

**Christians Gone Wild, week 3**  
**Preaching Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:10–17)**  
Pastor Mark Driscoll

“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”  
1 Corinthians 1:17

Shortly before going to the cross where He would die as a substitute to forgive sinners, Jesus prayed that Christians would be unified with both God and one another (John 17:20–23). Jesus then took away our sin by the cross, thereby enabling us to be reconciled to God as Christians and reconciled to one another as God’s church. Subsequently, unity among God’s people in the church is an expected byproduct of Jesus’ work on the cross.

Paul speaks directly to this issue, kindly imploring the church at Corinth to obey Jesus and be a like-minded and unified people (1 Corinthians 1:10). In saying this, a few points deserve mentioning. First, Paul is not saying that all church conflict is bad. He himself frequently fought false teachers and false doctrines, like in Galatia, where he wished false teachers would cut their penises off and go to hell. And 1 Corinthians is quite terse itself. Second, Paul is not saying that everyone in a church must be exactly alike. As he later explains in 1 Corinthians 12–14, unity does not require uniformity. Third, Paul is not denouncing preferences among church members when it comes to things such as preaching styles (e.g., topical or expository), Bible teachers (e.g., Calvin, Luther, Wesley), or worship styles (e.g., traditional or contemporary).

What Paul *is* denouncing is arrogant prejudices that some people have that cause them to consider their Christian preferences as superior to other, equally godly Christians’, thereby causing unnecessary divisions in the church. Paul is arguing that every Christian should both agree on the essential truths of the Christian faith and the biblical principles which God gives for the directing of our lives individually and collectively, and allow freedom for the various methods by which God’s principles are implemented.

In Paul’s day, philosophers were as popular as rock stars are today, and they had their own groupies who bought their t-shirts, subscribed to their podcasts, and hated the other stars with all of the animosity of the East Coast vs. West Coast hip-hop feud. The Corinthians carried this same immaturity into their Christian faith and Paul identified it as the underlying cause of so much of the trouble in the church (1 Corinthians 1:11–12). While the church had not yet split, it was divided into four teams, each with a leader they looked to while disrespecting the other leaders. Three of the teams overemphasized pastoral leadership: Team Paul, Team Apollos, and Team Cephas/Peter. Apparently, some people in the church preferred Paul, who founded the church (Acts 18:1–18), while others preferred the gifted preacher Apollos (Acts 18:24–19:1), and still others preferred Peter, perhaps because he was the leader of the disciples. A fourth team also emerged that disrespected pastoral leadership altogether and arrogantly had team jerseys printed up that simply said “Team Jesus.”

With his succession of questions, Paul sarcastically points out the folly of promulgating the lie that three godly, like-minded men and their Lord could

somehow be pitted against one another as teaching different things (1 Corinthians 1:13). Paul's point is simply that Jesus does not belong to one group of Christians alone and that no Christian leader can take away human sin. Therefore, it is unfitting for their name to be lifted above the name of Jesus Christ.

Apparently the arrogance among some in the church was so fierce that they actually boasted about who baptized them as new Christians (1 Corinthians 1:14–15). Paul is greatly frustrated that anyone would take the beautiful act of baptism as anything other than a reminder of our sinfulness, pride, and desperate need for the cleansing work of Jesus. Sadly, this trend continues among Christians whose devotion to their pastor and their church seemingly supersedes their enthusiasm for Jesus and unity among God's people.

After dismissing the secondary issues of one's favorite preacher and favorite baptizer, Paul closes his argument by getting to the focal point of true Christian unity and humility: the cross of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:17). It is at the cross that we find the crux of our faith, the salvation from our sin, and the rebuke of our self-righteous pride in the broken body of Jesus dying in our place. Simply, the cross is not about being hip, cool, or trendy, but about being forgiven for who we are and what we do so that we can love God and His church instead of just loving ourselves and our silly teams.