GBC/IBC/CIC/CIC Dr. Rick Griffith

26 Apr 98/15 Aug 04/28 Jan 07/9 Sep 12 Message 2 of 24

NIV 40 Minutes

**Follow the Leader**

Title

***1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5***

**Topic:** Divisions

**Subject:** Don’t divide over leaders

**Complement:** because the gospel is based on a crucified man.

**Purpose:** The listeners will realize that although they can accept the ministry of church leaders, this must not be done against other church leaders.

# Introduction

### [Christians must have unity despite denominational choices.]

#### One hot summer day a little Baptist boy and a little Presbyterian girl played together at the home of the boy. Since it was so hot, the mother decided to let the two go swimming in the blow-up pool. The kids played together for a while, but then, due to the heat, they both eventually took off their swimsuits. As the mother approached them to encourage them towards discretion, the little boy looked at the girl and noted, “Wow! I never knew there was *that* much difference between a Baptist and a Presbyterian!”

Kiddy

#### They didn’t exactly interpret the situation correctly.

Denominations

##### But one thing they did see is that we have our different denominations today.

##### My last look at the Singapore Church Directory revealed only 12 denominations, but actually worldwide there are over 250 versions of Baptists alone! There exist over 20,000 denominations in the world, with 270 new ones added each year. This makes 5 new denominations weekly!

#### We have many choices even within denominations. In Singapore if you choose to worship in English, then there’s the choice of *which* of about 400 churches to attend, then which *service*, etc.

#### Now these many denominations are not necessarily wrong. They represent different languages, people groups, and convictions that show the diversity of the body of Christ. This type of relevancy has enabled Christianity to grow to the worldwide faith that it is.

#### BUT… Christians must have unity despite *denominational* choices.

### And Christians also must have unity despite *leadership* choices.

Penguins

#### Of course, these churches and denominations don’t function in a vacuum as every organization has a leader. So then comes the leadership question: in that most churches have more than one leader, which one do you follow? How do you know whom you *should* follow?

#### This is the trickier question since it strikes us at the more personal level. It’s one thing to talk about philosophies of ministry in varying churches (which is kind of abstract). It’s another thing to talk about people. When it comes down to it, no institution—even a church—is any better than its people. And leaders are key to developing the people.

### Now I want to say at the outset here that Crossroads does not have any leadership crisis—not a problem with unity.

• Why unity?

#### In fact, God has given me a wonderful reprieve from problems that I have experienced in churches I have attended in the past. My first pastorate was a very difficult one. I often say that at that church I gained five years of pastoral experience—all in one year!

#### But Crossroads has no strong-willed leaders who are grasping for power. I’m so grateful for this time of peace! It’s not that we have any particular problem with leadership or unity that I address 1 Corinthians 1 today.

#### I’m just committed to sequential exposition of Scripture so I trust that God has a plan for us to address *this* text from 1 Corinthians that we’ll be addressing today.

### Background:

#### Last week we saw that the church addressed in 1 Corinthians was the most troublesome in the entire NT. This gives us the most teaching on many subjects in this book. In fact, Paul had to write them 4 times—and this 1 Cor. is actually his second letter and 2 Cor. is actually 4 Corinthians! Confused? Yep, it was!

Book Chart

1 Cor Charac

#### Especially about leadership—comprising chapters 1–4.

#### The question “Which church leader should we follow?” was a key question the first-century Corinthians were asking. Paul answers this question beginning in 1 Corinthians 1:10 which we will look at today.

Which leader?

### Subject: As we look at this text I believe God wants us to answer this question: *How can Crossroads maintain the unity that we already have?*

Maintain unity

### Preview: We will see two brief answers to this question today. The first way that you can help keep our church unified is simply…

# Don’t divide over favorite leaders (1:10-17).

MP

[It’s wrong to establish a group that promotes one church leader over others.]

## [Paul rebuked Corinth for its divisions concerning favored leaders (1:10-17).]

### The Corinthian concern was which leader was right—but Paul said Corinth’s divisions ignored his teachings about unity (1:10-12).

1:10-12

#### Some followed Paul:

Parties

##### “Hey,” they said, “Have you guys forgotten who *started* this church? Paul! Look, we were here four years ago when this body began under Paul and we’re not going to let anyone question him!”

* Paul

##### Maybe we can call this group the PAP: “Paul Action Party. Perhaps most of these PAP members were Jews who had been led to Christ by Paul four years earlier—or liked being led by Paul the Jew.

#### Some followed Apollos:

* Apollos

##### Perhaps this was because he was a great orator. Acts 18:24-28 notes he came to Corinth two years after Paul and impressed the Greeks with his speaking.

##### “What a great speaker Apollos is!” some of the Corinthians boasted. “He really knows his Old Testament, he’s educated in Alexandria which has the best library in the Roman world, he’s teachable, and bold! Why follow this Paul guy? He’s not that impressive a speaker at all!”

* Peter

#### Others followed Cephas (in Aramaic) or Peter (in Greek):

##### “C’mon, you guys!” they said, “You think Paul and Apollos are so great. But neither of them *was even saved* when Jesus was here! Our group gets back to original sources. When Peter was here in Corinth we heard the message from one who was right there with Jesus—none of this second-hand info!”

##### Perhaps the Jews in the Corinthian church were drawn to this faction—especially Jews who had moved from Israel or didn’t know much about Paul.

#### The ones that thought they were really spiritual followed "Christ" (in big quotes).

* Christ

##### Now it’s interesting that this group also was a party condemned by Paul. After all, aren’t we all supposed to ultimately be following Christ rather than any human leader?

##### What was wrong with the “Christ-only” group?

###### This was a recognized division just like the rest. You may *think* these were people who sought to turn the church back to Christ…

###### But they likely got together with a holier-than-thou attitude.

###### This group was probably against having *any authorities at all.* It’s easy to mask a rebellious spirit against your church leaders by saying “we only follow Christ.”

#### Notice that Paul doesn’t give any hint which group had the most followers—that wasn’t relevant. Why not? The majority was often wrong in Scripture.

• Majority?

##### When Israel was in the wilderness, ten spies were wrong and two were right, yet the majority followed the ten and died in the desert as a result.

##### It was the majority in Israel that wanted a king against God’s wishes.

##### It was the majority opinion in the Sanhedrin that nailed Christ on a cross.

#### Paul also does not side with any of the groups—not even the “Paul Party.”

#### Rather, he first appeals to unity in verse 10 instead of “divisions”—a word actually used of political parties in his day.

#### Today we have even more choices that make division tough to maintain—whether that be what is the right thing to do in a service, or even what to say!

Amens

Clapping

### But the church isn’t about competing leaders “outperforming” other leaders (1:13-17).

2.

#### Is Paul against baptism?

#### Not at all! Baptism plays a vital role as an outward symbol of repentance and identification with the Christian community. It bears witness of a changed life.

#### But despite its importance, Paul says in verse 17 baptism is not more important than proclamation so people can come to Christ.

(So what’s the point for us? It’s simply that…)

Rally

## We shouldn’t rally around certain church leaders—are we?

Rep-Dem

### Those of us from the USA are used to political parties which are essentially the same strength—Republicans hold the White House for a while, it switches back to Democrats, then back to Republicans, and so on.

Donkey kick

SS

#### But we shouldn’t be switching loyalties like this in the church.

God is Not

#### This reminds me of a preacher who phoned the city’s newspaper and said, “Thank you very much for the error you made when you announced my sermon topic for last Sunday. The topic I sent you was ‘What Jesus Saw in a Publican.’ You printed it as ‘What Jesus Saw in a Republican,’ and I had the biggest crowd of the year!”

Publican

#### We’re so used to loyalties to certain parties and individual leaders! But this is not God’s plan for the church.

Fight

### We need to ask ourselves if we have an “I follow Rick” group and an “I follow Lewis” group.

CIC Parties

#### Is it wrong to appreciate my preaching more than Lewis’s? Of course not!

#### Is it wrong for you to appreciate Lewis’s preaching more than mine? Of course… not!

#### But if you are a “Rickpublican” or “Lewisocrat”—then God is dishonored.

* Rick  
  • Lewis

### Another editorial slip occurred in a different newspaper, which printed the following correction: “It was incorrectly reported last Friday that today is T-shirt Appreciation Day. In fact, it is actually Teacher Appreciation Day.” Perhaps everyone was appreciating their t-shirts more than their teachers! But appreciating teachers is fine!

Teacher Apprec.

### I find it interesting that such groups can continue even after a leader leaves—Paul wasn’t in Corinth anymore nor Peter as well, yet the groups continued. I trust that this will not happen with us as we have the ebb and flow of leadership when I return to the states from November to December to have Christmas with my family.

Parties

(Now is it wrong for one pastor to minister to you more than another? Do you have to be equally blessed by each leader’s preaching or pastoral ministry or administrative skill or personal charm? No. Then why *shouldn’t* we have our favorite leaders in this church? This is because…)

Why Not?

# Unity is based on the *cross*—not human leaders (1:18-2:5).

MP

[No church leader changed your life—it was *God’s* power in Jesus’ death for you.]

## The gospel of Christ’s death seems foolish but it’s better than human wisdom (1:18-25).

1:18

### Paul gives his key point in verse 18 [read again].

### Sometimes I think back to my first preaching experiences in the evangelistic singing group “Crossroads.” There were four of us who shared the preaching. I had no clue how to preach at the concerts, so rather than trying to say something profound, I just shared the gospel when it was my turn to speak. To my amazement, as the fruit of 269 concerts the four of us counted comment cards indicating over 10,000 decisions for Christ! Why? Because the message was so profound? No—because it was so simple!

Cross-roads

### Unbelievers see the need for a focal point for unity—

#### They know unity is vital in sports…

#### We see the importance of both unity and competition now in the Olympic Games. But unity is also important in…

Hockey

Focal Point

Olympics

Marriage

#### In marriage…

#### Or in business. This business in the UK drums together the basis of unity!

Drums Source

#### But what’s the real source of unity with people?

• What

### Sometimes we think that our relevance fails in comparison to supposedly more modern solutions proposed by the world.

Relevance

### But our unity and relevance is based in the cross! But why do non-Christians consider preaching about the cross foolish?

Why?

Cross Foolish

#### Try to think of crucifixion from the perspective of an unbeliever. Perhaps our focus on a crucified man seems somewhat morbid. Therefore it seems foolish.

#### Why foolish? Because Jesus seems so powerless on that cross. After all, what would you think if your colleagues at work started wearing necklaces with torture or execution weapons on them? One has a guillotine, another a hangman’s rope, another an electric chair. If you can imagine how you’d feel about that, perhaps you could envision what the cross looks like to them.

* Power

(Why does the cross look so foolish? This is because…)

### People generally seek power or intellect more than they do weakness!

Jew/ Gentile

#### The Jews and Greeks had two entirely different backgrounds, which likely led to divisions within Corinth.

#### Verse 22 says Greeks then loved to debate philosophical ideas but Jews wanted to see power in miraculous signs—and the cross disillusioned both.

East/

West

#### What are modern parallels to these groups? It seems that Asians (whether Chinese, Indian or Malay) are enamored more with miraculous signs. I think Asians see things in terms of relationships more than westerners do.

#### But the westerners pride themselves on intellect—the objective ability to discern ideas or which great thinker or speaker to follow.

##### In maintaining unity in our body, I think we may struggle in this area with our two major perspectives—experiential versus rational.

##### Paul didn’t favor one or the other, actually. He said what we need most to is to focus on the basics—Christ crucified!

(Why? Do you know the problem with both miracles and wisdom?)

##### Neither miracles nor worldly wisdom changes lives!

###### Experience is in the end an empty pursuit alone. The world is filled with people going from one experience to another—Christians included.

###### And wisdom?

We have volumes of information for us on the Internet—but what does it really do for us? Sure, it’s helpful when you have a problem, but for many people it just fills up the moments of an empty life.

Worldly wisdom is foolishness in the eyes of God because it doesn’t forgive sin, it doesn’t give us power to do right, it doesn’t meet our basic needs or change our lives.

Unity Cross

### In contrast to both miracles and intellect, the gospel *does* change lives.

#### Paul says in verse 18 that the cross is the *power* of God to us.

Gospel

#### How does the gospel have power? It’s the only solution to our real problem—sin!

#### And only in the cross is the penalty of sin paid for by One who was not under the same sentence of death.

#### And this One who died also came back to life so He can change lives today!

* Examples

(But what are some *examples* of how the gospel changes lives? In verses 1:26 to 2:5…)

## Paul gives two examples of how the gospel changes lives—not man’s ideas (1:26–2:5).

### The Corinthians were saved in their lowliness to prevent pride (1:26-31).

* Corinth

#### This church was largely from the lower classes—uneducated, not influential, but foolish, weak.

#### But God designed it this way to make sure they didn’t get proud about their salvation—we also are not the “high and mighty” but we have His power.

* Paul

(So the church’s *lowly position* was a perfect example of seeing that it’s the gospel that changes lives. Then Paul also used *himself* as an example of how the gospel changes lives—not following the right leader.)

* Paul

### Paul preached a simple rather than eloquent message of forgiveness in the cross (2:1-5).

Simple message

* Auto

#### Paul refused eloquence but simply preached Christ.

#### Acts 17–18 records how Paul came to Corinth just after his trip to Athens.

##### In Athens he spoke at the influential Mars Hill where all the philosophers debated. It was a mixed reaction—some believed but most just sneered.

2MJ

##### In Corinth Paul didn’t have enough money so he reverted to his trade of tent making. He had been unsuccessful at planting a church in Athens and been made fun of there, he had no money, he had sent his fellow-workers out to follow-up on other churches, and he was in a rank pagan city—no wonder why he said that he came there in weakness and fear!

#### I recall my preaching class in seminary. Some of those guys were so eloquent—one even memorized his poems and declared them with flair! I felt that “I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom.” I felt intimidated. Now that I see the power of the gospel more clearly I can rest not on my words but on God’s power.

Inadequacy

Unity Christ

#### And the Corinthians needed to remember this too. They needed to see that the cross alone brings divided people together—not his human leaders. So there should be no divisions based on personalities.

Our Source

(So what’s Paul saying here for us? What’s our source of unity? He’s saying…)

# Conclusion

### Don’t divide over leaders because the gospel is based on a crucified man (M.I.).

Key Point

Our Source

### We unite around a Man on a cross rather than divide around men on pedestals!

### Maybe you’ve heard of the cliché “Divide and Conquer.” Yet in the church it is “Divide and Be Conquered.”

### Are you a “Rickpublican” or “Lewisocrat”? What can we do to put the cross first?

Cross First

#### First, don’t idolize Christian leaders.

* Idols

##### The real superstar is Jesus.

##### You may have noticed that my message title is not “Follow the Leaders” (plural) but “Follow the Leader” (singular)—that’s Christ.

#### Second, turn every negative comment about our leaders into something positive.

* Speech

##### Someone says that so-and-so can’t preach well. You respond, “I’m so grateful for his pastoral ministry in my life.”

##### Someone comments how so-and-so lacks a pastoral heart. Just say, “God has sure given him a strength in preaching”—or wherever he’s strong.

#### Third, compliment leaders without comparing.

* Don’t compare

##### Leaders need encouragement, but never at the expense of another leader.

##### Although we can accept the ministry of certain church leaders who minister to us in special ways, this must never be done *against* *other* church leaders!

##### Just let your praise be praise on its own merits—not in comparison to someone else’s weaknesses.

#### Finally, submit to the elders.

* Elders

##### Our understanding of the NT is that elders are the highest authorities whom God has called us to support.

##### Hebrews 13:17 commands us, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (It also doesn’t help others outside the body.)

Heb 13:17

#### [Reconciliation]

##### In 1945 two men met in England. It was at the end of WWII and the Admiral in Chief of the German navy, von Friedeberg, on the right unexpectantly appeared before British Field Marshall Montgomery. The British officer refused to shake his hands–and 20 days later the Admiral killed himself.

Sons

Fathers

##### Fifty years later—in May 1995—the sons of these men met at the same spot for a reconciliation ceremony. This time they shook hands.

##### If these men—without unity in Christ—could be united, how much more so us who know the Prince of Peace! I thank God that this church is united. As such “This Will Be the Place” where Christ’s love and grace can be seen and will touch a lost world.

Advance w/ lyrics

Cross Focus

#### “This Will Be the Place” (Steve Amerson with PPT lyrics)

IBC Dr. Rick Griffith

15 Aug 04 Message 2 of 2

NIV 30 Minutes

**Our Source of Unity**

***1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5***

**Topic:** Divisions

**Subject:** Why can’t we rally around favourite church leaders?

**Complement:** Don’t divide over leaders because the gospel is based on a crucified man.

**Purpose:** The listeners will realize that although they can accept the ministry of church leaders, this must not be done against other church leaders.

# Introduction

Title

### One hot summer day a little Baptist boy and a little Presbyterian girl played together at the home of the boy. Since it was so hot, the mother decided to let the two go swimming in the blow-up toddler pool. The kids played together for a while, but then, due to the heat, they both eventually took off their swimsuits. As the mother approached them to encourage them towards discretion, the little boy looked at the girl and noted, “Wow! I never knew there was *that* much difference between a Baptist and a Presbyterian!”

Kiddy

### They didn’t exactly interpret the situation correctly.

Denominations

#### But one thing they did see was that we do have our different denominations today.

#### My quick look at the Singapore Church Directory revealed only 12 denominations, but actually worldwide there are over 250 versions of Baptists alone! There exist over 20,000 denominations in the world, with 270 new ones added each year. This makes 5 new denominations weekly!

### We have many choices even within denominations. In Singapore if you choose to worship in English, then there’s the choice of *which* of the 250 churches to attend, then which *service*, etc.

### Of course, these churches and denominations don’t function in a vacuum as every organization has a leader. So then comes the leadership question: in that most churches have more than one leader, which one do you follow? How do you know whom you *should* follow?

### Intro MPI: The question “Which church leader should we follow?” was a key question the first-century Corinthians were asking.

Which leader?

### Paul answers this question in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 where he says…

# I. Don’t divide over favourite leaders (1:10-17).

I.

# [It’s wrong to establish a group that promotes one church leader over others.]

## [Paul rebuked Corinth for its divisions concerning favored leaders (1:10-17).]

### The Corinthian concern was which leader was right—but Paul said Corinth’s divisions ignored his teachings about unity (1:10-12).

Black

#### Some followed Paul:

Which Right?

##### “Hey,” they said, “Have you guys forgotten who *started* this church? Paul! Look, we were here four years ago when this body began under Paul and we’re not going to let anyone question him!”

* Paul

##### Maybe we can call this group the PAP: “Paul Action Party. Perhaps most of these PAP members were Jews who had been led to Christ by Paul four years earlier—or liked being led by Paul the Jew.

#### Some followed Apollos:

* Apollos

##### Perhaps this was because he was a great orator. Acts 18:24-28 notes he came to Corinth two years after Paul and impressed the Greeks with his speaking.

##### “What a great speaker Apollos is!” some of the Corinthians boasted. “He really knows his Old Testament, he’s educated in Alexandria which has the best library in the Roman world, he’s teachable, and bold! Why follow this Paul guy? He’s not that impressive a speaker at all!”

* Peter

#### Others followed Cephas (in Aramaic) or Peter (in Greek):

##### “C’mon, you guys!” they said, “You think Paul and Apollos are so great. But neither of them *was even saved* when Jesus was here! Our group gets back to original sources. When Peter was here in Corinth we heard the message from one who was right there with Jesus—none of this second-hand info!”

##### Perhaps the Jews in the Corinthian church were drawn to this faction—especially Jews who had moved from Israel or weren’t so acquainted with Paul.

#### The ones that thought they were really spiritual followed "Christ" (in big quotes).

* Christ

##### Now it’s interesting that this group also was a party condemned by Paul. After all, aren’t we all supposed to ultimately be following Christ rather than any human leader?

##### What was wrong with the “Christ-only” group?

###### This was a recognized division just like the rest. You may *think* these were people who sought to turn the church back to Christ…

###### But they likely got together with a holier-than-thou attitude.

###### This group was probably against having *any authorities at all.* It’s easy to mask a rebellious spirit against your church leaders by saying “we only follow Christ.”

#### Notice that Paul doesn’t give any hint which group had the most followers—that wasn’t relevant. Why not? The majority was often wrong in Scripture.

Black

##### When Israel was in the wilderness, ten spies were wrong and two were right, yet the majority followed the ten and died in the desert as a result.

##### It was the majority in Israel that wanted a king against God’s wishes.

##### It was the majority opinion in the Sanhedrin that nailed Christ on a cross.

#### Paul also does not side with any of the groups—not even the “Paul Party.”

#### Rather, he first appeals to unity in verse 10 instead of “divisions”—a word actually used of political parties in his day.

### But the church isn’t about competing leaders “outperforming” other leaders (1:13-17).

#### Is Paul against baptism?

#### Not at all. Baptism plays an vital role as an outward symbol of repentance and identification with the Christian community. It bears witness of a changed life.

#### But despite its importance, Paul says in verse 17 baptism is not more important than proclamation so people can come to Christ.

(So what’s the point for us? It’s simply that…)

## We shouldn’t rally around certain church leaders—are we?

IBC Parties

### We need to ask ourselves if we have an “I follow Dr. Packer” group.

#### Is it wrong to appreciate his 12 years of labour among us even though he is gone now—similar to how Paul started the Corinthian church? Of course not.

#### But if we have our own PAP—Packer Action Party—then God is dishonored.

* PAP

### Equally wrong is the IAP—Ivan Action Party.

* IAP

### We could have three versions of a MAP: a Matthew Action Party, a Mei Ming Action Party or a Mark McGowen Fan Club.

* MAP

### The TAP and NAP also are not God’s will.

* TAP
* NAP

### I find it interesting that such groups can continue even after a leader leaves—Paul wasn’t in Corinth anymore nor Peter as well, yet the groups continued. I trust that this will not happen with us.

Black

(Now is it wrong for one pastor to minister to you more than another? Must you be equally blessed by each leader’s preaching or pastoral ministry or administrative skill or personal charm? No. Then why *shouldn’t* we have our favourite leaders in this church? This is because…)

# II. Unity is based on the *cross*—not human leaders (1:18-2:5).

II.

# [No church leader changed your life—it was *God’s* power in Jesus’ death for you.]

Black

## The gospel of Christ’s death seems foolish but it’s better than human wisdom (1:18-25).

### Paul gives his key point in verse 18 [read again].

Hockey

### Unbelievers see the need for a focal point for unity—

#### They know unity is vital in sports…

Olympics

#### We see the importance of both unity and competition now in the Olympic Games. But unity is also important in…

Marriage

#### In marriage…

#### Or in business. This business in the UK considers drumming together the basis of unity! But what’s the real source of unity with people? It’s the cross!

Drums Source

### But unbelievers have a tough time seeing our unity in the cross. Why do non-Christians consider preaching about the cross foolish?

Cross Foolish

#### Try to think of crucifixion from the perspective of an unbeliever. Perhaps our focus on a crucified man seems somewhat morbid. Therefore it seems foolish.

#### Why foolish? Because Jesus seems so powerless on that cross. After all, what would you think if your colleagues at work started wearing necklaces with torture or execution weapons on them? One has a guillotine, another a hangman’s rope, another an electric chair. If you can imagine how you’d feel about that, perhaps you could envision what the cross looks like to them.

* Power

(Why does the cross look so foolish? This is because…)

### People generally seek power or intellect more than they do weakness!

Jew/ Gentile

#### The Jews and Greeks had two entirely different backgrounds, which likely led to divisions within Corinth.

#### Verse 22 says Greeks then loved to debate philosophical ideas but Jews wanted to see power in miraculous signs—and the cross disillusioned both.

East/

West

#### What are modern parallels to these groups? It seems that Asians (whether Chinese, Indian or Malay) are enamored more with miraculous signs. I think Asians see things in terms of relationships more than westerners do.

#### But the westerners pride themselves on intellect—the objective ability to discern ideas or which great thinker or speaker to follow.

##### As we seek God’s next choice of pastor and other leadership transitions for us, I think we may struggle in this area with our two major perspectives—experiential versus rational.

Black

##### Paul didn’t favour one or the other, actually. He said what we need most to is to focus on the basics—Christ crucified!

Unity Cross

(You know why? Whether we’re talking about miracles or wisdom, do you know the problem with both?)

##### Neither miracles nor worldly wisdom changes lives!

###### Experience is in the end an empty pursuit alone. The world is filled with people going from one experience to another—Christians included.

###### And wisdom?

We have volumes of information for us on the internet—but what does it really do for us? Sure, it’s helpful when you have a problem, but for many people it just fills up the moments of an empty life.

Worldly wisdom is foolishness in the eyes of God because it doesn’t forgive sin, it doesn’t give us power to do right, it doesn’t meet our basic needs or change our lives.

Gospel

### In contrast to both miracles and intellect, the gospel *does* change lives.

#### Paul says in verse 18 that the cross is the *power* of God to us.

#### How does the gospel have power? It’s the only solution to our real problem—sin!

#### And only in the cross is the penalty of sin paid for by One who was not under the same sentence of death.

#### And this One who died also came back to life so He can change lives today!

* Examples

(But what are some *examples* of how the gospel changes lives? In verses 1:26 to 2:5…)

## Paul gives two examples of how the gospel changes lives—not man’s ideas (1:26–2:5).

### The Corinthians were saved in their lowliness to prevent pride (1:26-31).

* Corinth

#### This church was largely from the lower classes—uneducated, not influential, but foolish, weak.

#### But God designed it this way to make sure they didn’t get proud about their salvation.

* Paul

(So the church’s *lowly position* was a perfect example of seeing that it’s the gospel that changes lives. Then Paul also used *himself* as an example of how the gospel changes lives—not following the right leader.)

* Paul

### Paul preached a simple rather than eloquent message of forgiveness in the cross (2:1-5).

Simple message

* Auto

#### Paul refused eloquence but simply preached Christ.

#### Acts 17–18 records how Paul came to Corinth just after his trip to Athens.

##### In Athens he spoke at the influential Mars Hill where all the philosophers debated. It was a mixed reaction—some believed but most just sneered.

2MJ

##### In Corinth Paul didn’t have enough money so he reverted to his trade of tent making. He had been unsuccessful at planting a church in Athens and been made fun of there, he had no money, he had sent his fellow-workers out to follow-up on other churches, and he was in a rank pagan city—no wonder why he said that he came there in weakness and fear!

#### I recall my preaching class in seminary. Some of those guys were so eloquent—one even memorized his poems and declared them with flair! I felt that “I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom.” I felt intimidated. Now that I see the power of the gospel more clearly I can rest not on my words but on God’s power.

Unity Christ

Black

#### And the Corinthians needed to remember this too. They needed to see that the cross alone brings divided people together—not his human leaders. So there should be no divisions based on personalities.

Our Source

(So what’s Paul saying here for us? What’s our source of unity? He’s saying…)

# Conclusion

### Don’t divide over leaders because the gospel is based on a crucified man (M.I.).

Key Point

Our Source

### We unite around a Man on a cross rather than divide around men on a pedestal!

### Maybe you’ve heard of the cliché “Divide and Conquer.” Yet in the church it is “Divide and Be Conquered.”

### Are you part of an International Baptist PAP or IAP or MAP? What can we do to put the cross first?

Cross First

#### First, don’t idolize Christian leaders.

* Idols

##### The real superstar is Jesus.

##### Not Dr. Packer, Ivan, Mei Ming, Matthew, Tom, Mark, Nick or anyone else.

#### Second, turn every negative comment about our leaders into something positive.

* Speech

##### Someone says that so-and-so can’t preach well. You respond, “I’m so grateful for his pastoral ministry in my life.”

##### Someone comments how so-and-so lacks a pastoral heart. Just say, “God has sure given him a strength in preaching”—or wherever he’s strong.

#### Third, compliment leaders without comparing.

* Don’t compare

##### Leaders need encouragement, but never at the expense of another leader.

##### Although we can accept the ministry of certain church leaders who minister to us in special ways, this must never be done *against* *other* church leaders!

##### Just let your praise be praise on its own merits—not in comparison to someone else’s weaknesses. So when we get a new pastor, let’s not compare him with the others, OK?

#### Finally, submit to the deacons.

* Deacon

##### In this time of transition without a senior pastor, these godly men are the highest authorities whom God has called us to support.

##### Hebrews 13:17 commands us, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Heb 13:17

Grace Baptist Church Dr. Rick Griffith

26 April 1998 Single Message

NIV 30 Minutes

**Divide and Be Conquered**

***1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5***

**Topic:** Divisions

**Subject:** Why can’t we rally around favourite church leaders?

**Complement:** Don’t divide over leaders because the gospel is based on a crucified man.

**Purpose:** The listeners will realize that although they can accept the ministry of church leaders, this must not be done against other church leaders.

# Introduction

### One hot summer day a little Baptist boy and a little Presbyterian girl played together at the home of the boy. Since it was so hot, the mother decided to let the two go swimming in the blow-up toddler pool. The kids played together for a while, but then, due to the heat, they both eventually took off their swimsuits. As the mother approached them to encourage them towards discretion, the little boy looked at the girl and noted, “Wow! I never knew there was *that* much difference between a Baptist and a Presbyterian!”

### They didn’t exactly interpret the situation correctly.

#### But one thing they did see was that we do have our different denominations today.

#### My quick look at the Singapore Church Directory revealed only 12 denominations, but actually worldwide there are over 250 versions of Baptists alone! There exist over 20,000 denominations in the world, with 270 new ones added each year. This makes 5 new denominations weekly!

### We live in a day of preferences—whether it applies to computers, schools, foods, cars, flats, and who knows what else. This is not like the old days when Henry Ford said, “You can have your car in any colour—as long as it is black!”

### We have preferences in churches too. In Singapore if you choose to worship in English, then there’s the choice of *which* of the 250 churches to attend, then which *service*, etc.

### But then comes the leadership question: in that most churches have more than one leader, which one do you follow? Which one *should* you follow? But then again…

### Intro MPI: Does Scripture allow preferences concerning which church leader to follow?

### Paul answers this question in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 where he says…

# I. Don’t divide over favourite leaders.

# [It’s wrong to establish a group that promotes one church leader over others.]

## [Paul rebuked Corinth for its divisions concerning favoured leaders (1:10-17).]

### Paul said Corinth’s divisions ignored his teachings about unity (1:10-12).

#### Some followed Paul:

##### “Hey,” they said, “Have you guys forgotten who *started* this church? Paul! Look, we were here four years ago when this body began under Paul and we’re not going to let anyone question him!”

##### Maybe we can call this group the PAP: “Paul Action Party.” It was probably the older Christians among them.

#### Some followed Apollos:

##### Perhaps this was because he was a great orator. Acts 18:24-28 records how he came to Corinth two years after Paul [read].

##### “What a great speaker Apollos is!” some of the Corinthians boasted. “He really knows his Old Testament, he’s educated in Alexandria which has the best library in the Roman world, he’s teachable, and bold! Why follow this Paul guy? He’s not that impressive a speaker at all!”

##### In fact, Paul admits he wasn’t into rhetoric in 2:1 and 2 Cor. 10:10 [read].

##### So Apollos’ group likely were Greeks enamored with eloquence and rhetoric.

#### Others followed Cephas (in Aramaic) or Peter (in Greek):

##### “C’mon, you guys!” they said, “You think Paul and Apollos are so great. But neither of them *were even saved* when Jesus was here! Our group gets back to original sources. When Peter was here in Corinth we heard the message from one who was right there with Jesus—none of this second-hand info!”

##### Perhaps the Jews in the Corinthian church were drawn to this faction.

#### The ones that thought they were really spiritual followed "Christ" (in big quotes).

##### Now it’s interesting that this group also was a party condemned by Paul. After all, aren’t we all supposed to ultimately be following Christ rather than any human leader?

##### What was wrong with the “Christ-only” group?

###### This was a recognized division just like the rest. You may *think* these were people who sought to turn the church back to Christ…

###### But they likely got together with a holier-than-thou attitude.

###### This group was probably against having *any authorities at all.* It’s easy to mask a rebellious spirit against your church leaders by saying “we only follow Christ.”

#### Notice that Paul does not side with any of the groups—not even the “Paul Party.”

#### Rather, he first appeals to unity in verse 10 instead of “divisions”—a word actually used of political parties in his day.

(Then Paul goes on to say that…)

### The church isn’t about competing leaders who try to “outbaptise” other leaders (1:13-17).

#### Is Paul depreciating baptism?

#### Not at all. Baptism played an important role in the early church as an outward symbol of repentance and identification with the Christian community. It bore witness of a changed life.

#### But despite its importance, Paul says in verse 17 baptism is not more important than proclamation so people can come to Christ.

#### In the second century Christians got overly concerned with the pastor who baptised them—so much so that if that pastor fell away some wondered whether the people needed to get baptised again! But Paul says what is far more important than baptism is conversion in the first place!

(So what’s the point for us? It’s simply that…)

## We shouldn’t rally around certain church leaders.

### The implication for us in terms of denominations is very pointed.

#### Many denominations are even named after their key leader: Lutherans follow Luther (even though Luther asked them not to use the term “Lutheran”), Wesleyans follow John Wesley, and Mennonites are named after Menno Simons.

#### Interestingly, the most problematic groups are those which claim “I follow Christ”: Disciples of Christ, Church of Christ, Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints, and True Jesus Church, which believes that Jesus is the Heavenly Father!

### But even more practical for us is to ask if we are doing this at GBC. Do we have our own parties?

#### We need to ask ourselves if we have a “I follow Dr. Poulson” group.

##### Is it wrong to appreciate his many years of labour among us from the beginning—similar to how Paul started the Corinthian church? Of course not.

##### But if we have our own PAP—Poulson Action Party—then God is dishonored.

#### Equally wrong is a KAP—Kwek Action Party.

#### Or a CAP (Chin Action Party) or a Ric Poolman Fan Club.

#### I find it interesting that such groups can continue even after a leader leaves—Paul wasn’t in Corinth anymore nor Peter as well, yet the groups continued. I trust that this will not happen with us.

(Now is it wrong for one pastor to minister to you more than another? Must you be equally blessed by each leader’s preaching or pastoral ministry or administrative skill or personal charm? No. Then why *shouldn’t* we have our favourite leaders in this church? This is because…)

# II. The gospel is based on a *cross*—not human leaders.

# [Ultimately no church leader changed your life—it was *God’s* power in Jesus’ death for you.]

## The gospel of Christ’s death seems foolish but it’s better than the wisdom of even godly men (1:18-25).

### Paul gives his key point in verse 18 [read again].

### Why do non-Christians consider preaching about the cross foolish?

#### Try to think of crucifixion from the perspective of an unbeliever. Perhaps our focus on a crucified man seems somewhat morbid. Therefore it seems foolish.

#### Why foolish? Because Jesus seems so powerless on that cross. After all, what would you think if your colleagues at work started wearing necklaces with torture or execution weapons on them? One has a guillotine, another a hangman’s rope, another an electric chair. If you can imagine how you’d feel about that, perhaps you could envision what the cross looks like to them.

(Why does the cross look so foolish? This is because…)

### People generally seek power or intellect.

#### Verse 22 says Greeks then loved to debate philosophical ideas but Jews wanted to see power in miraculous signs—and both were disillusioned by the cross.

#### What are modern parallels to these groups? It seems that the Indians and Malays are enamored most with miraculous signs. The so-called Elephant drinking god at one of the Hindu temples here a few years back is a case in point. What was more important was not that Hinduism is true, but that this sign actually took place.

#### But the Chinese pride themselves on intellect—the ability to discern which great thinker or speaker to follow.

##### Here in Singapore we are bombarded with invitations to hear all these gurus in management, mind control, or other seminars [newspaper clips].

##### One recent study of 347 Chinese schoolchildren even says that children will have higher test scores if they eat peanuts! Foods rich in zinc improve reasoning and pyschomotor skills (eye-hand coordination). You know which food is highest in zinc? Oysters! Good luck getting your kids to eat oysters, so peanuts is the next best possible choice.

##### Judging the relationship of zinc to reasoning and pyschomotor skills is out of my area of expertise, so I can’t comment much on this bit of worldly wisdom.

(But even if zinc does help and there’s something to gain from these management gurus, do you know the problem with this worldly wisdom?)

##### The world’s wisdom doesn’t change lives!

###### We have enormous volumes of information available to us on the internet—but what does it really do for us? Sure, it’s helpful when you have a problem, but for many people it just fills up the moments of an empty life.

###### Worldly wisdom is foolishness in the eyes of God because it doesn’t forgive sin, it doesn’t give us power to do right, it doesn’t meet our basic needs or change our lives.

### In contrast to both miracles and intellect, the gospel *does* change lives.

#### Paul says in verse 18 that the cross is the *power* of God to us.

#### How does the gospel have power? It’s the only solution to our real problem—sin!

##### It’s easy to blame someone else or something else for our problems. Why have some places got the coldest winter ever? El Niño. And why the warmest winter too in other places? El Niño again. El Niño has gotten the blame for about everything. Last month one of my friends was talking to his son, asking him why he didn’t get his homework done. “El Niño” was the response.

##### Our basic problem is not an “El Niño” problem. It’s a sin problem!

#### And only in the cross is the penalty of sin paid for by One who was not under the same sentence of death.

#### And this One who died also came back to life so He can change lives today!

(But what are some *examples* of how the gospel changes lives? In verses 1:26 to 2:5…)

## Paul gives two examples of how the gospel changes lives—not man’s ideas (1:26–2:5).

### The Corinthians were saved in their lowliness to prevent boasting before God (1:26-31).

#### The church here was largely from the lower classes—uneducated, not influential, but foolish, weak. But God designed it this way to make sure they didn’t get proud about their salvation.

#### Here’s where it’s tough for Singaporean believers to relate.

##### This is the only country in the world that has effectively reached the upper classes more than the lower classes.

##### But doesn’t this verse remind us that we, too, must be humble before God? We need to ask ourselves how much God is impressed with our fat bank account, position or education! Yes, in a sense PhD does mean “Permanent Head Damage”—at least if it gets in the way of us seeing the simplicity of the gospel.

(So the church’s *lowly position* was a perfect example of seeing that it’s the gospel that changes lives. Paul also used *himself* as an example of how the gospel changes lives—not following the right leader.)

### Paul preached a simple rather than eloquent message of forgiveness in the cross (2:1-5).

#### Acts 17–18 records how Paul came to Corinth on the heals of his trip to Athens.

##### In Athens he spoke at the influential Mars Hill where all the philosophers debated. It was a mixed reaction—some believed but most just sneered him off.

##### In Corinth Paul didn’t have enough money so he reverted to his trade of tentmaking. He had been unsuccessful at planting a church in Athens and made fun of there, he had no money, he had sent his fellow-workers out to follow-up on other churches, and he was in a rank pagan city—no wonder why he said that he came there in weakness and fear!

#### I recall my preaching class in seminary. Some of those guys were so eloquent—one even memorized his poems and declared them with flair! I felt that “I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom.” I felt intimidated. Now that I see the power of the gospel more clearly I can rest not on my words but on God’s power.

#### And the Corinthians needed to remember this too. They needed to see that Christ changes lives—not his human instruments. So there should be no divisions based on personalities.

(So what’s Paul saying here for us? He’s saying…)

# Conclusion

### Don’t divide over leaders because the gospel is based on a crucified man (M.I.).

### We unite around a Man on a cross rather than divide around men on a pedestal!

### Maybe you’ve heard of the cliché “Divide and Conquer.” Yet in the church it is “Divide and Be Conquered.”

### Are you part of a Grace Baptist PAP or KAP or CAP? What can we do about it?

#### First, don’t idolize Christian leaders.

##### The real superstar is Jesus—not Dr. P, George Kwek, Chin Wei Fong, Ric Poolman, or anyone else.

##### Or if Bill Gothard has really ministered to you, praise God. But never become a Gothardite!

#### Second, turn every negative comment about one of our leaders into something positive.

##### Someone says that so-and-so can’t preach well. You respond, “I’m so grateful for his pastoral ministry in my life.”

##### Someone comments how so-and-so lacks a pastoral heart. Just say, “God has sure given him a strength in preaching”—or wherever he’s strong.

#### Third, compliment leaders without comparing.

##### Leaders need encouragement, but never at the expense of another leader.

##### Although we can accept the ministry of certain church leaders who minister to us in special ways, this must never be done *against* *other* church leaders!

##### I made this mistake just last week when I complimented one of our staff here saying, “This ministry is sure better than five year years ago!”

##### Just let your praise be praise on its own merits—not in comparison to someone else’s weaknesses. So when we get a hew pastor, let’s not compare him with the others, OK?

### My prayer is that none of these exhortations apply to us. But if they do, let’s guard both the gospel and the unity in the Spirit so that this church can be all God wants it to be.

**Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage? He has just commended the church in his thanksgiving that their salvation will be ultimately completed.

Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible? This is a stern warning why we should not have favourite teachers in the church.

Background What historical context helps us understand this passage?

1. The people who had most influenced the church were Paul (church planter), Apollos (great teacher from Rome), Peter (probably the favourite among the Jews in the congregation).
2. Corinth was a place as a seaport city with an enormous free exchange of ideas, which undoubtedly lead to differences of opinion based on influential leaders.

10 What were the issues that divided the Corinthians? —immorality (5), lawsuits (6), singleness, divorce and remarriage (7), idol meats (8-10), Lord’s table (11), gifts (12-14), resurrection (15).

Can a church be perfectly united in mind and thought? (Yes—though not in opinions?)

12 How did Peter have an influence since we have no record of him ever making it to Corinth?

How could the group that followed Christ be wrong?

17 Is Paul depreciating baptism?

18 Why do non-Christians consider preaching about the cross foolish?

How is preaching about the cross powerful to believers?

20 What is the wisdom of the world? What examples of it do we see today?

21 Why can’t the world find God in its own wisdom?

22 Why are signs so important to Jews?

Why is wisdom so important to Gentiles?

What parallel groups do we find to these two today?

23 How is the crucifixion a stumbling block to Jews?

25 Is God foolish or weak?

26 Why does God choose the foolish, weak, and lowly things? (so that we will humble ourselves, vv. 29-31)

2:1 Was Paul not a good preacher?

2 Should all preachers preach Christ crucified or was this just Paul’s pet message?

3 How did Paul come to Corinth in weakness? (after not planting a church in Athens, cf. Acts 18)

4 What kind of demonstration of the Spirit’s power did Paul have? (miracles?)

5 Is Paul saying faith should rest on power (miracles) instead of wisdom?

**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

B. (1:10-17) Paul states that Chloe's household has informed him of divisions in the church whereby competing factions have rallied around their favorite teachers: Paul, Apollos, Peter, and "Christ" to let them know this is contrary to what he taught them.

C. (1:18—4:21) Paul states that their divisions stem from misunderstanding the true gospel message and the motives and self-abasement of God's ministers to reveal the remedy for their problem with pride.

1. (1:18—3:4) A misunderstanding of the gospel *message* has resulted in divisions because of a failure to see that the gospel message of Christ crucified is the true wisdom of God, in contrast to the human “wisdom” which caused their divisions.

a. (1:18–2:5) One reason the church shouldn’t boast of competing “versions of wisdom” is because the gospel is not human wisdom but Christ crucified.

b. (2:6–3:4) Since the gospel is wisdom from the Spirit, the church shouldn’t divide into groups following different leaders.

**Possible Illustrations**

What is not meant by “I follow Paul… I follow Peter… etc.”

1. This doesn’t men you can’t have one church leader who has had the most impact on you (DTS favourite prof award)

#### Sometimes I think back to my first preaching experiences in the evangelistic singing group “Crossroads.” There were four of us who shared the preaching. I had no clue how to preach at the concerts, so rather than trying to say something profound, I just shared the gospel when it was my turn to speak. To my amazement, as the fruit of 269 concerts the four of us counted comment cards indicating over 10,000 decisions for Christ! Why? Because the message was so profound? No—because it was so simple!

**Divide and Be Conquered**

***1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5***

**Exegetical Outline**

***Exegetical Idea:* One reason the church shouldn’t boast of competing “versions of wisdom” around certain teachers is because the gospel is not human wisdom but Christ crucified.**

# I. (1:10-17) The command against divisions in the church whereby competing factions have rallied around their favorite teachers: Paul, Apollos, Peter, and "Christ" to let them know this is contrary to what he taught them.

## (1:10-12) Paul rebuked the church for rallying around favorite teachers: Paul, Apollos, Peter, and "Christ."

## (1:13-17) Such divisions were contrary to what Paul had taught them.

# II. (1:18–2:5) One reason the church shouldn’t boast of competing “versions of wisdom” is because the gospel is not human wisdom but Christ crucified.

## (1:18-25) The power of the gospel is in a “foolish” thing—Christ’s atoning death—rather than supposedly superior ideas of men.

## (1:26–2:5) Two examples of how the gospel itself changes lives (not man’s ideas) are the Corinthians and Paul.

### (1:26-31) The Corinthians themselves had found forgiveness despite their lowly status to prevent their boasting before God.

### (2:1-5) Paul’s simple and uneloquent message of forgiveness in the cross was the foundation of his preaching at Corinth.

CIC Rick Griffith

28 January 2007 Message 2 of 24

**Follow the Leader**

***1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5***

**Introduction**

### Christians must have unity despite denominational and leadership differences.

### But how can Crossroads \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_maintain the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_unity that we already have?

# Don’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_divide over favorite leaders (1:10-17).

## Paul rebuked Corinth for its divisions based on competing leaders (1:10-17).

### The Corinthian concern was which leader was right—but Paul said Corinth’s divisions ignored his teachings about unity (1:10-12).

### The church isn’t about competing leaders “outperforming” other leaders (1:13-17).

## We shouldn’t rally around certain church leaders.

(But *why* shouldn’t we have our favorite leaders in the church? This is because…)

# Unity is based on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_cross—not human leaders (1:18–2:5).

## The gospel of Christ’s death seems foolish but it’s better than the wisdom of even godly men (1:18-25).

## Paul gives two examples of how the gospel changes lives—not man’s ideas (1:26–2:5).

### The Corinthians were saved in their lowliness to prevent pride (1:26-31).

### Paul preached a simple and ineloquent message of forgiveness in the cross (2:1-5).

**Conclusion**

### Don’t divide over leaders because the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_gospel is based on a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_crucified man (Main Idea).

### How can we put the cross first?

“This Must Be the Place” (Steve Amerson, “So You Want to be Like Christ” CD, Insight for Living)

 **Rick Griffith**

9 September 2012

*Message 2 of 24 in “Becoming Who We Are” series*

**Follow the Leader**

***1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5***

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### How can we put the cross first?

### “This Must Be the Place” (Steve Amerson, “So You Want to be Like Christ” Insight for Living CD)

Home Group Questions:

1. Read the entire 1:10–2:5 aloud. What reasons does Paul give not to rally around certain spiritual leaders? Name as many as you can.

a. This becomes divisive (1:10)

b. The leaders themselves are united (1:13)

c. The gospel then becomes misunderstood (1:18)

d. The person who baptizes you doesn’t matter (1:14-17)

1. What responses to the cross have you heard from non-Christians?

a. It’s not for me—too old fashioned

b. God couldn’t die like that

c. This religion is for hypocrites

d. I don’t need a blood sacrifice for me—that’s not my way to get to heaven

1. Why are *signs* important to *Jews* and **wisdom** so vital to **Gentiles**? What parallel groups do we find to these two groups today? Should we have a different approach for each?

a. Jews under Moses needed signs—not reason—and ever since (1:22a, 23a)

b. Gentiles were logical, mathematical (1:22b, 23b)

c. “Jewish-type” people are often uneducated, seeking miracles––Jesus as God’s power (1:24a)

d. “Gentile-type” folks need answered questions––Jesus as God’s wisdom (1:24b)

1. *How* can you not compare spiritual leaders? What tips have you found helpful?

a. We must discern based on God’s Word as the standard—as long as the cross is first (2:1-4)

b. Don’t make a decision whether to go to church based on who is speaking

c.