

The Topic: Division in the Church

A church that keeps the Gospel central will have the medicine needed to avoid division.

We need to focus on the cross instead of: Personalities, Human Wisdom, and Social Status.

Instead of Personalities

Paul’s situation

In 2 Corinthians 10:10	“His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.”
1 Corinthians 4:3	“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by your or any human court.”
1 Corinthians 1:1	“Paul, called by the will of God, to be an apostle.” (He inverts the normal greeting to emphasize God’s calling him)

Moving from division to the Gospel

Vs. 13 “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

Dropping names!

“I baptized none of you... except Crispus, and Gaius, ... and also the household of Stephanus.”

Crispus – former leader of the Corinthians synagogue

Gaius – the rich man whose house the church met in

Stephanus – the first believer in the entire province of Achaia

1. Paul walks a tightrope. Deemphasizing his own personality but establishing credibility.
2. A good idea during division: bring in respected names to calm the church.

Instead of Human Wisdom

A city obsessed with wisdom

The story of Epictetus and the young man

A message of foolishness

Jews demand signs – miracles

Gentiles demand wisdom – logical, mind stimulating approaches to God

The Gospel – neither full of signs nor wisdom, but a foolish message... but it is the power of God

American “Jews” and “Gentiles”

Amazingly, Christianity gives us both truths that stimulate the mind and the occasional supernatural experience, but we get them through the cross!

Instead of Social Status

Rich vs. Poor

The cross is the great equalizer

Benefits of the cross

Righteousness – we are declared righteous, as in not guilty.

Sanctification – he is our holiness, meaning, because of him, we are clean and pure.

Redemption – we were purchased by him and belong to him now.

Unity is perhaps the most important witness of the church today

John 17:21 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us,
so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Paul’s conclusion in 2:1-5 – “You know how my ministry epitomized everything I just said.”

Questions for Personal Study

1. What does it look like for you to keep to the plot of the Gospel?
2. What can you do to focus, and refocus daily, on what Jesus did for you on the cross?
3. How does our society today demand wisdom and signs? Why does God hide this except through people who accept the Gospel?
4. Why is the unity in the diversity of the church a powerful witness?