

THE ROI OF LOVE · 1 CORINTHIANS

LESSON ONE

Stop Picking *Teams* — You're All on the Same One

A CHURCH DIVIDED

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-31

KEY VERSE

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10 NKJV

THE ROI MOMENT

The Most Expensive Thing in the Room Is Usually the Divide

Walk into almost any organization — a company, a church, a family, a friend group — and you can feel it before anyone says a word. The tension. The camps. The people who nod when one person speaks and go stone-cold when another does. Everybody knows who's on whose team. Nobody says it out loud. But everybody knows.

Division is expensive. Not just emotionally — strategically. When a team is divided, energy that should be going toward the mission gets redirected toward managing the drama. Resources get split. Trust gets hoarded. The vision gets held hostage to whoever has the most loyal followers that week.

The church in Corinth had this problem bad. They were splitting into factions based on which preacher they liked best. "I'm with Paul." "I'm with Apollos." "I'm with Peter." And a particularly self-righteous group was walking around saying, "Well, we're with Christ" — which is basically just spiritual shade thrown at everyone else.

Paul writes back with the energy of a CEO who just got a terrible Q3 report. He's not panicking. But he is not playing. And the first thing out of his mouth — after the greeting — is a direct challenge to their division. Because Paul understood something that too many of us miss: **unity is not a soft skill. It's a survival strategy.**

*Before we go further — be honest with yourself.
Where in your life right now are you operating in
a camp instead of in community?*

THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE

Setting the Scene: Corinth, Circa A.D. 59

Corinth was not a quiet little town. It was a booming seaport city — wealthy, diverse, morally complicated, and filled with people from every background imaginable. Philosophers debated on street corners. Merchants moved money. Temples to pagan gods lined the skyline. It was the kind of city that made people feel like they had options — options for who to worship, who to follow, and how to live.

The church Paul planted there was a reflection of the city itself: mixed, messy, and full of potential. Slaves and free people sat in the same room. Jews and Gentiles worshipped the same God. Former idol-worshippers were learning what it meant to follow Christ. It was genuinely beautiful — and genuinely difficult.

Paul had founded this church, led many of them to faith personally, and then moved on — as missionaries do. But word got back to him through a household called Chloe's that the congregation had unraveled into factions. They weren't fighting about doctrine yet. They were fighting about personalities. And Paul had seen enough to know that if you don't stop a personality cult early, it will eat the whole church alive.

He wrote this letter from Ephesus around A.D. 55-56 — not to condemn them, but to correct them. The tone is a father who loves his children too much to let them destroy what they've been given.

— THE TEXT

Read It. Sit With It. Mark What Hits.

As you read, underline anything that surprises you. Circle any phrase that lands differently than you expected. Put a question mark next to anything you want to explore further.

PAUL'S GREETING — 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9

¹ Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ² to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, ⁵ that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, ⁶ even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷ so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will also confirm you to the end, that you

may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

A NEED FOR UNITY — 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-17

¹⁰ Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

¹² Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. ¹⁶ Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

1 CORINTHIANS 1:13 NKJV

THE WISDOM OF THE GOSPEL — 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." **20** Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. **22** For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; **23** but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, **24** but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. **27** But God has chosen the foolish

things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.

³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — ³¹ that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

— WHAT'S ACTUALLY HAPPENING HERE

Exploration Questions

These questions are designed to help you observe and interpret the text. There are no trick questions — but there are honest ones. Take your time.

1

Paul opens not with the problem, but with gratitude. He reminds the Corinthians of everything they already have in Christ — grace, gifts, enrichment, confirmation, faithfulness (verses 4–9). Why do you think Paul leads with this before addressing their mess? What does that tell you about how to handle conflict?

2

In verse 10, Paul pleads — not commands — for unity. He asks them to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." What do you think this kind of unity actually looks like in practice? Does unity mean everyone agreeing on everything?

3

The factions in Corinth were built around personalities — Paul, Apollos, Peter, and even a "Christ" group. Notice Paul's response in verse 13: "Is Christ divided?" He makes the division sound absurd. What was the real problem underneath the personality allegiances? What were they actually dividing over?

4

Paul shifts in verse 18 to talk about the Cross and wisdom. He says the message of the Cross looks like foolishness to the world but is actually the power of God. In your own words, what makes the Cross "foolish" by the world's standards — and why is that actually the point?

5

Look at verses 26–28. God deliberately chose the foolish, the weak, the base, and the despised. This is God's investment strategy. What does this tell you about how God measures value — and how does that challenge the way you tend to measure your own worth or the worth of others?

6

Verse 30 is the full portfolio: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption — all found in Christ. If everything you need is already in Him, what does that say about what we are actually looking for when we align ourselves with human personalities, movements, or brands instead?

THE ROI AUDIT

Now Let's Make It Personal

This is where we stop talking about the Corinthians and start talking about us. These questions are not designed to make you feel bad. They're designed to help you see clearly — because you can't make a better

investment until you know what you've been spending on.

1

Where in your life — church, family, friendships, workplace — are you currently operating in a faction? Who is "your people" and who are you unconsciously keeping at arm's length? What's driving that divide?

2

Think about a time when you followed someone's wisdom — a mentor, a leader, a social media voice — and it cost you. What were you really looking for that you thought they could give you? How does verse 30 speak to that need?

3

The world has a very clear idea of what makes someone valuable — credentials, platform, influence, income, connections. Be honest: how much has that matrix shaped the way you see yourself? And how does God's upside-down ROI math in verses 26-29 challenge that?

4

What is one specific thing you could do this week to invest in unity somewhere in your life — not because it's comfortable, but because it's worth it?

LALA'S TAKE

God's ROI Math Doesn't Work the Way You Think

Here's something nobody tells you about this chapter: the division problem and the wisdom problem are the same problem wearing different clothes.

The Corinthians were dividing over personalities because they were still thinking like the world. They were ranking people — Paul vs. Apollos vs. Peter — using the world's metrics: eloquence, status, influence, who baptized you. They were treating the gospel like a brand and the apostles like competing CEOs. And Paul's response is essentially: you have completely missed the point.

The Cross — the thing at the center of everything Paul preaches — is the world's worst advertisement. A man executed as a criminal, dying in public humiliation, on a wooden structure designed to maximize shame. By every

metric the world uses to evaluate a good investment, the Cross is a catastrophic loss. Zero ROI. Total failure.

Except it isn't. Because God's math is inverted. The greatest return in human history came from what looked like the greatest loss. The weakest moment became the most powerful moment. The most despised act became the most redemptive act. This is not accidental — it is the whole point. God chose foolish things to confound the wise on purpose, because He wanted it to be unmistakably clear that the power is His, not ours.

So when we divide over personalities, platforms, and preachers — when we pick teams within the body of Christ — we are essentially saying we still don't get it. We're still trying to figure out who has the best human wisdom. But Paul is saying: the whole game changed at the Cross. Stop trying to pick the smartest leader and start looking to the one Leader who holds your entire portfolio — wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption — in one hand.

*You don't need to find the right camp.
You need to find the right Center. And
everything else gets sorted from there.*

A Moment to Go Deeper

This lesson lives in the Faith pillar — specifically, the question of where your faith is actually anchored. Not where you say it is. Where it actually is, when things get hard or uncertain.

Where have you been placing your faith in human wisdom — a person, a system, a strategy — instead of in the power of God? What would it look like to reanchor this week?

✦ *Want to go deeper with this? The Faith Journal was made for exactly this moment.*

SEAL IT IN PRAYER

Close in Prayer

Use this framework as a guide — make it your own words, your own moment.

Father, I confess that I have sometimes made the gospel about personalities instead of about You. I have picked teams, built walls, and measured worth by the world's standards — even inside spaces that were supposed to be Yours. Forgive me for that. I want to see people the way You see

them — as worth investing in, regardless of their credentials or camp. And I want to root my own value not in what I have earned or who has endorsed me, but in what Christ became for me: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Let that be enough. Let that be everything. Amen.

GO DEEPER

For Further Study

Proverbs 3:5-7

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Ezekiel 28:2-7

Matthew 11:25

1 Corinthians 3:19-20

Romans 12:16

Philippians 2:1-4

The ROI of Love

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NEXT: LESSON 2 — THE WISDOM CHATGPT CAN'T GIVE YOU · 1 CORINTHIANS 2