

## 1 Corinthians 1:1-17 - "A Simple Gospel"

Starter: Why do you attend a Baptist Church? Are YOU Baptist?

1 Corinthians is a letter written by Paul (the apostle untimely born (15:8)) to the mainly gentile church in Corinth. The church was not united in the slightest and only few really understood what being a disciple was really about. The church was planted during Paul's second missionary journey (you can read about it in Acts 18) and the letter was written from Ephesus (16:8) during Paul's third missionary journey (around AD 55). The Greek culture was behind the main issues the church were facing; we'll unpack that as we go through the letter.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-17 and look for tell-tale signs of the things mentioned above particularly how unity can be found.

Q. Do you see any suggestion of what Paul is going to say about where unity in the church comes from? Is there a common source for churches of all time?

The Greek way of thinking was that wisdom comes from within; Paul seems to be saying that actually wisdom comes from the Spirit and it is a result of the grace of Jesus. But it is the Spirit who brings them unity through that wisdom.

Scholars suggest that the letter sent to Paul from Corinth must have had some strange thought about baptism in it.

Q. What does Paul say about baptism?

Q. What's the most important thing that Paul can do for this church?

The Corinthian church had overcomplicated things - they thought that Apollos, Paul or Peter were their teachers. Paul says, "No, Jesus is your teacher - be a disciple of him." They thought that something magical happened during baptism. Paul says, "No, the gospel is what's important don't overcomplicate the gospel by adding in works."

Q. Do we overcomplicate the gospel? If so, how?

My suggestion is that as a Baptist church we are inclined to say, "We follow John Smyth" (the founder of the Baptist church) instead of "We follow Jesus." That makes baptism more important to us at times than the gospel! We use baptism as a stick to beat people with rather than the wonderful event that it is for both individuals and the church. We don't allow people to be members of OUR church until they abide by our rules.

Q. What's wrong with this picture?

Closing question: How would the church be stronger as a result of a more inclusive view of membership?