

**1 Corinthians Sermon Series Week 2: Preventing Division | Destin Garner**

**Scripture Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:10, Chapter 2:1-16**

The Corinthian believers were experiencing **division**.

**1 Corinthians 1:10 ESV**

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

**This division was personality driven....each one of you says:**

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- “I follow Paul” - “I follow Apollos” - “I follow Cephas” - “I follow Christ.”

**What caused these divisions?**

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The new city of Corinth allowed people the chance to acquire wealth through commercial ventures. The citizens of Corinth were no longer fated to remain in their allotted position on the social scale but had a real opportunity for upward social mobility.

The community and the culture of the city were those of trade, business, and entrepreneurial pragmatism. These values fed the zeal to attain public status, to promote one's own honor, and to secure power. Perhaps no city in the Empire offered so congenial an atmosphere for individual advancement. Corinth seems to have been a city designed for those who were preoccupied with rising the ranks of social status.

This culture was dominated by the ‘Big Man,’ who would impose himself as a leader, and derive power and prestige from the size of his following.

Few Christians would have been unaffected by this dominant culture surrounding them. The problem was not that the church was in Corinth but that too much of Corinth was in the church.

**Could this be the case with us today? How can we keep from becoming status junkies, hungry for honor, obsessed and addicted to a type of self-promotion that divides? What's the solution?**

**Paul provides two solutions:**

**The first solution Paul offers to prevent division is for believers to have the RIGHT PRIORITY.**

**1 Corinthians 2:1-5 ESV**

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling and my speech and my message were not in

plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

### **The priority you need to keep to prevent division is Christ & Him crucified.**

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When you prioritize Christ and Him crucified the power rests in the **MESSAGE**, NOT in the **METHOD** or the **MESSENGER**.

Paul doesn't argue against a method of preaching which employs literary figures as a means to better convey the message of the Gospel, but as ornamentations intended to please and amuse the congregation.

When you prioritize Christ and Him crucified, it prevents division in that it **TETHERS** everyone to the **CENTRAL MESSAGE** of the **GOSPEL**.

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This is not to the exclusion of all other knowledge this is an escalation above all other knowledge.

“Any attempt to make the gospel palatable by bringing it into line with the tastes of those to whom it is preached distorts it.”

When you prioritize Christ and Him crucified, it prevents division in that it should keep us all **HUMBLE**.

“The message of the cross is an antidote to human self-glorification. It is hardly a message for the ambitious.”

It's hard to stand at the foot of the Cross & Boast. People addicted to status can't admit their failures, flaws and shortcomings. But Paul says, “I am the chief of sinners.”

### **Summary of 1 Corinthians 2:1-5: -----**

In short, the Corinthians came to faith by focusing on the cross of Christ which seemed so foolish to the ungodly. They must now return to that focus rather than splitting the church by magnifying human leaders.

**Division happens when we make much of ourselves. Unity comes when we make much of Christ and Him crucified.**

### **Application: -----**

- What are you known for? Your one thing? Your priority? Your focus at home, work, neighborhood?
- What could you do this year, month, week to make it more about Christ?

### **The second solution Paul provides to prevent division is for believers to keep the PROPER PERSPECTIVE.**

**1 Corinthians 2:6-9 ESV Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this,**

for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”

Human wisdom leads to **destruction and division**.

Human wisdom **cannot comprehend** spiritual wisdom.

**When confronted with Spiritual wisdom, unbelievers are like a donkey at a concert – they can hear it, they just don't get it.**

**1 Corinthians 2:10-13 ESV** these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also, no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

**True wisdom is from God, who has revealed Himself and His ways.**

**Division occurs when people:** -----

- 1) Rely on human wisdom.
- 2) Try to take credit for spiritual wisdom that is ultimately from God.

**1 Corinthians 2:14-16 ESV** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

Believers **should not** let the natural (unspiritual / unsaved) person tell us how to live our spiritual lives. Spiritual persons have the mind of Christ.

Success in the kingdom of God, is not about how high you can climb, but about how high and how many others you can lift up. Instead of pursing status for yourself, when you **PRIORITYZE CHRIST** and Him crucified (*making that the main thing*), and when live with a **SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE** (*having the mindset of Christ*) human wisdom and secular culture will tell you that you look silly, foolish and weak.

**Don't choose pride over gospel effectiveness.**

If you have power, prestige, followers, influence, intelligence, wealth, beauty, health - don't use those as status symbol for your greatness (*which will cause disunity and division*), use them as tool for the gospel to make Christ and him crucified known no matter what the natural world says or thinks.

**1 Corinthians 2:10-13 ESV**

## RPC SGL SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### “PREVENTING DIVISION” BY DESTIN GARNER

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 2026 | RPC CENTRAL

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: 1 CORINTHIANS 2: 1-16

**Have different members of your small group take turns reading verses from the Scripture passage above prior to beginning your group discussion.**

Icebreaker idea: What do you want to be known for this year?

1. Discuss and share what we learn about the character and nature of God from 1 Corinthians 2.
2. Corinthians valued status, upward mobility, and the “Big Man” leader. In what ways does our modern culture reward self-promotion, influence, and platform-building? How can these values also infiltrate and shape the church?
3. To quote Destin, *“The problem was not that the church was in Corinth, but that too much of Corinth was in the church.”* What are some subtle ways “too much of our culture” easily creeps into our faith or church life?
4. **Re-Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–5.** Why do you think Paul was so intentional about minimizing himself, his method, and his delivery? What would it look like for our faith to rest in God’s power rather than human wisdom today?
5. How can elevating personalities, platforms, preferences, or tastes (even good ones) unintentionally divide believers? What helps keep a group or church tethered to the central message of the gospel?
6. According to 1 Corinthians 2:6–9, how does God’s wisdom differ from the wisdom of this age? How does remembering the temporary nature of human wisdom help protect unity?
7. What is one takeaway you have from this passage? Who can share one area where you sense God inviting you to lay down self-promotion, comparison, or the need for recognition this week?
8. Ask the group to take a few minutes of silence for personal reflection and honestly ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and consider the prompts Destin offered: *In what areas am I hungry for honor, seeking glory and addicted to self-promotion? And what am I most known for right now:* at home, work, church, or online—what seems to be my “one thing”?

How clearly does Christ and Him crucified show up in that?

#### For Individual Application and/or next steps

As a small group, what is one intentional practice you could adopt (prayer focus, Scripture reading, serving together, testimony-sharing) that helps keep Christ—not personalities or preferences—at the center?

What are you known for? What is your one thing? Your priority? Your focus at home, work, neighborhood?

What could we do this year, month, week to make it more about Christ in our small group?

Continue Reading 1 Corinthians Chapter 2 or 3 this week as we continue our series on Wed. & Sunday!