Small Group Guide

The Cruciform Life | Week 2: Crossroads, Competition, and the Cross

Based on 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 and 3:1-17

Overview

In this message, we explored how the church in Corinth allowed competition, comparison, and tribalism to divide them. Rather than being shaped by the cross of Christ, they were being shaped by the culture around them, fanboying over popular preachers and forming factions. Paul's response is clear: the message is always greater than the messenger, and disunity empties the cross of its power.

Key Takeaways

- Every day, our repeated choices shape the person we are becoming. Many of those choices are genuine crossroads moments that affect our direction and destination.
- The Corinthian church was dividing over personalities rather than uniting around the person of Jesus Christ.
- Baptism unites us under one name, the name of Jesus, not under the name of any preacher, denomination, or local congregation.
- Competition and comparison are marks of spiritual immaturity. Paul called this worldly, infantile thinking.
- The Great Commission is an assembly line, not a mom-and-pop shop. We each plant and water, but God provides the growth.
- Jesus Christ is the only firm foundation. Any church building, ministry, or effort not rooted in His character and mission will ultimately be lost.

Warm-Up Question

Think of a time you came to a genuine fork in the road, either literally or in a life decision. Where did you end up, and did you end up where you expected?

Discussion Questions

On Crossroads and Decision-Making

1. The sermon described how thousands of small daily decisions are shaping the person we are becoming. Which of the following crossroads questions from the message feels most relevant to your life right now?
    - How will I respond when things do not go my way?
    - What will I do when I am tempted?
    - What voices will I listen to?
    - Will I pursue what is right or what is easy?
    - What will I do with my mistakes?
2. Can you think of a crossroads decision in your past that significantly shaped who you are today? What made that moment so pivotal?

On Division and Tribalism

3. The Corinthian believers were dividing over favorite preachers and teachers. In what ways do you see a similar dynamic playing out in the modern church, whether in your own experience or in broader Christian culture?
4. The sermon introduced the phrase: "In essentials, unity. In opinions, liberty. In all things, love." How would you personally define the difference between an essential and an opinion when it comes to Christian faith and practice? Where does that line get blurry?
5. Paul used biting sarcasm to make his point, asking whether Christ was divided, whether Paul was crucified for them, and whether they were baptized in Paul's name. Why do you think Paul chose to use himself as the example rather than pointing the finger at Apollos or Peter?

On Baptism

6. The sermon addressed several reasons why people wonder whether they need to be re-baptized. Were any of those scenarios new to you or personally meaningful? What questions do you still have about baptism?
7. The message emphasized that baptism is a beginning, not an end, and that we are saved in order to be shaped. How has your understanding of your own faith grown or changed since you were baptized? How does that growth reflect the process of sanctification?

On the Assembly Line and the Great Commission

8. The sermon described the Great Commission as an assembly line where one person plants, another waters, and God provides the growth. Where do you currently see yourself on that assembly line in someone else's faith journey?
9. The story of Rochelle and Scarlet Hope illustrated what radical, unconventional obedience to the Great Commission can look like. What is one area of your life or community where you sense God might be calling you to step outside your comfortable church circle?
10. The story of Emma described an assembly line of people who kept planting seeds in her life even when she was rejecting the message. Has there been a person in your life who kept planting or watering even when you were not receptive? How does that change the way you think about your own efforts when they seem fruitless?

On Foundation

11. Paul describes two kinds of building materials: costly ones like gold, silver, and precious stones, and cheap ones like wood, hay, and straw. In your own spiritual life, what does it look like practically to build with costly materials on the foundation of Jesus Christ?
12. The sermon closed with this statement: "The church is found when and where the people of God form an assembly line and start doing the work of God with the heart of a servant." What would it look like for your small group specifically to function more like that kind of assembly line?

Practical Applications

Choose one of the following to put into practice before your group meets again:

1. **Identify a crossroads decision you are currently facing.** Write it down and spend time this week in prayer and in Scripture asking God to shape your response by the character of Christ rather than by the culture around you.
2. **Reach across a dividing line.** Think of a Christian from a different church, denomination, or background with whom you have had tension or distance. Take one step toward unity this week, whether that is a conversation, a prayer, or simply a change in attitude.

3. **Find your place on the assembly line.** Identify one person in your life who is not yet a believer or who has walked away from faith. Commit to one intentional act of planting or watering in their life this week. It does not have to be a gospel presentation. It can be a meal, a conversation, or simply showing up.
4. **Examine your foundation.** Take an honest inventory of where you are investing your time, money, and energy as a follower of Jesus. Ask yourself whether those investments are built on gold, silver, and costly stones, or on wood, hay, and straw. Share what you discover with a trusted friend or your group leader.

Closing Prayer Focus

Spend time as a group praying for the following:

- Unity within your local church and among churches in your community
- Boldness to engage people outside the walls of the church with the love and truth of the Gospel
- Wisdom to recognize the crossroads moments in your daily life and to choose the path shaped by the cross
- Those in your lives who are somewhere on the assembly line, not yet finished products, and in need of someone to keep planting and watering

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Memory Verse for the Week

Reflect on 1 Corinthians 3:11, where Paul reminds us that no foundation can be laid other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.