household of Stephanas* (1:16), who were Paul's first converts in Achaia (ah-kay'-yah), a province in Greece, of which Corinth was the capital (1 Cor. 16:15).

Paul is not minimizing the importance of baptism; he is just pointing out he didn't personally baptize most of his converts. That was done by his associates, such as Silas or Timothy. Jesus practiced this same procedure. What does John 4:2 record?

Next, Paul writes: *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel* (1:17a-b). Paul is emphasizing his number one priority is *to preach the gospel*, without which no one would be ready to be baptized.

Paul writes that Christ sent him to preach the Gospel, but *not with wisdom of words* (1:17b). This means without philosophical reasoning or secular learning. Why? *Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect* (1:17c). Simply preaching the Cross has awesome power. What does Jesus say in John 12:32?

The phrase *lifted up* refers to Christ's death on the cross (Jn 12:33). The word *all* means Jesus' offer of salvation extends to *all* people, not just the Jews. Jesus' incredible love for *all* people, as expressed in His death on the cross will draw the lost and unify the saved. If the Cross of Christ doesn't compel you to maintain unity in your church and in your home, nothing will.

To maintain a united house, **concentrate on Jesus, cultivate unity, and elevate the Cross.**