

The Kind of Church You Want to be a Part Of

1 Corinthians 1:1-17

Pastor Guy Gray

Good Church, Bad Church

The sad truth is that a lot of people like Jesus—but they don't like the church. Jesus is intriguing, wise, loving, sacrificial, caring and a powerful catalyst for personal and social transformation. Many people view Jesus this way, even people who do not count themselves as Christians. Ask people what they think about Jesus and you'll see. Most people don't bash Jesus. Most people admire Jesus, even if they know little about him. Ask people what they think about the church and you'll get a very different response. Recent surveys reveal that many of the same people who "like Jesus" don't want anything to do with church. They view the church as negative and judgmental. They see the church as a religious organization with a political agenda. They see the church as unloving, uncaring, hypocritical, oppressive and all about buildings and money rather than people. This sounds harsh to those of us who love Jesus and love His church as well, but it does have a ring of truth to it. Most of us have had some sort of hurt or negative experience associated with church life. This is all the more reason for us to get it right. One thing is clear from the teachings of Jesus—He wants to build a church that reflects the truth of who He is. In the New Testament the church is called the body of Christ. That means we are to be the hands and feet of Jesus—the visible expression of Jesus in this world. Isn't that the kind of church you want to be a part of?

The Kind of Church God Wants to Build

The Book of 1 Corinthians is about the kind of church God wants to build—a community of people who have a special calling on their lives. This is a calling to know Jesus, trust Jesus, serve Jesus and become like Jesus. Called to be "holy" (1 Corinthians 1:2) means to be "set apart", to be different and to belong to God and His purpose. This kind of church would be a validation of the gospel of Christ rather than a deterrent! This kind of church would be so Christ-like that people would be drawn to Jesus "because of the church," not "in spite of the church." That is the kind of church God wants to build. Isn't that the kind of church you want to be a part of?

The Challenge of Corinth

The church at Corinth had some special challenges, to say the least. The unique dynamics of the city of Corinth created a culture that looked much like our own. Here are some of the key cultural values at Corinth: competitiveness, self-achievement, self-fulfillment, self-promotion, pleasure, freedom, ethical relativism, an obsession with social status, entertainment, celebrity making, sports and materialistic gain. Start with these qualities and try to create a selfless community of sacrificial love and spiritual unity! That is exactly what it was like to build a church at Corinth. Today, in our culture, it's almost exactly the same. So it is no surprise to read in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 that this church had big problems. The problem with the church at Corinth is that it looked just like the world around it, only worse! 1 Corinthians is God's Word to us, teaching us how we can be different—how we can follow in the way of Christ even while living in a fallen culture.

The Marks of a Church that Makes a Difference for Christ

Chapter 1 reveals to us 3 marks of the kind of church that God wants to build: Christ, Gospel and Cross. The church at Corinth had taken their focus off of Jesus Christ and put it elsewhere—onto personalities, styles and various issues. Paul calls their focus back to Jesus. He also calls them back to the gospel and the power of the Cross. It's easy for us to get sidetracked from the gospel and to focus on "issues" instead. We can also forget where the power of the gospel really lies—in the message of the Cross. A focus on Christ, gospel and the power of the Cross: these are the characteristics of a church that will make a difference for Christ. For, as we shall see, when a church builds on these things, it will become a church characterized by unity, humility, service, love,

good ethics and a true movement of the Spirit of Christ. Isn't that the kind of church you want to be a part of? The choice is ours. The call comes to each of us individually and to all of us as a church community. If you want to be part of a Christ-centered church then you need to be Christ centered. If you want to be a part of a friendly, loving church, you need to be friendly and loving. You get the idea! May the Lord help us as our community of River West hears God's Word in Corinthians and responds in faith! Let's pray to know the power of the gospel and the Cross of Christ in our lives and in our ministry.

Ideas for Reflection and Discussion

This week, read 1 Corinthians 1:1-17 again. How did the Lord speak to you through this passage? In what way were you encourage? In what way were you challenged or convicted?

The Church that Jesus is Building

We can learn so much just in the first 17 verses about the kind of church Christ wants us to become. Read verse 2 again. What kind of characteristic does Paul attribute to the Church even in this one verse?

A Godly Response to Difference

Paul devotes a good amount of energy and focus on division in Chapter 1. How have you seen division in the church? What causes division? Have there been instances where you contributed to division? According to scripture, how does the Cross of Christ change how you might respond to divisions now?

TODAY

SUNDAY 9/16

Sign-ups continue for
Community Groups, Bible
Studies & Classes after each
service

SUNDAY 9/16

Jr. High School Youth Group
Kick-off...Sports Night!
Come hungry! 5:30pm-7pm
@ RWLG, Contact Pastor
Josh for details 699.2226
or josh@riverwest.org

SATURDAY 9/22

Time for Women, Enjoy
pastries & tea while con-
necting with other
women. 10:00-noon @
RWLG. Contact Linda
Streger for details 636.9223
or stregerhome@aol.com

SATURDAY 9/22

Roby Duke Concert to
benefit Tina Anderson
and Enlace. Tickets
\$5.00 in the lobby today.
7:00pm @ RWLG
Contact Tina Andeson for
details 699.2226 or
tina@riverwest.org