

The Church Is United in the Gospel

Summary and Goal

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth to address several problems they were facing, one of which was division. The church had lost sight of its unity in the gospel. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, believers are brought into one body to live in unity and harmony as an expression of the great power of the gospel. God unites the church by the gospel of Jesus Christ, the one thing that binds us together amid great diversity. Because we have been brought together with God through Jesus, we unite with a local church and live humbly and graciously with one another. The church's unity is a necessity and not a luxury. When churches walk in unity, they experience the fruit of Jesus' high priestly prayer.

Session Outline

1. The church is to be united (1 Cor. 1:10-13).
2. The church is to be united by the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17-18).
3. The church is to be united by the gospel to show the world Jesus' power (1 Cor. 1:19-21; John 17:20-23).

Background Passages: 1 Corinthians 1; John 17

Session in a Sentence

God unites the church by the gospel of Jesus Christ, the one thing that binds us together amid great diversity.

Christ Connection

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth to address several problems they were facing, one of which was division. The church had lost sight of their unity in the gospel. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, believers are brought into one body to live in unity and harmony as an expression of the great power of the gospel.

Missional Application

Because we have been brought together with God through Jesus, we unite with a local church and live humbly and graciously with one another.

Group Time

GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraphs on page 75 in the DDG to talk about a scene from the movie *Remember the Titans* to illustrate the importance of team unity.

In *Remember the Titans*, a movie based on the true story of T. C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1971, Denzel Washington plays Coach Herman Boone. In this movie adaptation, Coach Boone is in his first year of coaching a newly integrated football team. What makes this story so powerful is that it shows how a divided team and coaching staff go from fierce discord to strong unity rooted in mutual friendship. As a result of this transformation, the team goes undefeated and wins the state title.

The turning point for the team comes when Coach Boone forces the young men to go on a grueling run to the Gettysburg cemetery. While they are bent over gasping for air, Boone gives a persuasive speech that starts by revealing that the team is standing on sacred ground where fifty thousand men died, in his words, “fighting the same fight that we’re still fighting amongst ourselves.” Boone goes on to say, “If we don’t come together right now on this hallowed ground, we too will be destroyed just like they were.”

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What motivations for unity might the world give? (shared ethnicity; shared life experiences; shared power or the hope of power; guilt; inspiration and ambition; mutual protection; acceptance)

SUMMARIZE: The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth to address several problems they were facing, one of which was division. The church had lost sight of its unity in the gospel. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, believers are brought into one body to live in unity and harmony as an expression of the great power of the gospel. God unites the church by the gospel of Jesus Christ, the one thing that binds us together amid great diversity. Because we have been brought together with God through Jesus, we unite with a local church and live humbly and graciously with one another. The church’s unity is a necessity and not a luxury. When churches walk in unity, they experience the fruit of Jesus’ high priestly prayer.

Leaders, grow on the go! Listen to session-by-session training every week on *Ministry Grid*, *Apple Podcasts*, *Spotify*, or *LifeWay’s Digital Pass*: ministrygrid.com/gospelproject | gospelproject.com/podcasts.

Point 1: The church is to be united (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

READ 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 (DDG p. 76).

¹⁰ Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters, by members of Chloe's people, that there is rivalry among you. ¹² What I am saying is this: One of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul's name?


SAY: Paul loved the church at Corinth. He spent several months in that city working, building relationships, and preaching the gospel. He had many friends there and got to see the Lord save many people in the city (Acts 18:10). To hear that the church was experiencing division had to hurt his heart. After all, he considered the Christians at Corinth to be his spiritual children (1 Cor. 4:14-15). That's why he wrote with such urgency to the church.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 76) to accent Paul's intention to correct the Corinthians' tendency to live as if they had been saved to build their identity around their favorite apostle or leader.

Like a young adult who goes off to college and begins to lose his or her reason and focus, the church in Corinth was swerving away from what was important. They had been rescued by the death and resurrection of Christ and for the purpose of glorifying God. But the church members were living as if they had been saved to build their identity around their favorite apostle or leader. Paul called the church back to reality and to unity in what matters.

- It is essential that Christians speak in agreement with one another and that they share a common understanding and conviction (1 Cor. 1:10). Christianity is built on the words of the apostles because they testified to the risen Christ (Eph. 2:20). The church is "the pillar and foundation of truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Having a unified message is necessary for the life of the universal church as well as for local churches. Sadly, today the church is often known by its schisms, disagreements, and arguments, perhaps more so than by its agreement and unity. This saddens the heart of God and weakens the mission of the church because it misrepresents "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:10).
- The apostle wanted "no divisions" among them (1 Cor. 1:10). Was Paul too idealistic? When Christians walk in disunity, it diminishes the character of Jesus to those who are in the world. One only needs to go to social media, a local barbershop, or a members' meeting to see that the state of the church in America is similar to the state of the church in Corinth. Politics, race, preaching styles, music, and the color of the carpet are often sources of deep distrust, gossip, and even church splits. When Paul tells the church to agree in what they say, he's calling them—and us—to the same focus: the finished work of Christ, not tribal affinities.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 Over what kinds of trivial matters do you see Christians most often grow divisive? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)


EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 76) to show how Paul promoted believers' union with Christ over any kind of identity we might find in any leader or teacher, including himself.

Paul emphasized that those who rallied to him for identity did so foolishly since Paul was not crucified for them, neither were any of them baptized in his name. In other words, since only Christ died for them, Christ was the only One to whom they belonged. Scripture teaches our union with Christ, not our union with Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or any other leader (Col. 3:1-4). In a day and age dominated by charismatic pastors with huge followings on social media, we must know ourselves to belong wholly to Christ. And we must beware of schisms and divisions, like those in Corinth.

- Verse 12 tells us that rivalries existed within the church in Corinth. Apparently members were divided according to their favorite teachers. Paul was heartbroken because this attitude is one of worldliness, and it had snuck into the church.
- It was common to have such loyalties in Greek and even Jewish cultures as people frequently identified with their favorite philosophers or rabbis. The apostle Paul recognized the personality factions as a threat to church unity. When people claim that they “belong” to a person, they are, in essence, saying that they only find one teacher helpful, or even necessary, in their spiritual development. This factious spirit likely arose in an attempt to subvert the apostolic leadership of Paul.

Commentary: Paul's concern over the divisions in Corinth came from a report that he had received from “Chloe's people” (1 Cor. 1:11). We aren't told much about who Chloe was, but based on how Paul wrote of her, she was a person of prominence and respect. Chloe was likely a spiritual leader or a businesswoman in Corinth whose home was used as a house church.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 Why are people prone to identify more strongly with certain personalities and public figures than with Christ Himself? (these people are tangible and we can physically see them and audibly hear their voices; we equate certain people's way of living with what we want to be true of Jesus; we obey Scriptures direction to be imitators of godly people but we overlook the further expectation that these people must be imitators of Jesus; we are people who are jealous of attention and uniqueness)

Point 2: The church is to be united by the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17-18).

READ 1 Corinthians 1:17-18 (DDG p. 77).

¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ will not be emptied of its effect.

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 77) to highlight the difference between unity and uniformity. Emphasize Paul's point that if Christ was not divided, then neither should the church act divisively because the church is His body.

Unity is not uniformity; unity in the church consists of possessing common allegiance to the same core beliefs and values—to Jesus and the gospel—even while there are differences among us. In 1 Corinthians 1:13, the apostle Paul asked, “Is Christ divided?” The obvious answer to this question is “no.” Paul knew of Jesus’ presence in heaven and His existence in one piece. So Paul’s point was that if Christ is not divided, then neither should the church act divisively because the church is His body.

Voices from the Church

“If a choir is singing in great harmony, it’s not because they are singing the same parts; it’s because they’re adding their part to the same song. It is the goal that produces the unity. Unity is not sameness. Unity has to do with same purpose.”¹

—Tony Evans

- Unity in the church is sharing the same mind and agreeing on the essentials of the faith—essentials such as who God is, who Jesus is, Jesus’ death and resurrection, and salvation by grace through faith. A united church is a church that speaks of these truths biblically and accurately and of one accord. Christians in unity also understand that God has saved them for His own glory (1 Pet. 2:9), for their spiritual formation into Christ’s image (Rom. 8:28-29), and to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).
- Paul made it clear that Christ sent him not to focus on baptism as much as to preach the gospel (2 Cor. 1:17). Paul was not saying that baptism is not important—he emphasized the importance of baptism elsewhere—but that the gospel is what is most important. As members of Jesus’ body, we may differ on who we prefer to deliver a sermon, what type of music is most edifying, or some of the finer points of theology, but we must remain united on what the gospel of Jesus is because in it we find our salvation.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 77).

Unity of the Church: Christ's desire for the church is that we be united as one in Him by the **gospel**, reflecting the **oneness** of our trinitarian God. As such, we are to allow for no divisions to separate us, such as ethnicity, socioeconomics, nationality, language, politics, or secondary doctrinal beliefs. Our objective is not simply to work around or look past these differences within the body of Christ but to celebrate the **diversity** of God's people made one in **Christ**.

Essential Doctrine “Unity of the Church”: Christ's desire for the church is that we be united as one in Him by the **gospel** (Phil. 2:1-2), reflecting the **oneness** of our trinitarian God (John 17:20-23). As such, we are to allow for no divisions to separate us (1 Cor. 1:10), such as ethnicity, socioeconomics, nationality, language, politics, or secondary doctrinal beliefs. Our objective is not simply to work around or look past these differences within the body of Christ but to celebrate the **diversity** of God's people made one in **Christ** (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4-6,11-13), demonstrating humility (Rom. 12:3,16; Phil. 2:5-11) and freely loving and forgiving one another (Col. 3:13-14) to reflect the power of Christ who reconciles all things to Himself (Ps. 133:1; Eph. 1:10; 2:14).

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 77) to identify “the cross of Christ” as one of the few dividing lines that should be found in the church.

Paul's gospel included the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ. It is the good news of the kingdom of God's available to all who look to Christ in faith and repent of their sins. But here Paul has a particular focus on “the cross of Christ.” In Corinth, the preaching of the cross divided the hearers into two groups: those who are perishing and those who are being saved. Those who are in Christ by faith see the cross as wisdom and beauty. Everyone else sees the cross as foolish and worthless.

Application: Preaching with “eloquent wisdom” would cause the cross of Christ to be emptied of its effect. Should we then rebuke a preacher for being a great communicator? Of course not. Rather, what we must do is discipline our own thoughts and train our hearts to be more impressed with the message of the gospel than with any messenger. It is the cross of Christ that unites us. Paul thought this pursuit was so important that he did not want to overshadow the gospel by communicating it with eloquence. His approach would have been radically different than the Greek orators of his day who wowed audiences with style and human wisdom.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



How does the gospel serve to unify the church? (every believer recognizes himself or herself as a sinner in need of the Savior; every Christian is saved in the same way, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; believers are all adopted into the family of God, so we are all brothers and sisters in Christ; obeying Christ, we are to love and serve one another)

Point 3: The church is to be united by the gospel to show the world Jesus' power (1 Cor. 1:19-21; John 17:20-23).

READ: Ask a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 1:19-21 (DDG p. 78).

¹⁹ For it is written,

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and I will set aside the intelligence of the intelligent.

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish? ²¹ For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 78) to explain how the perceived foolishness of the cross serves to confound the wisdom of the age.

In verse 19, Paul quoted Isaiah 29:14. There Isaiah warned the Kingdom of Judah that God would judge them for relying on the intelligence of the world rather than Him, the all-seeing and all-knowing Creator. Paul then continued with a flurry of questions to make the point that both Greek philosophers and Jewish teachers who reject the cross—who see themselves as wise—are fools in comparison with God. True wisdom is found in believing, being saved by, and nurtured through the preaching of the cross.

- God sent His Son to die upon a cross, thus leading to the cross becoming the central image of the Christian faith. The cross has become a popular image that represents passion and perseverance, but this wasn't always the case. In the first century, the cross was a symbol of cruel punishment for the most foolish and vile of society. Dying on a tree was viewed as a cursed way to die not only amongst Roman citizens but also according to Mosaic Law (Deut. 21:23). Therefore, those who consider themselves intelligent according to the wisdom of the age are left baffled by the truth that salvation comes through Jesus' crucifixion.
- Throughout Scripture, Paul is clear: the gospel is powerful enough to save anyone regardless of their cultural background, both those who are near and those who are far away (Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 2:11-13). The church's unity is built on a message that completely changes the way we see God, ourselves, and the world around us. Disunity happens when we forget the depths of our depravity, the holiness of God, the finished work of Jesus, and that God is in the process of making all things new. Too often, church politics and personalities become our central focus as opposed to the message of the cross that saves both Jew and Gentile.

Illustration: During His ministry, Jesus made it clear that He didn't come for those who deemed themselves well but rather for those who recognized themselves to be sick and in need of healing (Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31). Those who believe themselves to be wise find no use in the preaching of the cross, but those who humble themselves and believe in the gospel, who are willing to be counted foolish in the eyes of the world, are saved.

READ John 17:20-23 (DDG p. 78).

²⁰ “I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. ²¹ May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. ²² I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. ²³ I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 78) to amplify the importance of church unity by noting Jesus’ parting desire for the church’s oneness as expressed in His high priestly prayer in John 17.

In John 17:20-23, Jesus made it clear as He prayed to God that His parting desire was that His people—the church—would be one. His motivation behind this prayer is that the world would know that God sent Him and that He is the Christ. A unified church in the twenty-first century that is standing on the gospel and bearing fruit will be an attractive community to people who live in a culture of disconnectedness, discouragement, and drama. A church that is united is a church, as Jesus prayed, that is moving and living as one.

- Because there aren’t many communities where there is true unity and diversity, the church has a fantastic opportunity to display it. Not only do we have the chance, but we have all the resources we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). A united church that is made up of people with socioeconomic, ethnic, and political diversity who all have submitted to Christ’s rule is like no other organization in the world.
 - The path forward to this type of unity is clear. The church is called to walk in step with the gospel by guarding our hearts against union to particular people or personalities. We must remember that our primary union is with Christ. May we reevaluate what we spend our time debating and put it in perspective, knowing that a lost world is watching.
-

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



How does unity in the church support her mission of making Jesus known throughout the world? (unity in the body of the church reflects her head, Jesus, who is one with the Father and the Spirit; unity in the church provides an attractive community to those in the world; a unified church more readily joins together in support of missions both locally and around the world; the love of the church for one another naturally overflows into displaying God’s love in the world)

My Mission

PACK ITEM 10: PICK UP YOUR CROSS: Read the **Derwin Gray quote** on this poster and share the following content as you conclude this session.

- The goal of this session has been to help the church pursue unity as a necessity rather than a luxury. As we have learned, unity is only possible when we have the cross at the center of our lives and fellowship. When the church builds its identity around anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ, it will not be truly effective. The key to the church building its life around Jesus is to remember that salvation is possible only through Him. When God saves us, we become united to Him, the triune God made known to us in Christ, not to individuals leaders or philosophies. Remember, every person has preferences, but Jesus' life and death teach us to lay down our preferences to serve others. Every local church must learn to come together or else fail in her mission.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 79), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God's Word.

Because we have been brought together with God through Jesus, we unite with a local church and live humbly and graciously with one another.

- **What is one way you will strive for unity with your local church because of the work of Jesus on your behalf?**
- **What are some ways your group/ church may need to repent and address the issue of factions within your body?**
- **How will you proclaim God's wisdom found in the message of the cross of Christ, even though it seems like foolishness to the world?**

Voices from the Church

"The Creator of the universe, who is more glorious and more to be desired than any treasure on earth, has revealed himself in Jesus Christ to be known and enjoyed forever by anyone in the world who will lay down the arms of rebellion, receive his blood-brought amnesty, and embrace his Son as Savior, Lord, and Treasure of their lives."²

—John Piper

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, You have made us for Yourself and You have called us to love one another. We are thankful that through Your Son, Jesus, You have made us one redeemed community united in identity and mission. Bind us together in the love of the Spirit so that we will prioritize the gospel in our lives and relationships. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 80-82), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 83) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God's Word.

Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 80-82) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 83) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 80-82) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 1** as a part of point 1 in the session: **Our confrontation should be done within the framework of the gospel, acknowledging the sin but also our great Savior who offers forgiveness and peace through His cross.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 2:** "No matter what stage of life we are in as Christians, our goal should be to imitate Paul by seeking to make Jesus famous and not ourselves."
- **Day 4:** "If Jesus spent time praying for the unity of the church, then this should tell us that walking in unity is not something we should take for granted."



Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 83) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to discuss the ways they sense unity within their church or small group that they do not sense elsewhere.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

Additional Commentary

Point 1: The church is to be united (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

“Paul has heard about the divisions in the Corinthian church through visitors from Chloe’s household (1:11). His initial approach to the problem is to make a passionate appeal to them as though he were Jesus—in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1:10a). He then goes on to speak of the *divisions among you*, using a Greek word that refers to competing political parties, and then calls on them to agree with one another (1:10b), just as political parties might reach an agreement after resolving their differences. He also uses the medical term for healing broken bones or fixing a dislocated joint when he appeals to them to *be perfectly united in mind and thought* (1:10c). Their failure to present a united front is unhealthy and unnatural . . . Paul’s three questions in 1:13 confront their divisions. He is making the point that Christ is not the property of any small section of the church. It is absurd to think that Paul was crucified for them. Baptism was in the name of Christ, not Paul. (Note that Acts does not record the use of the trinitarian formula found in Matthew 28:19.)”³

“The Corinthians are exhibiting a haughty devotion to one or another of three itinerant Christian preachers. **Reported** (Gk. *dēloō*) means to ‘show,’ ‘make clear,’ or ‘reveal’ something. **Chloe’s people** (Gk. *tōn Chloēs*, lit., ‘the ones of Chloe’) may have done this by an oral report (5:1; 11:18). Chloe’s identity and her location (Ephesus? Corinth?) are unknown, as well as whether these ‘people’ are friends, business associates, family, or from her household. Apparently the Corinthian Christians were divided into factions on the basis of who had baptized them (vv. 14-17). Paul knew **Apollo** well (16:12). His rhetorical skills were impressive, and the Corinthian Christians had received him gladly after Paul’s departure (Acts 18:24–19:1). **Cephas** is the Aramaic equivalent of the name Peter (Gal. 2:7-14), and both names refer to Peter the apostle (1 Cor. 15:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:7-14). Unlike Paul (1 Cor. 7:8), Cephas was married and had traveled to Corinth with his wife (9:5). Apparently one faction in Corinth, claiming to be above it all, took the slogan ‘I follow Christ.’”⁴

Point 2: The church is to be united by the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17-18).

“Baptism played a prominent role in the life of the early church, as the outward ritual signifying repentance from sin and initiation into the Christian community. Still, as throughout the New Testament, it takes a back seat here to the ministry of proclamation and the response of conversion. By saying Paul did not baptize many, he must mean that he delegated this responsibility to others . . . Verse 17a must thus be taken as referring to relative priorities. Paul’s primary calling was to preach rather than to baptize. Verse 17b introduces the thought that will form the main idea of 1:18–2:5. The focus of Christian proclamation must remain clearly centered on the message of the crucifixion rather than baptism or any other doctrine.”⁵

“**Not with eloquent wisdom** emphasizes what the world sees as the gospel’s foolishness, that being the message of ‘Christ crucified’ (vv. 18,23; 2:2). The message of **the cross of Christ** should never be diluted in our evangelism, for by such ‘clever’ means we risk voiding it of its power. The **cross** divides the human race. The division is between **those who are perishing**, to whom the cross is **foolishness**, and those **who are being saved**, to whom the cross is wisdom and power.”⁶

Point 3: The church is to be united by the gospel to show the world Jesus’ power (1 Cor. 1:19-21; John 17:20-23).

“The ‘wonderful’ yet ‘shocking’ things [Isaiah 29:13-14] that the prophet foretells, with messianic overtones, are what Paul declares to have now transpired through Christ crucified. Especially when read in the context of its early Jewish interpretation, Isaiah 29:14 is used by Paul to announce that God’s eschatological judgment and salvation are taking place in the midst of the Corinthians ... The Corinthians who still value ‘the wisdom of the wise’ have failed to notice God’s apocalyptic judgment on such wisdom through the crucified Messiah. The fact that in 1:18 people are still in the process of being saved (or destroyed) indicates that the unfolding of the drama of salvation is not yet complete. Isaiah’s words are for Paul not just a judgment on ancient Judean leaders, but also ‘an indictment of the rhetorical affectations of the Corinthians.’”⁷

“Jesus expands his prayer to include those who will—not *might*, but *will*—believe in him. The ‘Great Commission’ isn’t our job to get done, but God’s promise to fulfill. We are privileged to live as characters in God’s story of redemption and also as proclaimers of that story; but we must never forget, it is God’s story. Jesus prays for the unity, not the uniformity, of his believers. God is praised, and the world takes notice, when Christians demonstrate a Spirit-given unity—a unity we must be eager to maintain (Eph. 4:1-3). Our fallen instincts encourage us to build our identity on what distinguishes us even from other believers, but Jesus exposes the self-centeredness of such a mind-set. Our *union with Christ* brings a *unity in Christ* that transcends all secondary disagreements.”⁸

References

1. Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2009), 337.
2. John Piper, “Preaching as Expository Exultation for the Glory of God,” in *Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 115.
3. Dachollom Datiri, “1 Corinthians,” in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1405.
4. Frank S. Thielman, “1 Corinthians,” in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 2192-93, n. 1:10-17a; n. 1:11; n. 1:12.
5. Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, in *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) [Wordsearch].
6. F. Alan Tomlinson, “1 Corinthians,” in *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2017), 1813, n. 1:17; n. 1:18-19.
7. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, “1 Corinthians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 698.
8. Scotty Smith, “John,” in *Gospel Transformation Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 1440, n. 17:20-26.