

Series: Corinthians, a Church in Progress

United We Stand, with Christ Crucified

1 Corinthians 1-4

Dr. Matt Cassidy – February 27, 2022

If you'll open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians—it's in the New Testament towards the end. We'll be in chapters 1 through 4 today.

I took my wife to Gladys Knight this week. Yeah, Wednesday down at the Paramount. When I said I took my wife there, I meant that I drove her there, I dropped her off at the Paramount, and then I picked her up later on.

But I want to say that was a very interesting group of people. I watched people go there and leave the Paramount theater. I mean, wow—income levels all over the place. People showed up in limousines, some people rode their bikes, some people had their husbands drive them there. But there was ethnic diversity for sure and age differences, and radical religious differences. Gladys broke into a gospel song, and those of the faith—it turned into a revival. Those backup singers were now a church choir, and people were standing up and holding up their hands and praising Jesus. And other people with different religious backgrounds were thinking, *Huh*. Anyway, on pop songs, everyone was swinging in their chairs.

But I'll tell you this: I bet there weren't six people in that sold-out crowd that had three things in common. I mean, it was a different crowd. But I'll tell you this: this is true, that every one of those people put those differences aside for two hours so they could enjoy Gladys Knight. For 120 minutes, they said, *There's one thing that matters, and that's her singing some fantastic songs*. It was unity for a common purpose ... a lot like the Church.

Well, a lot like the Church is supposed to be, unified for a common purpose. Lately it hasn't been that way so much, especially in our country.

I want to read you a little section from the president of the largest Protestant denomination in the world. And this is him addressing his church. He says:

“What is most disappointing for me in 2020 is how so many church people were willing to walk away from the Church over relatively small disagreements ... at least

small in the light of the Gospel and in light of eternity. ‘Well, you didn’t say enough about this cultural issue, so I’m leaving.’ Or, ‘You said too much about the cultural issues, so I’m leaving.’ Or, ‘I don’t like how you approach vaccines or masks, so I’m out.’”

He said, “I talked to people who had been at our church for a decade and I said, ‘I married your kids. I walked with you through the tragedy of a death of a family member. And now you’re leaving because you disagree with what we’re doing with masks?’

“We Christians say we hate the cancel culture, but I’m amazed at how many people are willing to cancel their church over a disagreement on a rather small thing ... a small thing in light of the Gospel.”

It wasn’t just that denomination. Lifeway Christians stores and publishing house does a survey every year of what the issues of the year are. And this year for the first time ever, it was church unity. So, the idea of churches being divided is nothing new.

Corinthians First, Christians Second

As a matter of fact, the Books of 1 and 2 Corinthians are about a church that’s famously divided, famously being torn apart. As a matter of fact, that’s why Paul has to write two different letters. And they are large letters, addressing the various ways you can have arguments and how you can split a church.

And the general division, if I had to say what was the overarching thing (we’re going to look at some of the various ways you can be divided)—but the general reason that this church is so split up is because they were Corinthian Christians. They were Corinthians that were Christians. The center of their universe, their identity, the reason they would brag about things, is because they were Corinthians, and they had a Corinthian worldview, they had a Corinthian value system. Oh, yeah—and they were Christians too.

And this Corinthian worldview, which would be very much like any worldview outside of the biblical worldview, Paul would call it “fleshly” or “worldly”, because it’s the natural value system we gravitate towards.

1 Corinthians 1:10

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, 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.

And so, it caused a great deal of division. Look what he says in chapter 1, verse 10: “I appeal to you, my brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you would all agree, and that there would be no divisions among you, but that you would be united in the same mind and the same judgment.”

Why was there so much division in this church? And here’s why. Because Jesus Christ had lost His place in their souls. When Jesus Christ leaves His sovereign throne as King, then there’s going to be division. If He’s not the King on that throne, in the soul of every person in that church, they’re going to find a way to split this in as many ways as they can.

The Book of 1 Corinthians is kind of difficult to preach on, honestly. And what I’m going to try to do today is try to show you what to look for when you read chapters 1 through 4. It would be helpful if you did that. What I’m going to try to do today is to show you the reasons for the divisions and why there are so many.

And by the way, the reasons for the divisions in the Corinthian church is the reason that there are divisions, maybe, in our church, in your marriage, or in the workplace. And it’s this. Their identity was found in something that was not Christian. It was not Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But their identity was found in being a Corinthian. *I identify as a Corinthian.*

Corinthian Culture

It’s hard to explain or to know what that means. So, let me tell you what the Corinthians culture was, and a little bit about the city and the values they had, so that you can understand how their identity is attached to that and how that attachment caused great division in the church.

So, a real quick survey of this culture and of the city called Corinth. Corinth was in Greece, and if you look at it geographically, land masses from an hourglass shape. There are land masses to the north and to the south, but it’s the bottleneck. It’s in the middle. It’s the waistline in between. So, it was a connection to the north and to the south via land. But it had two harbors.

It basically had two sea coasts. It had one that would allow people to get to Asia. The other one led into Italy and all of Europe. So, you can imagine that this was a hub of commerce. It was a powerful, strategic trade route. As a matter of fact, they built a road from one harbor to another and they would drag the ships across. That's how important it was.

Now the people that lived there, the population, was a mob of very hungry, selfishly ambitious people, highly motivated to get ahead. Because that's where you go. I mean, it's the new boomtown. It is the capital of potential. And the cultural climate, or the vibe, the feel, the atmosphere of being a Corinthian, was to do whatever you had to do to establish status or wealth or fame ... and mostly this ... honor. Honor is going to be one of our key words. Honor and status were obsessions in this culture and in this society. That was their identity.

When you talked about society, or rather, the idea of an identity there, when we talk about the identity of a person, the identity means that's how they see themselves and that's how they keep score in their own heart, how they're winning or losing. But it's also how they keep score to other people. That's how they judge themselves and it's how they judge other people as well.

And so, they were just proud of being proud to being identified as a Corinthian. *Yeah, I'm a Corinthian.* Like we do sometimes ... *Well, I'm an Austinite.* We don't say "Austin, Texas"—we just say "Austin." *I'm from Austin ... and I'm a Christian.*

The Road to Honor: Power and Wisdom

So, winning in Corinth was all about honor. And if you want to know how to get honor, they literally had a path or a road to honor. And the road to honor was about power and wisdom. And the idea of power is just being in control of your own life ... autonomy. But also, even more, power over other people's lives. And wisdom was scored by your sophistication or your intelligence.

And in those days, the rock stars of the day were the public speakers. If you were the captain of the debate team, you're winning. If you were the king of rhetoric, we're going to be followers of you. That was primary when it talks about wisdom—the ability to communicate effectively.

So, power and wisdom—that was honor. And if you couldn't get those yourself, you could attach yourself to someone who was powerful and had wisdom. And they had fan clubs. *If*

I can't be that person, I can wear that person's jersey, and I'm with him, and you're with that guy, and that's okay. We're going to split up and we're going to pick sides that way.

The point is, in summary, power and wisdom and cliques to those people with power and wisdom—that's how the Corinthians kept score. Do you think that affected the church? Oh, yeah. It tore that church to pieces. Because people didn't have as their central identity, their prime reason for existing, Christ and Him crucified. They had so many other expressions of what's most important in their life.

1 Corinthians 1:11-12

For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarrelling among you, my brothers. ¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."

Look what it says in chapter 1, verses 11 and 12: "For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each of you is saying, 'I follow Paul,' or 'I follow Apollos,' or 'I follow Cephas,' or 'I follow Christ.'

That is the very definition of *That's very Corinthian of you. How Corinthian of you to be this way.* They're choosing culture over Christ. And if you don't have a mind that's transformed so that Christ is the center of what makes your decisions and how you make things valuable, you can't grow in your spiritual life. If Jesus is second, you can't hear the profound depths of biblical truth. You can't digest it. If there's something—some other person, some other attribute, like *I'm athletic or intelligent or successful*—if that is how you're identifying yourself, then you can't help but start dividing families, churches, and relationships, because those things can be taken from you.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³ for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? ⁴ For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

Look how Paul puts it in chapter 3. Having these worldviews causes division. “But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh ...” And other translations say “worldly.” I would say, *Because you’re so Corinthian*. “...as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still fleshly.” Some translations say “worldly.” *You’re still being so Corinthian*.

And so, he goes on. “For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh...” *Aren’t you just worldly, aren’t you just being Corinthians?* “... and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another, ‘I follow Apollos,’ are you not being merely human?” *I can’t even give you Bible passages and truth from God because you’re so Corinthian. You have these values that are so contaminated and so foreign to the ways of God and Jesus Christ.*

Paul’s Answer to Their Identity as Corinthians

And so, here’s what Paul does. I want you to see how Paul reacts to this particular audience, this special audience, and how he responds to them. So, he’s going to take on this identity as Corinthians. He’s going to give them two answers to their value system. One is that he’s going to say, *I don’t want followers. I’m not going to play your stupid Corinthian games.* And then second of all, he’s going to say, *Look, I don’t want to entertain your value system of power and wisdom. I don’t want followers, and your value system of power and wisdom, your road to honor is completely opposite to the road to glory, the road of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 1:12-13

What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.”¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

The first one is that he doesn't want any followers. Look how he says this in 1 Corinthians 1:12-13: “What I mean is that each one of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ or ‘I follow Apollos,’ or ‘I follow Cephas,’ or ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided?” It is now, yeah. “Was Paul crucified for you?” No. “Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” Paul says, *I don't want your attention—I'm not your savior.*

1 Corinthians 3:5-7

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servant through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

And then he goes on again. Chapter 3 picks this up again. “What then of Apollos? What then of Paul?” *We're just servants!* “Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was the one who caused the growth. So neither the one who plants nor he who waters is anything ...” *We're nothing!* “... but only God who gives the growth.”

Paul is saying, I don't want to be your rock star. I want to be forgotten. I'm just a vessel. I'm just a messenger.

Application #1

Could that happen here, now, in our culture? Oh, you bet it does. We try to make rock stars out of Christian leaders. I can't tell you how many times people have come to me and said, “Why don't you lead like this guy or that guy?” “There's a guy in Dallas” or “There's a guy on

the West Coast” or “There’s a guy on the East Coast.” “Man, he leads with so much boldness and confidence and power.” I look him up and I think, *That looks like pride to me.*

If you think I can’t do that, you’re mistaken. I can be that. As a matter of fact, I have a wristband here that says, “What would Jesus do?” on it. But on this side it says, “Don’t be a jerk.” I’m in a recovery group that keeps me from being that kind of leader. I don’t want a following. And some of those people that I’m supposed to be like have lost their jobs in the last few years for being dictators and bullying and being abusive. I don’t want to be that.

How very Corinthian of you to make an idol out of a religious leader.

And then, sometimes around here we’ll have a Bible study writer and curriculum, a Bible study style that people attach to. “I’m a follower of her.” And what it is, is *This is how I like to learn, so everyone should have to learn the way I like to learn.* Very Corinthian of you. Oh yeah, it happens. It happens now. And Paul would say, *Don’t follow a person. Don’t follow maybe even a style of ministry. Follow Christ. Just follow Christ and Him crucified.*

You have one thing in common. Make sure that one thing is Jesus Christ, the Savior, the King, the crucified one.

Paul’s Answer to the Road to Honor

The second thing Paul is going to do—remember, I said he’s going to look at it two different ways—one is that he doesn’t want a following, and the second is that this whole Corinthian value system is evil. You’ve got to abandon their values of wisdom and power. That road to honor is a road to ruin. It’s far from the road to glory, the road to heaven. It’s contrary to everything that we know about God and heaven itself. This road to honor is a dead-end road.

And listen, Paul could have stepped into this. This is what is somewhat unusual to this book. But Paul could have stepped in and come over here to the road of honor and said, *I’m going to be in the fast lane, excuse me. Because I can play this game of yours.*

But I don’t play stupid games, because they have stupid prizes.

But he could have said, *I’m a Roman citizen, I’m a Pharisee of Pharisees. Do you know who personally disciplined me? Probably the most intelligent man in the Roman Empire. And that doesn’t even include my little debate on Mars Hill which people will be studying for the next two thousand years in how to do apologetics. And you know, I’m going to write more New Testament books than anybody else. How am I doing over here on this road to honor?*

Paul won't do that. Paul is going to go over here and talk about the road to glory. And he's actually going to bring up his frailty and his weaknesses just to kind of throw it in their face and say, *I'm not going to play your silly Corinthian value games.*

1 Corinthians 1:17

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

So, look how he celebrates his weaknesses in 1 Corinthians 1:17. And then we'll break down chapter 2. He says, "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom .."--- *that's a value of yours*---"... lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

And then in chapter 2, he says, "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom" *that you guys love so much.* "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 rather, they were a demonstration of the Spirit and the Spirit's power, so now your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but rather, in the power of God."

Paul says, *It was never about me. I wasn't using all this stuff that you value so much—wisdom and power.* Even in his description of Jesus Christ he's talking about how this road to heaven is a Christ crucified. I'll tell you more about that in just a minute. But he's just saying, *Look, Jesus Christ and Him crucified is supposed to be the center of your identity. That's how you define yourself. That's how you evaluate yourself.*

Paul Presents Himself

1 Corinthians 2:1-3

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come ... with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.

Again, let's look in more detail how Paul describes himself in every way he can think of contrary to this road of honor. "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come ... 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."

The value over here? Wisdom. "I know nothing." How about power? He said, "I was weak and in fear and much trembling." Paul is saying, *I'm not getting on that road. It's a dead-end road.* It's a Corinthian road. It's a fleshly road. It's what we go to instinctively and intuitively.

It's the road to glory. And that road is a road of humility and service. It is the road to the cross. And not only does Paul say, *That's the position I'm taking.* When he talks about Jesus Christ, he talks about Him in the same way. He's saying, *Jesus didn't get on your silly road. Jesus Christ is on this road to glory.*

Paul Presents Jesus the Way Jesus Presented Himself

1 Corinthians 2:2

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Look how he describes Christ in chapter 2, verse 2. It's subtle, but it's powerful. "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Jesus Christ and Him crucified—it's one of the only books that he's going to write where he mentions the crucifixion without the resurrection. He's leaving Jesus in the state of crucifixion. And that's for a reason. There's no resurrection here because he's talking about how it's not about power. It's not about wisdom. It's about his willingness to submit.

"Jesus Christ and Him crucified"—first let's look at it --- "Jesus Christ"—that's not a first and last name. It's not like "Matt Cassidy." "Christ" is a title. And mixing those two—Jesus Christ and Him crucified—is mind-blowing, because "Christ" means "Messiah, the anointed one, the promised savior," in a word, "the victor." And so, Paul says, *I preached Jesus, the promised savior, the victor, the anointed one that was coming, the Messiah ... crucified.* That doesn't sound like a winner to me. Right. And the Corinthian minds were like [*explosive noise*]. And we may not fully appreciate that audience. When you're saying that this is the man to follow and Christ crucified—

The Greeks and the Romans all but perfected assassinations or executions. They could do it quickly with an axe to the neck. Boom! They could do it quietly. *Here's some hemlock, we'll check on you tomorrow.* But crucifixion? That costs a lot. It costs time and it costs money. And they didn't do it to just anyone. They saved it for various purposes. And the purpose of crucifixion was to maximize pain and to maximize humiliation. And when they put someone through that, it was for a political reason, generally speaking. And they put a person on a cross, and they said, *That person is a pathetic failure. Learn from this, my fellow Romans.*

Seneca said that any self-respecting man would never allow himself to be crucified, but would instead commit suicide before that event would take place.

And so, Paul doesn't introduce Jesus over here on their road to honor and say, *He was a profoundly wise teacher. He was eloquent in His speech. He was a powerful healer. He raised people from the dead.*

No. He says this: "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Christ crucified. Crucified means that He was a failure, He was crushed, He was shamed, He was humiliated, He was executed by Rome. That's the center of my identity.

This is hard to hear. That's not very Corinthian of Jesus, is it? No. It's contrary to all things intuitive in us.

The world's religions have certain traits in common, but until the gospel of Jesus Christ burst upon the Mediterranean world, no one in the history of human imagination had conceived of such a thing as the worship of a crucified man.

--- Fleming Rutledge

One writer says this: "The world's religions have certain traits in common, but until the gospel of Jesus Christ burst upon the Mediterranean world, no one in the history of human imagination had conceived of such a thing as the worship of a crucified man."

So, here's the point. There is a worldview fork in the road. There's an identity fork in the road. You either travel down this road to honor or you travel down this road to glory. And the road to honor is the way of the Corinthians, the way of the Americans, the Austin way of living and whatever that gets you.

And the road to glory, the road to Christ, is the road to crucifixion. It is a crucified carpenter at the end of that road. And it's a paradigm shift. You have to take one or the other. Christ is King, sitting on a throne. If He's second, He's not even in the game.

Paul is saying that it's a totally different way of keeping score. It's golf, not basketball. It's the lowest score that wins, not the highest score that wins. You're missing it completely.

Jesus is always counterculture, because culture is always Corinthian in some way. We always look for identity is some expression of worldliness or flesh or whatever it might be. This road to glory, the road to heaven, is contrary, because Jesus is of the spirit and we are of the dirt. And no wonder we take the gravel road to destruction.

1 Corinthians 1:20-21, 25

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

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

Jesus' definitions just don't work for a person that's worldly. Look how it's so contrary to what people were expecting in chapter 1, verses 20 through 25. "Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe." Here's a summary statement. "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Jesus didn't radically change and absolutely alter human souls and mankind by bringing a greater wisdom. His wisdom outsmarted our best wise men, and it looks like foolishness.

He didn't come—where's the law?—He didn't come to write another law or even show us how to live the law so much, as He did to pay the bills for the law. That's how you change the world.

Where are the philosophers? Jesus wasn't sent here to be a better Socrates.

And then, finally, it says, "Where's the power?" The political power—you can write all of Jesus' political values on a single postage stamp. That's how little He addressed that issue, because His power was not like the world's power. The road to glory, the road to salvation, led to a crucifixion—a shameful crucifixion.

Application: People of the Cross

And God in His sovereignty planned that Jesus would die such a death, to maximize pain and to maximize humiliation, so that we would, believe it or not, yes, celebrate the cross; that we would be people of the cross. That's what we're called as saints. We're people of the cross. And when we say that we're people of the cross, it's not like we're in our heads thinking, *Jesus died on the cross. Good. Now I don't have to.* That's not how being people of the cross works. Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives within me. And the life that I now live, I live by the power of the Spirit living by faith."

And what he means is, yeah, the road to glory is for the people of the cross, and I've got a cross for me. And that's where I give up my ego and my values and my way of keeping score, and leave it at the foot of that cross so that I can take on heavenly values. That's where I can go to confess my sins—that's weakness; confess my sins—that's weakness; and receive as a benefactor of the glory of Jesus Christ. That's what Paul is saying.

Jesus says, "Look, I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly, and it's not on this road to honor. The life that I have for you, the abundant life, is on this road to glory." And Jesus paved that road. And in the gutters runs His blood. And that road is descending, it is stooping, it is humbling ourselves, it is washing the feet of an enemy that would soon betray you. That road to the cross, that's where you leave at the foot your life, your talents, your ambitions, your hopes, your dreams. And you take on all those things that Christ gives you instead.

Jesus said this. "People of the cross, if you want to be a disciple of mine, you need to deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me." He said, "If you want to keep your life, you're going to lose it. But anybody who loses their life for my sake will save it."

Paul says the path of honor, the Roman path, the Corinthian path, the American path, the Austin path, is short-lived. I mean, if Paul could prophesy, he'd say, *Hey, the Roman road here ... in a few short years the Rhine River is going to freeze. You'll be overrun by barbarians. And you'll be like, Rome, this empire ... They'll be naming dogs after Caesar and salads after Caesar. But that cross that you're ashamed of, on which Christ was crucified? That's going to be on the top of the tallest buildings in many cities for thousands of years. It will be the icon, the logo, the emblem for a stronger power, for a richer sense of wisdom. This is the road to glory. This is the road to take.*

So, what road? Where is your identity? In your looks, in your success, in your intelligence, your income? Be afraid. Whatever you put your identity in that can be taken away, you're going to have to live in fear that it might be lost. Or the road to glory, sealed with a covenant from God that He'll never leave you or forsake you, and you'll live with His values, and it has eternal consequences.

For me, the hardest part of living this road is just remembering that I'm a person of the cross. And whatever you can do to remind yourself that you're a person of the cross, that humbles himself and washes feet and serves others, and has a whole other value system ... whatever you can use to help you remember, let that help you. For me, it's just trying to remember who I belong to, kind of like this silly wristband. Sometimes I carry a cross that I got in Bethlehem. It's made out of olive wood. It's just a token. I carry it with me and then I lose it, and then I have more. I bought a bunch because I lose them. But it just reminds me that, when I'm going to go into work or a meeting, I don't have to be in charge, I don't have to dominate. I can be the person who encourages other people and their ideas or their initiatives. I can go to school, and if I'm a person of the cross, I'm doing my due diligence. I'm studying as hard as I can, I'm learning new methods of studying. I take that test. It doesn't define me. If I make a 100, I'm not more valuable. If I make less than I was expecting, it doesn't make me a failure. Those things are so variable. I am a person of the cross, and I celebrate this: Christ and Him crucified.

And so, I'll do my best to give back to what God has given me, and I'm going to show that off in a test. If you're a person of the cross, you can take that servitude, that idea of humbling yourself instead of exalting yourself, into any relationship you want. Serve your mate, see what happens. Serve your little brother or younger sister. This is really fun, kids, okay, no matter what grade you're in. You do that—care for and serve your younger brother or younger sister—because your parents are not going to know what to do with you. They'll call the counselor, they'll call the pastor, “Something's wrong with my child. What's happened to them?” And you just tell them, “I'm a child of the cross. That's who I am.”

Don't be a Corinthian. Let's not be Corinthians. Let's be followers of Christ and Him crucified ... and resurrected. Christ ... Him crucified and resurrected. When we have that in common, everything else is such a distant second that we can celebrate the differences that we enjoy. We can enjoy those age, race, income differences and all those other things. Vive la différence!

If we can make Christ and Him crucified and resurrected first and foremost, and make it our identity; if we can just hold onto that for, I don't know, 110 minutes while we're in here, it will be famous. If we can hold onto that priority for the next twenty to eighty years, depending on how long you live, the whole church would be the lighthouse she was meant to be. We'd have unity for a common purpose. And the common purpose is a reigning, sovereign king that was crowned as His crucifixion, and will be crowned later upon His return.

Let's make the center of our universe that King. Would you pray with me?

Lord, we'd ask that we would be mesmerized, that we would be obsessive about who You are and the majesty of a king becoming a slave, humbling himself and taking on this form and taking on this cross that is famous for humiliation. And Lord, let that be our worldview and our dynamic and our way of keeping score.

Lord, I'd ask that You would help us be a church that's unified under this glorious truth of Christ crucified and resurrected, so that we might be called Your children; and that identity which cannot be taken away, cannot be stolen, and will never rust, will be what motivates us in making our decisions about what to do with our time, our wealth, our talent, our place in life, our office. Let that be the driver of things in our lives.

And God, here's my prayer, Lord: that You would cause our church and the church in America to be unified around that common truth. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.