

Unity at the Crossroads: Remembering Our True Center in Christ

1 Corinthians 1:10–17 (ESV)

Student Devotional

Picture a nighttime battlefield in World War I—two enemy trenches just yards apart. But for one miraculous evening, the shooting stops. Soldiers from both sides **crawl out** into no-man’s land, shake hands, share small gifts, and even play soccer. Why? Because for that moment, **their shared humanity** was bigger than the flags they fought under.

That image is exactly what Paul yearns to see in the **church at Corinth**—not just a ceasefire, but **real unity** around Jesus. They were dividing into cliques: “*I follow Paul,*” “*I follow Apollos,*” and so on. Paul’s message, in short: “**Lay down your personal banners. We’re all on the same side—Christ’s.**”

This five-day devotional is designed to help you see **why unity matters** so much, how it affects your daily life, and what you can do to **stop division** and keep your focus on **the Cross**.

Day 1: Divisions in Our Trenches

“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...” (1 Corinthians 1:10, ESV)

Think About It:

We’re not literally shooting at each other like World War I soldiers, but sometimes in church—or **among Christians**—we **draw lines** just as sharply. We **love** certain worship styles or preaching methods, and we think everyone else is *wrong*. We let **small arguments** turn into **big walls** between us.

Maybe you’ve **rolled your eyes** at someone else’s preference: “*They want to do what in Sunday School? That’s so outdated.*” Or maybe you’ve **put a Christian leader** on a pedestal: “*I only listen to sermons by this pastor—everyone else doesn’t get it.*”

Paul cuts through it: **“I appeal to you...that there be no divisions among you.”** He’s reminding us we’re **one family**, bought by **one Savior**, on **one mission**. In Corinth, factions were forming around **favorite leaders**. For us, we might get stuck in **debates** about worship music style, translations of the Bible, or ministry preferences. The real question: **Do these differences overshadow our shared love for Jesus?**

Pray It:

Lord, open my eyes to any “trenches” I’ve dug in my relationships. Help me remember that **Your cross unites us** more than any difference can divide us.

Do It:

Identify **one small disagreement** or preference you have that could be causing friction with another believer (maybe worship style, service times, or a minor theological point). This week, **choose unity**—focus on what you share in Christ **instead** of what sets you apart.

Day 2: Shifting from ‘I Follow...’ to ‘We Follow Jesus’

“Each one of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ or ‘I follow Apollos,’ or ‘I follow Cephas,’ or ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided?” (1 Corinthians 1:12–13, ESV)

Think About It:

Have you ever **fangirled** (or fanboyed) over a Christian celeb? Maybe a **charismatic preacher**, a **famous Christian author**, or a **worship band**. You find yourself **quoting them** constantly, and if someone disagrees, you’re ready to defend them to the end.

That’s exactly what happened in Corinth: “I follow Paul!” or “I follow Apollos!” They were turning **leaders** into **celebrity idols**. Paul steps in: *“Wait, is Christ divided? Did Paul die for your sins? Did Apollos get nailed to a cross for you?”* Obviously **no**.

When we center our faith around a **human personality**, we risk forgetting **the real hero** of the story—**Jesus**. Paul started the church; Apollos was a gifted speaker; Cephas (Peter) was a key apostle. All legit leaders, but the Corinthians **took it too far**.

Today, we have **podcasts** and **social media** that can turn pastors into superstars. The danger is **loving the messenger** more than **the message** of the cross.

Pray It:

Jesus, I don't want to give **any human** the devotion that belongs to You. Help me **value** the leaders who bless me but always keep my ultimate allegiance to **Your name alone**.

Do It:

Ask yourself: **“Am I more excited about [Favorite Pastor/Podcaster] than about Jesus?”** If so, **read directly from Scripture** (maybe start in the Gospels or a personal study of Romans) and let **God's Word** speak to you **without** the filter of a specific leader's commentary.

Day 3: The Cross, Not Human Strategy

“For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel... lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” (1 Corinthians 1:17, ESV)

Think About It:

Think of a **shiny marketing campaign** for a product. It's easy to be dazzled by **flashy ads**—but if the product is worthless, no amount of marketing can fix that.

Paul is basically saying: *“I'm not here to be a marketing genius. I'm here to present the **cross**—because the cross **alone** has the power to save.”* In Corinth, some valued **eloquence**—they loved a good show, a big personality. Paul says the gospel isn't about **smooth words**; it's about **Christ crucified**.

When we lean on **human talent** over **God's truth**, we risk **“emptying the cross of its power”** in our hearts. The cross itself is already **shockingly powerful**—Jesus died for the sins of the world. We don't need to **dress it up**; we just need to **point people to it**.

The Greeks admired **philosophical sophistication**. They wanted new ideas, brilliant oratory. Paul's approach? Preach the cross plainly. For us, we sometimes want **“bigger and better”** methods for evangelism or church growth, forgetting that **God's Spirit** transforms hearts, not our cleverness.

Pray It:

God, help me rely on **Your power**, not on my own ability to impress people. Let the cross be the loudest message in how I live and speak.

Do It:

Before your next **Christian event** or **conversation** about faith, **pray**: “*Lord, help me highlight the cross, not my own words or style.*” Then, **intentionally share** something about **Christ’s sacrifice**—like a short testimony of how the cross changed you.

Day 4: Practical Steps to Maintain Unity

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. **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.” **13** Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:10-13, ESV)

Think About It:

In the trenches of daily church life, **disunity** can creep in from **small stuff**: Who picks the worship songs? Which Sunday School curriculum do we use? Why is so-and-so always put in charge of that ministry?

Little things can balloon into **big tensions**. Paul says it shouldn’t be that way. So how do we **actively** preserve unity?

1. **Stop Playing Favorites.** Instead of praising Leader X or Group Y, **celebrate** how God is using all sorts of people with different gifts.
2. **Focus on the Gospel.** If you realize an argument is overshadowing the **core message** of Jesus, step back. Is this debate a deal-breaker or a side issue?

3. **Address Conflict Early.** Don't let silent grudges grow. Paul heard from Chloe's people about the quarreling and **addressed it**—he didn't wait for it to explode.
4. **Pray for One Another.** It's hard to remain divided with someone you regularly pray for by name.

In Corinth, members were **literally** claiming identity by “Paul, Apollos, Cephas.” That's like us picking sides: “*I'm from the youth group,*” “*I'm part of the men's ministry,*” “*I'm with the contemporary service.*” Unity doesn't mean uniformity—it means you value **the relationship** above **winning** an argument.

Pray It:

Jesus, show me where I can **pursue peace** in my church, family, or small group. Help me let go of petty differences and keep **You** the focus.

Do It:

Take one **practical step** to unify your faith community:

- **Talk to** that person you've been avoiding.
- **Offer praise** for a different ministry you don't usually engage with.
- **Cross group lines**—join an event or volunteer team outside your comfort zone.

Day 5: Standing Together at the Cross

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. (1 Corinthians 1:17)

Think About It:

The cross stands at the center of our faith. It's like a giant **lighthouse** guiding us to safe harbor. Yet, how often do we get **sidetracked** by smaller lights—**leaders' personalities**, our own opinions, or external labels?

Christ wasn't divided; He died as **one sacrifice** for all. When we let anything else define our unity, we're forgetting that.

If you ever feel yourself drifting into a “my group vs. their group” mentality, **imagine kneeling at the cross**. Jesus isn’t wearing a T-shirt that says “Team Paul” or “Team Apollos.” His love is for **all** who believe. That means we can stand side by side—even if we disagree on worship style or who’s the best preacher—because **the cross unites us** deeper than any difference can divide us.

Paul was worried that focusing on who baptized who or who’s the best speaker would “empty the cross of its power.” And that’s tragic—**we want the cross to shine at full brightness**.

Pray It:

God, I never want to dilute the power of the cross with my personal preferences. Keep my eyes on Jesus, crucified and risen, and let that vision bring unity in all my relationships.

Do It:

Picture the cross in your mind the next time you feel tension with a fellow believer. Could you put aside the argument for the sake of exalting Jesus together? If so, **do it**. Offer grace, apologize if needed, or at least step back to see **the bigger picture**: we’re on the same team, worshiping the same Savior.

You’re Ready for Class!

In this **five-day dive** into 1 Corinthians 1:10–17, you’ve seen how **Paul confronts church division** and calls us to **stay centered on Jesus**. We’re all standing in **the same spiritual trench**, united by Christ’s sacrifice.

As you head to class, think about:

- **Where do I see division** in my own faith circles?
- **How can I** be an agent of **unity**—focusing on Jesus, promoting love, and resisting the urge to pick sides?

Come ready to share **one step** you’ll take this week to **lay down your “arms”** and remember that the cross is the **ultimate** unifier. After all, **we kneel at the same cross**—why not stand together in the world?

Before We Gather

- What are some reasons Christians might be drawn more toward specific church leaders or movements than Christ Himself?
- How does remembering our status as family under Christ encourage us to approach church conflict differently?
- What are some modern ways we elevate Christian leaders, and how can we shift our allegiance back to Christ?
- How does keeping the cross as the central message guard us against personality-driven faith?
- What practical steps can we take to ensure our primary allegiance is to Christ rather than Christian celebrities or traditions?
- How can we keep the gospel front and center in our church life—through preaching, teaching, singing, and serving?
- What can we do when we sense division forming over secondary issues or personal preferences?