

Centered on Jesus

- One of greatest testimonies = church can offer world = genuine unity
- 3ABN viewers often call = express amazement by oneness
 - unity of message = they see among our presenters
- Why does that speak so powerfully to people?
- Unity around biblical truth = witness that Christ / among His people
- When believers stand firmly on = platform of God's Word
 - God's eternal truth = becomes powerful testimony
- Exactly / burden of Paul's heart = in opening / **1 Corinthians**
- Before addresses problems = reminds them who they are in Christ
- 1 Corinthians 1:4–9** “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus [they received grace], that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge [enriched by Christ], even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you [gospel truth confirmed in them], so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, who will also **confirm you to the end**, that you may be **blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ** [**He will sustain them till the end**]. God is faithful, by whom you were [**most importantly**] called into the fellowship of His Son, **Jesus Christ our Lord.**”
- **LORDSHIP OF CHRIST = FOUNDATIONAL**
 - **CENTRAL TRUTH THAT GOVERNS CHURCH**
- B4 addressing divisions/ conflicts = Paul makes it clear the church
 - does not belong to human leaders = belongs to Jesus Christ
- 1 Corinthians 1:10** Paul makes / appeal = “Now I plead with you [not casual suggestion] brethren, by the name of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together [united] in the same mind and in the same judgment.”
- **Church unity = matters deeply to God** = at Corinth = loyalties were shifting away from Christ = and toward personalities

- Why / Paul later asks rhetorical questions: **“Is Christ divided?”**
[obvious answer “NO”] **Was Paul crucified for you? [“NO”]**
- **Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” “NO— Matthew 28:19**
baptized in name of Father/Son/Holy Spirit [not human leader]
- Same danger exists in churches today
 - divisions begin subtly = not w/ open rebellion
- A few people gather around favorite preacher / teacher
 - leader / viewpoint
- Preferences harden into camps centered on personalities / ministries
 - Instead of being centered on Jesus
- Paul makes it plain = **that’s denial of our allegiance to Christ**
- We’re called into fellowship w/ Christ = our Savior / crucified for us
 - Christ = our Lord / around Whom church must gather
- This does not mean = there’s no place for leadership
 - God gives leaders to His church
 - but leaders / never meant to replace Christ as center
- **1 Corinthians 12:27** [Paul explains true unity] where he says we are **“the body of Christ and individually members of it.”**
- A body has many parts = each part has a function / contribution
- Hand is not / eye = foot is not / ear = Yet all belong to one body
- Paul is not calling for **uniformity** = calling for **unity**
- Difference = uniformity says everyone must look alike / sound alike / think alike in every detail / function in exactly the same way.
- But biblical unity allows for diversity of gifts / personalities / functions / backgrounds = while all remain submitted to same Lord
- The church is healthiest when there is = **unity in diversity**
 - and more than that = unity **despite** diversity
- **1 Cor 1:10** word translated **“perfectly joined together / united”**
 - carries idea of = being restored to proper condition
- Mending what has been torn / setting what is broken back into place
- When cliques form = relationships are distorted

- Something in the body = is out of joint
- Paul is saying = church must be restored to its proper condition
 - and that restoration comes only when all are brought back under **lordship of Christ**
- Relevant today = especially when we think about small groups
- In many parts of Seventh-day Adventist Church = small group Bible studies have been rightly emphasized
- Small groups can be tremendous blessing
 - provide prayer support / discipleship
 - Bible study / encouragement / accountability / outreach
 - Help people grow in Christ = connect in meaningful ways
- If forget its purpose = danger small group can become a clique
- What is difference between small group / clique?
- Small group is centered on Jesus / grounded in Scripture
 - open-hearted / connected to the larger body
- Clique is centered on itself / closed off / relationally exclusive
 - often subtly shaped around preferences/personalities/pride
- Small group builds up church = clique fragments it
- Small group says, “How can we serve the body of Christ?”
 - Clique says, “This is our circle”
- Small group welcomes others
 - Clique makes others feel like outsiders
- So how do we keep small groups from turning into cliques?
- Keep Christ at center = remain grounded in authority of Scripture
 - Guard our hearts against exclusiveness / spiritual pride
 - Stay connected to larger mission of the church.
- Remember that every ministry / every fellowship group / every Bible study exists not to create a subculture within the church
 - but to strengthen / body of Christ as a whole.
- When Jesus is truly Lord = self must die / pride must die / competition must die

- Paul is calling for = not simply agreement on surface
 - but surrender of heart
- Church will never be united = merely by structure / policy
- Will only be united = when it is truly centered on Jesus
- So today let's ask ourselves: Am I contributing to unity of the body,
 - or am I pulling people toward myself / preferences / circle?
- Am I helping restore relationships = to their proper condition?
- Is Jesus truly center of my thinking / my speaking / and my serving?
- May God help us to be = people / perfectly joined together in Christ
 - Different in gifts = but one in heart
 - Diverse in function = but united in purpose
- Centered not on human leaders = but on Jesus Christ our Lord