

GREETINGS AND AN EARNEST APPEAL 1 Corinthians 1:1-17

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INTRODUCTION

Today the church has many problems. Some of them are small, and we can afford to take them in stride as we focus on other things. But the church also has some very large problems that it needs to address directly and immediately. One of the big problems that plagues the church is disunity. As we look around, we count thousands of denominations, and see great disunity even among many of those denominations. In individual churches, we see strife over building programs and mission statements. People divide over minor theological issues, and even create division over personal incompatibility. Sometimes church politics cause factions within our ranks, and sometimes we stir up trouble without having any readily identifiable excuse.

These are exactly the kinds of problems Paul encountered in first-century Corinth. But unlike us, Paul saw the disunity caused by these problems as a terrible disaster. He was so worried about the divisions in Corinth that he barely got through saying “hello” before he launched into a rebuke against this gospel-opposing behavior. It’s strange to think about, isn’t it? Paul actually told the Corinthians that their divisions were contrary to the gospel itself.

The corrective Paul offered to the Corinthians was that they refocus their attention on Christ, and on the blessings they had received in him — including their fellowship with one another. This is the same corrective we need today. By focusing our attention on ourselves instead of on Christ, and on our disagreements rather than on common blessings, we will fail to pursue the unity to which God has called the church. But this is something we can change if we will only take time to hear the words of Paul in this section.

SALUTATION (1:1-3)

1:1. Paul wrote this epistle with the authority of **an apostle** (one commissioned and sent) **of Christ Jesus**. Because he had been called **by the will of God**, Paul’s words were to be received as the commands of God himself (Matt. 10:40; 1 Cor. 14:37). **Sosthenes**, a Jewish resident of Corinth (Acts 18:17) who had become a believer, may have served as Paul’s secretary for this letter (1 Cor. 16:21).

1:2. Paul sent this letter to believers **in Corinth**, a Greek seaport and center of international commerce. The apostle’s description of these Christians immediately revealed his deep concerns for them. First, he called them **the church of God**. The

readers were not merely individuals. They constituted a church community that belonged to God. Only God's desires rightly held sway over the life of this church. Second, the believers in this church had been **sanctified**, or set apart from the world, by virtue of their faith in Christ. Third, the Corinthian believers were **called to be holy**. They had the responsibility of pursuing pure and holy lives. Fourth, believers in Corinth were called to holiness **together with all believers everywhere**. Holiness was not to be pursued simply by individuals, but by the entire church working together.

This opening address set the stage for Paul's central concern in this section. They had received the gift of salvation from God, and this brought them into a relationship with other believers. They were members of one body (1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-27).

1:3. Paul issued a standard greeting among Christians in his day. He expressed his hope that God would continue to bless his readers through Christ with his enabling **grace** and the experience of **peace**. Paul used exactly the same formula, word for word, in Romans 1:7; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; and Philemon 1:3. He used shorter versions with identical language in Colossians 1:2 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1, and gave very similar greetings in 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; and Titus 1:4. In fact, every one of Paul's letters begins with some wish of **grace** and **peace** for his readers. Similarly, 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3; Jude 2; and Revelation 1:4 employ greetings with this type of language.

THANKSGIVING (1:4-9)

1:4. Before wrestling with a long list of problems in the Corinthian church, Paul paused to mention several positive feelings and hopes. He affirmed that he was **always** sure to **thank** God for his readers, and explained why he did so. He frequently began his other epistles in very similar ways (Rom 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph 1:15-16; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philem. 1:4).

Here, Paul first explained that the cause of his gratitude was the **grace**, or unmerited favor, the Corinthians had received **in Christ Jesus**. Some have also suggested that "**grace**" refers to the Corinthians' charismatic gifts. The phrase "**in Christ**" appears often in Paul's writings. It refers to his teaching that all who trust in Christ have been joined to him, participating in his death and resurrection. Those united to Christ die to the judgment of death and come alive to countless blessings of new life, sharing in Christ's inheritance (Rom 6:1-7; Gal 3:28-29; Eph. 1:3-14). By being united to Christ, believers draw their life from him (Gal. 2:20; compare John 15:1-8; 17:22-23), and Christ represents them as righteous before the Father (Rom. 5:15-19; 1 Cor. 15:22).

1:5. Paul specified a number of tremendous blessings that the Corinthians had received. Their lives had been **enriched** with **speaking** and **knowledge**. Chapters 12-

14 explain that Paul's readers greatly prized their spiritual gifts of revelation and knowledge. Although the apostle warned against the abuses of these gifts (1 Cor. 8:1-13; 13:1-2), he was also pleased that God had granted them these blessings. These gifts were good blessings from God.

1:6. Paul acknowledged the great privileges that God afforded the church at Corinth, and then cleverly foreshadowed the argument he would pursue later in this chapter (1:18-2:5). He pointed out that the Corinthians received their gifts as confirmation of the **testimony**, or witness, which he himself had given them. Paul's preaching of the gospel had been the conduit of their gifts of revelation and knowledge. As a result, the presence of Spiritual gifts in the church **confirmed** the efficacy and truth of Paul's gospel message. This brief aside was important because the Corinthians took great pride in human wisdom. Yet, the gospel that had enriched their lives with these gifts was not based on human wisdom and pride, but on humility and Spiritual wisdom. Consequently, Paul cleverly reminded them of this truth before he addressed the matter directly.

1:7. Although the Corinthians **eagerly** longed for Christ to return in glory, the Spiritual gifts they received through the gospel fully equipped them to live lives of faith in the meantime. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:14, the Holy Spirit "**is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession.**" The Spirit supplies believers with a host of blessings as they long for Christ's return.

Paul mentioned the return of Christ here to remind the Corinthians of the true nature of their present condition. Many in the Corinthian church thought they were even more blessed with gifts than they actually were. For example, Paul sarcastically wrote, "**Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings — and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you!**" (1 Cor. 4:8). He also had to remind them that the gifts they possessed were only temporary, partial manifestations of the blessings they would receive at Christ's return (1 Cor. 13:8-13). Knowing this about the Corinthians, it seems likely that Paul mentioned Christ's return to remind them that they needed to stop being satisfied with the progress they had already made. They needed always to apply themselves to waiting **eagerly** for Christ's return.

1:8. The gifts of the Spirit displayed in Corinth gave Paul great confidence that God would keep them safe until the **end** of this age. **The day of our Lord Jesus Christ** is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the great "day of the Lord" (Amos 5:18-20; Joel 2:31). That day will bring judgment against the enemies of God and wondrous reward for God's people (Joel 3:14-21; 2 Pet. 3:10-13). Although Paul later warned the Corinthians that flagrant apostasy could prove their faith in vain (9:27; 10:1-12), he fully expected them to be **blameless**, without guilt, in the end.

1:9. In the final analysis Paul's confidence in the Corinthians' future rested not on them, but on God's faithfulness to them (1 Cor. 10:13) and to his Son (compare John 10:29; Eph. 1:18; Heb. 2:13). God had called them **into fellowship with his Son** (compare 1 Cor. 1:4), and **God is faithful**. He will keep all who truly believe safe until the end. Paul did not place his confidence in the church as the Corinthians did, but in the church's God, eliminating the grounds for the church's boasting.

Paul pointed out that God had called the Corinthian church together into **fellowship with his Son**. He did this not only to assure them of their salvation, but also to remind them that the fellowship they shared with one another was in Christ. When they disrupted their fellowship with one another, they disrupted their **fellowship** with Christ.

APPEAL IN RESPONSE TO DIVISIONS (1:10-12)

After his brief greeting, Paul immediately turned his attention to one of the dominant problems in the Corinthian church. Instead of serving each other in harmony, Paul's readers had divided into factions, each of which thought itself superior in wisdom to the other segments of the church.

1:10. The apostle began with a respectful, but forceful appeal. In this verse and the next, he called his readers **brothers** to remind them of his intense familial affection for them (see also 1:11,26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 7:24,29; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6,20,26,39; 15:1,31,50,58; 16:15). Similar expressions of love appeared in Paul's other letters when he appealed to his readers to pay special attention to his words (Rom. 10:1; Gal. 4:19; 1 Thess. 4:1).

Paul also revealed the intensity of his concern by appealing to his readers **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**. By so doing, Paul reminded them that the authority of Christ himself stood behind his exhortations (see also 1 Cor. 5:4; 2 Thess. 3:6; compare 1 Thess. 2:6).

The appeal divides into three parts. He asked the Corinthians to **agree with one another**, to eliminate **divisions**, and to **be perfectly united in mind and thought**. Each part says basically the same thing: the Corinthians needed to eliminate the divisions in their church by becoming like-minded with one another.

Two qualifications should be added at this point. On the one hand, Paul did not desire unity at the expense of truth (see 11:18-19). Paul himself stood against others in the church when the central truths of the gospel were at stake (1 Cor. 15:12; Gal. 2:5,11; 5:12). Here, he expressed plainly that Christian unity requires like-mindedness. The verses that follow reveal the beliefs that should have formed the center of agreement among the Corinthians (1:13-17).

On the other hand, Paul did not mean that unity implied uniformity on all matters. As he pointed out in several places, there is much room for disagreement and diverse opinions over secondary issues in the Christian church (Rom. 14:1-14; 1 Cor. 7:25; 8:1-13; 2 Cor. 8:10).

1:11. At this point, Paul revealed the source of his intense concern for the unity of the Corinthian believers whom he again called **brothers** (see also 1:10,26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 7:24,29; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6,20,26,39; 15:1,31,50,58; 16:15). He had received information from members of **Chloe's household**. Scholars disagree as to whether or not Chloe was a member of the Corinthian church. Whatever the case, members of her household had informed Paul about some serious problems in the church. Paul had learned that there were **quarrels** within the church.

1:12. Paul got right to the heart of these quarrels: the church had divided into personality factions. It is possible that the use of the singular "I" as opposed to the plural "we" in this context indicates that these groups were not organized, solidified factions. The problem may have been much more individualistic.

Whatever the case, Paul identifies four factious loyalties in the church at Corinth. First, some declared themselves followers of **Paul**. As much as this group may have fed the apostle's ego, he rejected its practice as entirely inappropriate. Second, some followed **Apollos**, a teacher who came to Corinth after Paul (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1). He was the subject of concern several times in this epistle (3:4-9,22; 4:6). Apparently, his following was substantial. Third, others followed **Cephas**, that is, the apostle Peter, believing he had the greatest insights of all. Fourth, one group claimed to **follow Christ**. Although this claim sounds positive on the surface, it is likely that Paul included this group in his list because even they thought themselves superior to others because they refused to identify with a mere human leader. Boasting in Christ would have been fine (1 Cor. 1:31), but boasting in oneself for following Christ was sin (1 Cor. 1:29-30; 4:7). All of these groups or individuals took wrongful pride in the fact that they followed one leader or another.

By the very nature of these divisive slogans, it appears that a good number of the Corinthians also rejected Paul's authority to speak to matters of theological substance. This may help explain Paul's defense of his apostleship and authority in this letter (1 Cor. 1:1,17; 4:9; 9:1-2; 11:1; 14:37-38).

DIVISIONS ARE CONTRARY TO PAUL'S MINISTRY (1:13-17)

1:13. The apostle responded directly to the strife within the church by asking three questions to which he expected resounding negative responses. First, he asked, "**Is Christ divided?**" The kinds of divisions in the Corinthian church could be justified only if Christ's own resurrected body had been dismembered. Elsewhere Paul described the church as the body of Christ, the community of those joined to him and to

each other by faith (Rom. 12:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 3:6). If Christ himself had been dismembered after his resurrection, the divisions within the church may have been theoretically acceptable. But in reality, Christ remained whole; and the church needed to remain whole as well.

Second, because some believers within the church identified themselves as the followers of Paul (1 Cor. 1:12), Paul asked if he himself had been **crucified** for the believers in Corinth. By this question he made it clear that to identify oneself as a follower of Paul was to insult the saving work of Christ's death. Paul was the servant and apostle of Corinth, but he was not their Savior.

Third, Paul made his objection to divisions in the church even more concrete by asking if the Corinthians had been **baptized into the name of Paul**. The New Testament makes it plain that Christian baptism was performed in the name of the Trinity (Matt 28:19). This formula was often abbreviated as baptism "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). Even so, nowhere in the New Testament were believers baptized in the name of an apostle or church leader. The loyalties of believers in all ages must be directed toward Christ alone, the one in whose name all believers are baptized.

1:14-15. Paul breathed a sigh of relief that he had not baptized many believers in Corinth. In his evangelistic work at Corinth, he had baptized **Crispus** (see Acts 18:8) **and Gaius** (see Acts 18:8; 19:29; Rom 16:23), but no others (Note, however, that he qualified this statement in v. 16). These words do not suggest that Paul did not consider baptism important. Elsewhere Paul stressed the importance of baptism. It is the sign and seal of faith in Christ, that demonstration of union with the Savior in his death and resurrection (Rom. 6:4). For this reason, evangelism normally included baptism (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 16:30-33). Even so, in this particular circumstance where believers were aligning themselves against others as followers of Paul, he was relieved that he had not provided them with support for their divisive spirit by baptizing many of them.

1:16. Paul parenthetically qualified his statement that he had only baptized **Crispus** and **Gaius**. In the process of writing these verses, he recalled that he also baptized **the household of Stephanas** (see 1 Cor. 16:15). Paul may even have been reminded of these baptisms by Stephanas himself, since Stephanas was apparently with Paul when Paul dictated this letter (1 Cor. 16:17). Beyond this, however, the apostle confessed that he could not remember if he baptized anyone else. This qualification of 1:14-15 indicates how intent the apostle was on not providing his opponents any grounds for objections to his argument. As far as he was concerned, he had baptized so few people in the Corinthian church that there was no justification for the existence of a division on the basis of loyalty to him.

1:17. This verse serves as a hinge in Paul's discussion. It closes his preceding discussion of baptism and transitions to his next topic. The conclusion to the previous

matter amounts to an explanation (**for**) that Christ did not send him **to baptize, but to preach the gospel**. It would appear that Paul followed the example of Jesus in this matter. Christ preached, and delegated baptism primarily to his disciples (John 4:1-2). Paul followed the same practice; he proclaimed the gospel and left baptism primarily to his converts who supervised the ongoing life of the church.

The expression “**preach the gospel**” moves Paul’s thoughts in a different but related direction. What was the nature of the gospel he preached? It was devoid of **words of human wisdom**. This phrase may be translated more literally, “wisdom of words.” The idea is that his preaching did not rely on cleverness (“cleverness of speech” NASB) or eloquence (“eloquent wisdom” NRSV). Here Paul distinguished himself from the Greek orators of his day who sought to persuade with impressive rhetoric and style. Instead, Paul insisted that his preaching was simple and straightforward. He avoided great oratory style for a particular reason: he did not want it to distract from the message itself. His style of preaching was self-effacing, pointing to the one true source of salvation, Christ.

Paul was deeply concerned that **the cross of Christ not be emptied of its power** when presented in preaching. The gospel message contradicts human wisdom, so that it cannot be mixed with the power of human wisdom and manipulative persuasion. For this reason, those in Corinth who tried to defend their faith and practices through human wisdom actually opposed the way of the gospel. The **power of the cross** was the “power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16). Salvation comes only from the atonement of Christ purchased by his suffering on the cross. The recognition and reception of that power was Paul’s chief concern as he proclaimed the gospel.

APPLICATION

Sometimes it seems hard to apply passages like this one to our lives. This portion of Paul’s letter seems very foreign to us. When was the last time you heard anyone claim to be “of Paul,” “of Peter,” or “of Apollos”?

Yet, when we look more closely at these items, we do begin to see that our lives and churches parallel the church Paul addressed in many ways. To begin with, the introduction tells us something about the church as a whole, not just about the church in Corinth. Paul said at least two things about the church that are very important for us to apply to our lives.

First, the church today is blessed in countless ways just as the Corinthians were. We have been set apart as God’s people, and we have many special blessings that the rest of the world does not enjoy. Chief among these gifts is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He has blessed us richly with Spiritual gifts and graces that encourage us as we wait for the return of our Lord. Although the Corinthians faced many difficulties in their

day, Paul rejoiced in God's blessing to them and he encouraged them to rejoice with him. No matter what difficulties the church faces today, we should always approach these troubles with a firm awareness of the many blessings of the Spirit that we have received from God.

Second, the church today is bonded together by the blessings we have received in Christ. Our utter dependence on Christ and his power to redeem us bonds all believers in a special fellowship. Most of us don't value our brothers and sisters because we forget that we and they are all equally in need of Christ and the power of his death and resurrection.

It goes without saying that churches should not allow their internal politics and disagreements to rend their fellowship, but these problems arise so often that it bears repeating. When we have divisions in our churches, we need to evaluate carefully why these divisions have occurred. Are we legitimately separating ourselves from those who deny the gospel of Christ? Or are we dividing and quarreling because of human pride? By keeping Christ central, we can avoid many of the factions that develop around persons and secondary doctrinal positions. We can also hope to stem the personal abuse that takes place, and draw ourselves back to treating others as we would treat Christ himself. Perhaps by remembering the church's call to be holy, we can also refrain from actions that would damage our church's witness in the community. We also need to refocus our attention on the blessings we have received: forgiveness, salvation, knowledge, spiritual gifts, friendship among at least some members, and unity with Christ, to name a few. If we keep disagreements in perspective, we will not be willing to divide the church for reasons contrary to the gospel of Christ.

DIGGING DEEPER

Christ Jesus (1:1)

Paul argued Christocentrically throughout this entire section. He was called as an apostle **of Christ Jesus** (1:1), and wrote to **those sanctified in Christ Jesus** (1:2) who had been called to be together with everyone who called **on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ** (1:2). He wished them grace and peace from **the Lord Jesus Christ** (1:3) and gave thanks for the grace the Corinthians had received **in Christ Jesus** (1:4). He pointed out that they had been enriched **in him** (1:5) when the **testimony about Christ** (1:6) was confirmed in them, so that they lacked no spiritual gift as they waited for **our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed** (1:7). They would also be found blameless **on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ** (1:8), and this blamelessness would ensure continued fellowship with **Jesus Christ our Lord** (1:9). Thus, when Paul appealed to the Corinthians to be unified **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ** (1:10), he had already loaded his argument with every conceivable element of the Corinthians' Christian experience. They could not reject his counsel without also rejecting Christ.

Corinth (1:2)

The Corinth that Paul knew had a sordid history. Strabo claimed the city had 1,000 temple prostitutes servicing the temple of Aphrodite on the Acrocorinth. Archaeologists have discovered many clay models of human genitalia offered to Asclepius the god of healing, presumably to petition him to heal venereal disease. But that perverse city of ancient Corinth had been destroyed by Rome in 146 B.C.

The Corinth Paul knew had been rebuilt on the site of the ancient city by the Roman emperor Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., and was populated largely by freemen whose status was barely above that of slave. It was a center for international trade, and attracted people from all over the world. It followed Roman laws and culture, and Greek philosophy and art.

Corinth's religious composition varied greatly, including worship of the Roman gods and the Greek gods, the mystery cults from Asia and Egypt, and of course Judaism. Because of its commercial strength, the city possessed wealth. That wealth brought all kinds of people to populate the area: the educated and sophisticated, people seeking their own fortunes, prostitutes and criminals. The Corinthian church itself contained people who had been **sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals offenders, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers** (9-11). Not many were **wise by human standards, influential, or of noble birth** (1:26). Rather, they were **foolish, weak, and despised** (1:27-28), and some were certainly **slaves** (7:21-22; 12:13).

Sanctified, Holy (1:2)

Given the nature of Corinth and its people, and of the Corinthian church itself, it is no wonder that Paul reminded the church that it had been **sanctified** (*hagiazo*), or set apart as God's people, and was **called to be holy** (*hagios*) (1:2). "**Holy**" referred both to the fact that the church was to remain dedicated to God as his people, and that it was to be pure, which in this case necessitated that its members radically alter their lifestyles. It may have been a remembrance of the church's formerly deplorable members which caused Paul to be so thankful for the **grace given** to the Corinthian church (1:4), and for their spiritual gifting which **confirmed** that they had believed the gospel (1:5-6). Paul reminded them that Christ would keep them strong until the end probably because their past lifestyles still tugged strongly at them through the influence of the Corinthian society and culture (1:8; compare 12:2).

In Christ (1:2,4)

Central to Paul's thinking in all his letters was the concept of being **in Christ** (*en Christoi*) (1:2,4). He used this exact phrase 73 times in his writings, and frequently

employed related phrases (such as “in him”) and concepts. This is a complex idea, incorporating both a legal and an experiential aspect. On the one hand, “in Christ” refers to the fact that believers are covered by Christ’s imputed righteousness (Rom. 5:15-19; 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1:30; 15:22; Gal. 2:17). Because Christ has died for them, and imputed his righteousness to them, believers stand before God’s judgment throne with Christ’s own status. They are accounted righteous because Christ stands in their place as their representative.

On the other hand, there are other passages in which a legal, representational meaning does not fit. These occurrences of the phrase seem to imply that “in Christ” is much like John’s term “abide” (John 15:1-7; 1 John 4:13), meaning that Christ lives within believers, and they live in him (John 17:22-23; Rom. 6:23; 12:5; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; 3:28). These passages seem to require that “in Christ” refer to an intimate relational union that affects believers on the level of their very being. 1 Corinthians 1:4 may well carry some of these overtones.

Fellowship (1:9), United (1:10)

The apostle gave thanks that God had brought a wide diversity of people into one community. He united rich and poor (1:26-28), slave and free, and Jew and Gentile (12:13) with Christ, with each other, and with believers everywhere (1:2). The **fellowship** with Christ into which God had called the church was not individual, but corporate (1:9; 10:16-17). By including these reminders in the introduction, Paul provided greater reason for his distress over the factions which divided the Corinthian believers (1:10). Specifically, their actions ran contrary to the life to which the church had been called. This also explains why Paul urged their unity **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ** (1:10), appealing to Christ’s authority, but also implying that unity be sought for the sake of Christ.

Divisions (1:10)

By its **divisions** (*schismata*), the church not only attacked itself (10:17; compare 8:12), but it also attacked Christ because the church is Christ’s own **body** (12:27). The church need not actually divide into discernible groups to be guilty of **divisions**. The word *schismata* may also refer to quarrels or divided opinions (1:11-12), or to situations of passive neglect (11:18; 12:25). **Divisions** damage by preventing like-mindedness, unity, and fellowship within the body of Christ.

Baptize (1:13-17)

Though Paul claimed that his call to preach the gospel did not include a call personally to baptize (1:17), he did not repudiate the importance of baptism. Paul

recognized the legitimacy of baptism as a continuing practice by baptizing at least some people himself, and by appealing to the proper baptismal formula as proof of Christ's primacy and of the church's unity (compare 12:13). Since a proper understanding of baptism demonstrates the church's unity, baptism signifies, among other things, that the baptized individual is part of the **church**, God's **sanctified** people (1:2).

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. How often did Paul mention ideas like "fellowship" and "division"? How often did he speak in terms that reminded his audience that they were supposed to be unified? What does this tell you about Paul's emphasis in this section of the letter?
2. How often did Paul mention Christ in this section? What does this tell you about his purpose and argument?
3. What various blessings did Paul say the Corinthians had received? Do you think these are the same blessings Christians should expect to receive today? Why or why not?
4. Why was Paul so upset about the divisions in Corinth?
5. Why did Paul downplay baptism here, but exalt it in other contexts?
6. How much does this section imply about the true nature of baptism?
7. Do you think words of human wisdom really empty the gospel of its power? How? Will this affect the way you present the gospel in the future?
8. In light of everything Paul says in this part of his letter, how should we think and feel about each other? How should we think and feel about the church? What should we do about it?
9. Can you think of any divisions in your own church that need to be addressed? Have you contributed to these problems in any way? What steps can you take to prevent or correct divisions in your own church?