

I Corinthians 1:10-17
Divisiveness (the sectarian spirit)

- There have always been tensions in the church between Orthodoxy and Diversity, Faithfulness and Flexibility, Resisting the world's values and Resisting God given differences in the church.
- More often than not the church tends to confuse its Civil Wars (which are unwarranted) with its Culture Wars (which are necessary). The church at Corinth is a classic example.

A. The nature of Christian unity.

“¹⁰ Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree (speak the same thing), and there be no divisions (tears or cracks) among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ . . . there are quarrels among you.”

1. Paul is not advocating community without any diversity.
 - a. In chapters 12-14 of I Corinthians he explains the importance of diversity in gifts and ministries within the church.
 - b. The motif of the "Body of Christ" suggests many parts that differ in form and function.
2. Christians should be telling the same story but not necessarily in the same way.
 - a. The members of the body have different roles but they work together to support the coordinated function of the body as a whole.
 - b. In Corinth, the church had turned the natural differences within the congregation into a battleground where those who differed were deemed inferior if not unorthodox.
 - c. For more information on this subject look at apptoteach.org theology file #802,803

B. The sin of sectarianism is its disrespect for the Lordship of Christ and the diversity of Christ's body the church.

“¹¹ For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's {people,} that there are quarrels among you. ¹² Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ.”

1. Paul is addressing a spiritual civil war that was being presented as a culture war.
2. Believers were equating their human preferences with Divine preferences.
3. The sin of sectarianism is the disrespect shown to the ones not preferred.

C. Our Baptism into Christ is the rational for our unity.

¹³ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ that no man should say you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize,

but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.”

1. Jesus is the central figure of the Kingdom of God family. When we make any one member of His Body a central figure we do dishonor to the head, Christ.
2. Water Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ's death.
“all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death” Rom.6:3
3. Water Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ's church.
“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,” I Cor.12:13

D. Some typical examples of a sectarian spirit.

1. Denominations - see apptoteach.org theology file #103
2. Gifts or styles of ministry - see apptoteach.org theology file #604
3. Personalities -
4. Ethnic or cultural issues - see Paul's letter to the Ephesians

E. Put your best foot forward without losing your balance or kicking your neighbor.

1. Individual congregations will have different strengths and ministry emphases. This is natural and should not be a concern. The church in Acts 2 illustrates 6 differing emphases in ministry.

Events of Acts 2	Styles of ministry	Longings of people	Purpose of the church
vs.43 “a sense of awe”	Reaching UP	Transcendence	Exalt Christ as Creator, Redeemer, Lord
vs.42 “the teaching of the Apostles”	Reaching DOWN	Insight	Educate Christ's people
vs.42 “fellowship”	Reaching IN	Intimacy	Edify Christ's church
vs.47 “adding to their number daily”	Reaching OUT	Direction	Evangelize Christ's world
vs.42 “breaking of bread”	Reaching BACK	Stability	Embrace Christ's heritage
vs.47 “having favor with all people”	Reaching FORWARD	Utopia	Enrich the culture

2. A congregation should maintain a balance in ministry where each of the 6 differing areas of ministry is present
3. A congregation should not judge other congregations because they do not share the same emphasis or strength.

F. The church at Corinth and its wars

1. The church at Corinth was not engaged in the Culture wars that it should have been fighting.
2. The church at Corinth was too engaged in Civil wars (fighting God given differences).

G. The evolution of Civil Wars in the church.

1. **Innocent preferences** - where we honestly acknowledge our preferences.
2. **Natural cliques** - where we isolate ourselves from those who differ.
3. **Hardened divisions** - where we distort and distrust those positions that are not our own.
4. **Civil War** - where we actively try to remove those with whom we disagree.

- **Elements of a civil war**

- a. Distrust of those who differ.
- b. Distortion of differences.
- c. Disruption of "Body Life."
- d. Departure from fellowship.

- **How to prevent a civil war**

- a. Sound Biblical teaching.
- b. Modeling "Body Life" by leaders.
- c. Keeping the main thing the main thing.
- d. Communication - "Speaking the truth in love" and "listening."
- e. Being willing to defer to others in love.