

BIBLE SMASH!

Study: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Memorize: Ephesians 4:1-6

Notes:

Analyze: The background information...

Topic: Unity in the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Paul was writing to deal with a growing problem in the church of Corinth. Some of the leaders in the church were claiming slightly different variations of Christianity and church members were starting to take sides with the various leaders. As the members and leaders became more founded in their beliefs it was starting to create tensions among the groups to the point that it was possible that the church might split.

At that time, in the early Christian church, to split up due to disagreements was considered the same as denying faith in God and Christ – the very thing that churches were trying to support. It was okay to split up for the sake of starting new church plants – but not out of arguments among church members. When Christian loyalties are pitted (set up to fight) against each other then church becomes divided. Christ was not sent to create chaos among those that follow in His footsteps but to create unity (love your neighbor).

We are not to become “religiously” loyal to a pastor, youth pastor, or any other member of a church. We are to be loyal to Christ and Christ only. Other leaders of a church should always be pointing you towards God and Christ. If they are trying to gain attention for themselves then there is a problem. They have a problem and it needs to be worked out appropriately

between that person, their fellow church members, and God. Don’t confuse loyalty as a friend with “worshiping” or giving too much credit to someone and their abilities. We should only be worshiping God (1st commandment). There is also a more common situation in which the leader does not seek to be glorified but over time individuals in the church start to put a “religious” trust in what that leader says and does. There are two problems with this. The first is that the individual is basing their relationship on God through the abilities of the leader and not with God directly. Jesus says we can only know God through Him – and not any other church leaders or members. (Matthew 11:27)

Here is a normal example pattern for new Christians:

- 1) I know Christ
- 2) You know me
- 3) I introduce you to Christ (you know Christ through me)
- 4) You know Christ (on your own)

It can be very difficult to get to step 4 when, by human nature, we associate people with other people and also it means that we are now directly accountable for our actions and behavior.

The second problem with individuals attaching themselves to God through other leaders in a church is that the church members can put unrealistic expectations on the leaders to be perfect like God and when leaders fall, make a mistake, or fail at something (which almost

everyone eventually does at some point) the individuals lose faith in the abilities of God because of the weakness of humans. If a relationship is kept first with God and then with leaders, when a leader fails or makes a mistake, the church can work together to show support and help for the leaders and not lose sight that God is in charge, or lose any faith in God.

Paul goes on to say that he is glad he did not baptize anyone in that church (except a few people). He does not want anyone to think he is great or special because of what he has done on behalf of God. He wants to make sure that everyone is looking to act as Christ would want – not other leaders in the church, although if the leaders are leading a Christ-centered life then ideally everyone would have the same aspirations – to serve God.

Lastly, Paul is also saying that a relationship with God is primary and that anything else, including baptism, is secondary. Paul was not placed on this earth to baptize, circumcise or to lead in any other symbolic act of worship. He was sent here to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was common in that day for philosophers and other leaders to use the truth and twist it to get others to follow them. Paul claims that he will not twist the truth, as others may do, but that he will tell the story of Christ just as it is. That Christ came to earth, died and rose again for our sins.

Ephesians 4:1-6

Let's face it. I had you memorize these verses because you will need to know them if you are attending the Nazarene Youth Congress 2003. In short, Paul is asking (pleading) for the church to stay together in unity. The church should be as one body as there is only one God the Father. Paul is, rightly so, big on people getting along within the body of God and setting an example to the rest of the world, of what it means to a true Christian and belong to the family of God.

Share: Is there anything that you have learned that you would like to share with others or anything that have learned from listening to someone else share? Write it here...

Honor: A formation prayer

Dear Lord Jesus,

**in my better moments I want nothing more than to be like you. But, there are other moments...Help me to see how conformity to your way really is. In my seeking for you may I be found by you.
I love you Lord, Amen.**

From "Prayer – finding the heart's true home" by Richard Foster. Page 66.

Leader's Guide: Questions for discussion...

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

- 1) Is it okay to have divisions within one church body?
- 2) What are the differences between divisions of labor and divisions of theology?
- 3) Can one church have several leaders and exist peacefully together as one body? When might this work to an advantage or when might it become a problem?
- 4) Do people follow church leaders because of the leader's abilities? Is this normal or healthy? When might this become unhealthy?
- 5) What types or qualities might make a church leader someone that church members are willing to follow?
- 6) What should be the goal of a good church leader? (answers might include: to lead non-Christians to a relationship with Christ, to disciple Christians, to lead the church in the worship of God...)
- 7) What are some ways a good church leader will accomplish this goal? How can we, as teens, accomplish this same goal?

Ephesians 4:1-6

- 1) What does it mean to be a "prisoner" for the Lord?
- 2) Why is it important to be humble, gentle and patient with each other? Is any one of these traits more important than the other?
- 3) What could happen if there was not unity in the church?
- 4) Do you see any results of lack in unity in our churches today? What do you think causes these results and how might they be corrected or prevented? (if that is even possible)

Credit

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