

Series: A Missional Church for a Pagan Culture

VBC

Pastor Mike Reid

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

September 8-9, 2007

“The Redemptive Power of Unity”

Intro

Pastor John went home sick on Tuesday.

Missed seminary classes Wednesday.

Called Thursday and said (raspy) "I think it's getting worse."

So we went to the bull pen. Me.

Two volunteers to pray for Pastor John now.

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

The Redemptive Power of Unity

So let's dig in.

First off, a relief pitcher gets to choose his own pitches.

So I changed the title.

Open to 1 Corinthians 1:10

Let's look at "the Redemptive Power of Unity"

BIBLE - Read verses. 10-17

The issue here is the Corinthians' problem with divisiveness.

The broken part of man will break down unity.

1. Man's ways lead to division.

The Corinthians had a number of problems
but many of them were sourced in this issue – their cliques and such.
So Paul tackles the matter at the get-go

He writes what the church is supposed to look like, in verse 10 ...

(verse 10)

" ... that all of you (1) agree with one another so that there may be (2) no divisions among you and that you may be (3) perfectly united in mind and thought."

Wouldn't that be a perfect world?
But if we have our attitudes right, and are leaning on Jesus, it's possible.

But the believers in Corinth were not right on this.
They had divided into factions that were at odds with one another.

(read verse 12)

"What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

These men did not encourage these cliques.
This came from the grassroots.

And so there were these four factions.

There was the Paul group –

Most likely his defenders – he had his enemies in Corinth (as we'll see)
Paul had lived there and ministered there.
Whenever church members are having problems and start action out,
they almost always target the lead guy.

I think Senior Pastors walk around with a lightning rod attached to their belt.

The Apollos group –

We read about him in Acts.
He was a good leader, well-versed in scripture.
He was well-educated and eloquent, well-versed in the wisdom and philosophies in the day.
Probably those who considered themselves the more sophisticated ones claimed him.

The equivalent today might be some who are long-time or well-read believers.
They would consider themselves "mature" Christians.
But spiritual maturity has nothing to do with tenure or knowledge, and everything to do with humility and Christlikeness.

The Peter Group (Cephas is his Aramaic name) –

He was never actually in Corinth,
but if there were Jewish believers there, those saved out of Judaism,
they could have considered him their hero.

These would be equivalent with the legalists in today's church.

The rule-keepers and performers.

Even at a grace church like Village, there are likely some who place the highest value on outward behavior and performance.

The Christ Group –

OK, this is just odd.

Who wouldn't want to be in this group?

You can picture this sort of one-up-man-ship –

I follow Paul. Oh, yeah, well I follow Apollos, the eloquent one!

Then, no, it's Peter! The first leader of the early church.

Finally, Uh, Hello, Christ! The holy trump card!

Apparently, there was a group that claimed a deeper spirituality.

We REALLY know Jesus.

Clearly their arrogance surpassed that of all the others.

But let's step back and look at all this.

There will always be different perspectives, varying interests, different styles and different cultures.

This variety and diversity is what makes the church deep and rich.

But differences of taste and style

can become differences of opinion.

And that can grow into separation.

Like the Quaker who was asked, "What church are you in now."

He replied, "The one true church, at last."

"How many belong?"

"Just my wife and I ... and I'm not always sure about her."

In verse 14, Paul makes some parenthetical comments about baptism.

Read 14, "I'm glad I didn't baptize anyone ...but a few"

And 17 – "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel ..."

He is not against baptism.

This ordinance was probably done by others of Paul's team.

That's not so unusual.

Our own lead guy, Pastor John, has delegated this here at Village.

But apparently "who baptized whom" was one piece of their divisiveness.

Paul wanted no part of it.

So, this (all) is an interesting passage of scripture.

After reading and re-reading it, I asked God ...

"What do you have here for us at Village?"

And I think it is this -- We must never let down our guard.

Divisions could ruin our church.

But this is true in any church.
 Because, I'll tell you something you may not know ...
 Churches are full of sinful people with agendas.

And that's the answer to the question,
 "so what do you pastors do with your time all week."

Even a healthy body of believers like Village must guard to keep our opinions in check.

Paul would say to us...
 If we are not careful,

2. We can unwittingly become men followers and people pleasers.

Sometimes you can hear this sort of thing in peoples' comments ...
 "I'm of John MacArthur, I'm of Rob Bell, I'm of John Johnson.
 I'm of Mike Reid"

I though I'd give that a shot.
 Three out of four isn't bad.

I remember a man on the search committee that hired me at Boones Ferry.

He asked me about my preaching style.
 "A lot of people here really like the way Chuck Swindoll preaches."
 Well, maybe you should be interviewing him.

It's pretty easy to fall into blindly following men, especially good leaders,
 Paul would say never let that replace your first allegiance to the Lord.

But there is something more – for us at Village.

3. **WE** (now, specifically us at Village)
 must be vigilant to esteem our differences and guard our unity.

Am I saying divisions could become a problem here?
 Absolutely.

It is easy to get caught up in agendas; and side-tracked by peripherals
 And Paul says that will void the power of the cross.

Are we tempted to have cliques?
 Certainly, tempted.
 Hopefully not more.

There is even greater risk for a church that is as multi-cultural as ours.
 By multi-cultural, I mean more than different ethnicities.
 It includes numerous factors like age groups and worship styles.

Look at some of our strengths in diversity.

We have a rapidly growing Hispanic fellowship

There are many new converts and a strong emphasis on discipleship and spiritual growth.

Mauricio and Aleida are so full of love and God's spirit;
 God is blessing many through them
 This is no longer a little add-on ministry.
 And it presents challenges for space and inclusion.

We have some beautiful brothers and sisters in Jesus to fully absorb into our body.

We've just turned a significant corner in our Korean Fellowship
 Weathered a long pastoral transition.
 Now have a very strong fellowship –
 the lay leadership has grown stronger;

We have an energized new pastor (Joe)
 Energized and energizing.

But we've far enough into this that we realize it's harder than we originally understood
 But it's so worth it –

Our Chinese fellowship is also growing quite rapidly.

God is doing something here at Village (multi-cultural)
 that is unusual and awesome.

Make no mistake. This is hard but we're growing in it.
 I know of many examples of Villagers who really get this.
 I'll share one story.

One dad told of his high school son after football practice.
 Anglo kid saw his Hispanic Village friend with his buddies.
 Greeted, big hug, both groups just stared in wonder.

Mark DeYmaz – "our unity amidst our diversity IS our witness"

Traditional vs. Contemporary

example in Discovery Class –
 these newbies don't always get that we offer two styles
 he railed against empty-headed contemporary music –
 most in the room must have been offended

I remember thinking, "I'm not sure he's gonna make it here."

We need to guard our generational unity.
 Some of our younger members want to see us appeal more to their generation.

They would say what we call "contemporary" isn't very – well – contemporary.
 And some of us oldies may want to "get it," but don't get it. Not yet, anyway.

And there's a myriad of other issues good folks here could disagree on.
 Any could cause some mini-factions, (if we're not careful)

Christians involved in political activism, or not

Only the King James Version; never the King James Version

Pro-build; pro-status quo

Home school, public school, private school

Miraculous spiritual gifts today, or no, not never.

Ducks, Beavers.

For our troops to remain in Iraq; for Bush's head on a platter

So how do we guard our unity here at Village?

Read Vs. 17 – Paul's summarizing comment

"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."

When we do things man's way, we negate the power of the cross.
 Stated positively ...

4. Christ's way is for his power to overflow through us.

We can only do this as we plug in to Him.

It's not about trying our hardest in our strength to do the right things.
 That voids the power of the cross in us.

The cross is our strength.
The cross is the great reconciler of people.
(Repeat that.)

So Paul would say to us at Village ...
Let us let the power of the cross do its work in us.

And He will keep us as one.