

When Division Arises in the Church

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, Watermark. The scripture today comes from 1 Corinthians 1, verses 10-17. Please follow along on your bulletin or on the screen.

Starting from verse 10, we read, 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.

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 one of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Cephas, or I follow Christ.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius.

So that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.

[1 : 1 0] For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel. This is the word of God.

Great. Thanks, Iris. Let's pray together as we come to this passage. Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, as we sang this morning, God, come and be the center.

God, be the center of our church. Be the center of our lives. God, we want the foundation of this church. We want the essence and the center of Watermark to be you, God.

Your word and your gospel. And so I pray as we look at your word and try and make sense of it, won't you speak to us, God? Won't you speak to each one of us? For those that have been at Watermark for many years and for those that maybe it's their first time, God, we pray that you, the living God, will speak to us.

Show us yourself. Reveal more of yourself to us, we pray. In your great and wonderful name. Amen. Amen. I want to start off with a confession.

[2 : 1 7] And I've confessed this sin to some of you before, so some of you may know the story. Our family has been in Watermark or has been in Hong Kong six and a half years.

And we came here six and a half years ago to join Watermark Church, for me to join the start here. And it has been a wonderful six and a half years. It has really been great.

And the very best thing about it has been Watermark Church. This family has been a real family to our little family. And we have loved it. But when we moved to Hong Kong six and a half years ago, I was 33 years old at the time.

Which means I was fairly young to be leading a church. Not young anymore, but once upon a time I was very young. And when I stepped into this role, I guess as senior pastor at Watermark, I was very young.

I was very inexperienced. But I was also very insecure. I didn't really know what I was doing about anything. I didn't know how to preach. I didn't know how to lead. I didn't really know anything.

[3 : 20] And you may question whether I know anything at the moment. That's a conversation we can have later. But at the time, I certainly didn't know anything. And I think in my heart, I was very aware of it. And so I was very insecure.

Each Sunday, I was convinced the only people that were going to be here was the band, the staff, and the elders. Because they kind of had to be here. And I was convinced no one else was going to be here. And so if you've been here for six and a half, seven years, you are amazingly gracious.

But here's the question. What do insecure people do? Insecure people tend to struggle to see the good in others. Because if you see the good in others, then that just exasperates your deficiencies, right?

Insecure people criticize others who see things differently from themselves. Insecure people tend to get into tribes. They find people that think similarly to themselves.

And then they and their tribes criticize others who think differently as a way of boosting their own self-esteem and make themselves think good about themselves. Insecure people keep on telling themselves that they are right.

[4 : 27] They see the truth. And everybody else is wrong. And so in order to feel better about myself and my obvious faults, one of the things I would sometimes find myself doing is I would listen to sermons from other churches and then I would scoff at them.

And I would privately think things like, Oh my goodness, they are not gospel-centered at all. That is not an expositional sermon. They didn't even get to Jesus. And all sorts of other ridiculous things.

Now, it's one thing for someone to do that privately, to listen to something and privately think, Hmm, I'm not so sure if I agree with it. But insecure people don't just like to think it privately.

They've got to tell other people to make themselves look good. And so I would find myself talking about other churches and other pastors. And I would do that in order to boost and bolster my own insecurities and fears.

And so sometimes I would say, you know, That church is not very gospel-centered. That church doesn't preach expositional sermons. And one day I found myself talking to two people saying these very humble words.

[5 : 35] I listened to Pastor So-and-So sermon, and it was one of the worst sermons I've ever listened to. That coming from a 33-year-old self-congratulatory schmuck who didn't actually know anything at all.

And actually, if I'm honest, now in retrospect, Pastor So-and-So is actually a really good man. And he's actually done a great job here in Hong Kong. Now, I'll tell you how the story ends a little bit later.

But, friends, do you know why this, if you're new to Watermark, you might be a bit freaked out and never want to come back. That's okay. But, friends, here's my question. Do you know why there's so much division and conflict in churches?

Do you know why churches, there's fighting and there's disagreements? Why do churches and denominations not get along and churches bad-mouth one another? I think the reason is because fear and insecurity and pride and self-centeredness is such a real part of our human hearts and church leaders as well.

And we find it so much easier to retreat into our own little tribe and to find people that maybe agree with us and we, together, find joy in criticizing the church down the road or the pastor down the road or that group and that people down the road.

[6 : 53] And so that's something of what we see in the book of 1 Corinthians. And so we're going to look at 1 Corinthians. If you're new, we are preaching through this book of the Bible over the next couple of months. And in the city of Corinth, the church there, the church is a small church, maybe 30 or 40 people, but there are factions, there are groups, there are divisions.

There's this group of people and they don't get along with that group of people. And there's lots of division and faction going along in the church. And so the Apostle Paul writes this letter to him and he wants to address it.

And so he does three things. And again, I'm sorry, I don't have slides, but he makes an appeal. Second, he exposes the problem. And then thirdly, he gives a prescription.

He gives a solution, an answer to their problem. So let's look at the first one. He makes an appeal and he appeals for unity and agreement. Look at what he says here in verse 10. He says, 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 more divisions amongst you, but that you be knighted in the same heart and the same judgment.

Okay, so this is Paul's appeal. Now remember, last week he said, he said Jesus is the head of the church. Jesus is the one who's leading the church. Jesus is at work in the church.

[8 : 08] But just because Christ is at work in the church doesn't mean that everybody else doesn't do anything. He says, Christ is at work. He's given you gifts to grow you and sustain you and carry you to the end.

But you've got to also do something. And what do they need to do? They need to be in agreement. They need to come together. They need to put away their factions and mend their splits and deal with the ruptures and be united.

And this is not just a superficial unity like, hey, let's all wear blue clothing or let's all, you know, you like tennis, I like tennis. This is a deep-seated, profound unity.

He says, be united in the same mind, the same judgment. Another translation says, be of the same convictions. In other words, the deep-seated foundation of this church come together and be one.

Now, this is obviously not suggesting that churches should just be uniform, right? We should all just be the same culture. We should all just look, address, and act and talk exactly the same.

[9 : 11] That's not a good idea at all. One of the things we love about Watermark is the diverse cultures and ethnicities and languages and people from all over the place. And one of the things that's beautiful about that is it's a picture of heaven.

Heaven's going to be like that one day. And so diversity is not the issue. Paul's not saying, let's just be uniform. He's saying, in our diversity, let's be united. Let's be of the same heart, the same mind.

And so Paul appeals for unity. But now, why is there division in the church? What's going on here? Well, the problem is pride and selfishness in the people.

Pride and selfishness are leading to division. Look at verse 11 and 12 with me. He says, For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people, Chloe is obviously someone in the church, someone current, that there's quarreling amongst you, my brothers.

Okay? So, it's not just different points of view or different personal preferences. There's antagonism. There's rivalry. The one translation says, there's rivalry amongst you. There's not just different opinions.

[10 : 13] They are competing against each other. They are in opposition. Verse 12. For what I mean is that each one of you says, I follow Paul. I follow Apollos. I follow Cephas.

I follow Christ. So, there's division. There's camps. There's all these little groups that follow different people. But that just seems really strange. I mean, why were they doing that?

I mean, imagine that in Watermark, right? I follow Alan. And I'm Jeremy's man. And I like Neil. He's my guy, right? That would just be weird. So, what's going on here?

Well, remember, the city of Corinth was in Greece. But it was also part of the Roman Empire. So, there's this influx of Greek and Roman cultures. One of the pervading things about Roman culture in that day is the idea of patronage.

Okay? Patronage is when you have a wealthy, sophisticated, maybe upper class person. They're called a patron. And if you unite yourself or attach yourself to that person, you serve them, you vote for them in elections, you give them loyalty.

[11 : 17] You can enter this, what's called a patron-client relationship. And you become the client, they become the patron. And you support them and you're loyal towards them. And they offer you access to privileges.

They give you status in society. You can kind of follow them. You get buried in their family's grave spot. You kind of join their family in a way. And so, in Roman culture, there are all these patrons and all the other people are trying to unite themselves to wealthy, sophisticated, upper class people as a way of elevating their own status.

Elevating their own value and being praiseworthy in society. Becoming more powerful and respected. And that's what seems to be going on here. So, there are all these members in the church and they are acting just like the culture of their day.

And so, one guy says, I follow Paul. He's my patron. He's my guy. And who's Paul? He's the guy who started the church. He's the guy who maybe led many of them to Christ. But others are saying, no, no, I like Apollos.

He's my guy. Well, who's Apollos? Well, Apollos is probably someone who's Greek. And, in the book of Acts, it tells us that he went to Corinth. He spent a lot of time there.

[12 : 29] But the book of Acts also tells us he was a very eloquent speaker. He was a very powerful speaker. He was a natural orator. And if you remember anything about Greek culture, remember Greeks loved philosophy and oratory and public speaking.

And that's why Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Plato and Socrates, all these famous philosophers, they loved public speaking. They loved debate. They loved oratory. And so, these guys, they meet Apollos and he's a public speaker.

He's very good. He's very sophisticated. And they say, Apollos, he's our guy. And they align themselves with him. And then the others, they'll say, no, no, Cephas, he's our guy. Cephas is the Aramaic name for Peter, the disciple of Jesus.

And why did they like him? Well, maybe because he was one of the original 12. As they say, well, you know, Paul wasn't one of the 12. Apollos wasn't one of the 12. But Cephas, he's one of Jesus' disciples. So, he's our guy.

But also, Peter, remember, he was the apostle to the Jews. And Peter, Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. And so, maybe there's some Jews in the congregation. And they get around Cephas, and they go and have lunch at his house.

[13 : 35] And they go and hang out with him. But then the last one's a bit tricky. Because look at what the last one says. Some people say, oh, we follow Jesus. We follow the Christ. And you think, well, that's not a bad thing.

That's surely what we want everyone to say, right? If you've been a watermark, that's what we should all be saying. We follow Christ. Jesus, this is Jesus' church.

What's wrong with saying? We follow Jesus. But the problem is, that actually, they weren't all following Jesus. They weren't at all. The problem is, that they've turned Jesus into their patron.

Their kind of leader, with which to bolster themselves. Jesus had just become, one of many of their patrons, one of their leaders. Just one of a choice, of a whole bunch of people. And so, even this faction, the church, they weren't really following Jesus.

They were just using him, for their own selfish ambition. Their own selfish gain. You see, if they really were following Christ, what would they do? They wouldn't get in a faction, say, we're the Jesus people.

[14 : 39] They would cross over the aisle, to others and say, hey guys, Christ is the center of this church. Let's be united together, around Jesus. But what are they doing? They've aligned themselves, to Jesus, as a way of, growing their own status.

Elevating themselves. Jesus has become, just another patron, not their king, and their master. You see friends, Jesus had become, just another part, of the organizational charge, of this church.

So you've got Peter, and you've got Paul, and you've got Apollos, and you've got Jesus. Just another piece, of the puzzle. And so maybe like us, at Watermark, you might say, okay we've got, we've got mission, and evangelism.

Okay that's one piece, of the pie. And we've got kids, and youth. That's another piece, of the pie. And we've got, discipleship, and CG, and we've got preaching, and we've got community groups, and then we've got, we've got Jesus over here, and we've got, some other thing over here.

And Jesus becomes, just one piece, of the pie. We do many things, as a church. We do social justice, yeah that's important. We look after the poor, and the marginalized, and we want to follow Jesus. He's one of many things, that we do.

[15 : 42] And what Paul, is saying here, is that if Christ, is just one piece, of the puzzle, one slice of the pie, not the center, oh there's trouble. There's going to be division.

Because what happens, when these people say, no no social justice, that's what we've really, got to focus on. And someone else, there's no community groups, that's what we've got, to focus on. Someone else, there's no Bible handling, that's the most important thing.

And Jesus says, actually unless, I'm at the center, empowering, and animating, and renewing, every other section, what you're going to do, is these sections, are going to become, fractures.

They're going to become, a cause for division. They're going to, you're going to fight, against each other. Friends, Jesus had become, just another patron, another one, to align themselves with, to advance their own status, their position, their commercial interests.

But Jesus doesn't want, to be a patron, he wants to be our savior. He wants to be the king. He wants to be the one, that we all, bow down before. Jesus isn't someone, you simply serve, like a patron, and then get something, in return.

[16 : 43] Quid pro quo, I'll give you Jesus, something you give me. Jesus says, I am the king, I am the lord, I am the master, around which, everything else, orientates itself.

Jesus says, this is my church, I purchased her, with my blood. I sanctified them, I made them holy. See friends, what divided these Christians, wasn't, theological conviction, wasn't like, some people said, these guys preach the gospel, these guys do something else.

Sometimes, sometimes as Christians, you might need to divide, along those lines. If somebody is preaching, or teaching something, that is against the bible, or making God out, to do something, that is not, or say something is not, sometimes you might need to say, do you know what, I can't agree with that, and I can't go with you on that.

But that's not the issue here, because Peter, and Paul, and Apollos, and Jesus, all preach the same gospel. They all said, there's one name, under which man can be saved. You can only be saved, by coming to Jesus.

They all agreed, that Christ is our only hope, in life and in death. That only by putting, all of your hope in Christ, can you be saved. They agreed with that. But what divided these people, was the individual factions.

[17 : 59] What divided the Christians, was not doctrinal convictions, but sidelining Jesus, to just one of many good, and important things, rather than being the center, that empowers everything.

Friends, when Christ Jesus, is not Lord of everything, other competing voices, come up, and start dividing, and fighting, over what is the most important thing.

Now, friends, in Hong Kong, we don't have many fights, over church leaders. Fortunately, I think that's a great thing, about Hong Kong. You know, we don't have many people here, saying, are you Baptist, are you Presbyterian? Oh, I can't believe it. Or, are you Tim Keller's guy?

Are you Andy Stanley's guy? And in conflict, we don't have much of that, in Hong Kong. But we do have, other things, that become, that are secondary, that become primary. And so we fight, over things like, political ideology.

We fight, over things like, where do you send, your kids to school? Which company, do you work for? What job, do you have? Parenting methods.

[19 : 02] And we can latch, onto these causes, and these causes, and these names, can become, surrogate patrons. Surrogate saviors, things we put our hope in. And friends, when we put our hope in those things, when we elevate ourselves, using these things, to elevate ourselves, and diminish Christ, conflict ensues.

And so dear friends, pride and selfishness, are insidious problems, because they blind us, to our foolishness, and they separate friends, and they, they separate gospel communities.

And so once again, I confess, I've done that. I've done that. I've left pride, and insecurity, and fear, like something else, become more important to me, than Jesus. Do you know what was more important to me?

It was my own ego. It was my own security. It was my own need, to look good, and feel good about myself, in front of others. When that became more important, to me than Jesus, do you know what I did?

I started alienating others, pointing the fingers at others, criticizing, and making conflict. And so what do these Corinthians need? What did I need?

[20 : 06] What do we need? Well, of the next few weeks, Paul is going to deal, with the division in the church. And he's going to tackle, from a number of different angles. But here, he kind of, zeroes in on the heart of it.

And he, he lays the foundation, for what he's going to, speak about, over the next few weeks. And what Paul does here, is he says, the most important thing, the prescription, the thing that we need, is to keep Christ, at the center, and to be united around Christ.

And there's a reason for this. Because Christ, and the gospel, are the only thing, that can give us, the status, and the security, and the identity, that we really need. You see, when Christ is not center, we look for something else, to give us a status, an identity.

And then we've got to, compete with others. But when Christ is the center, can give me an identity, a status, a security, that allows me, to reach out to others, that disagree with me. To reach across the aisle, and say, hey Oscar, maybe I disagree with you, and some key things.

But you value Christ, I value Christ, we can be united in this. And so Paul reminds them of Christ. And so he gives them a prescription, that Christ stays center. Look at verse 13.

[21 : 11] He says, is Christ divided? In other words, is Christ just a piece of the puzzle? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized, in the name of Paul? I thank God, that I, Paul, baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say, you were baptized in my name.

And then he says, oh wait, by the way, I remember, actually I did baptize, also the household of Stephanas. But beyond that, I can't remember anything. Paul's old, he's lost his memory. Verse 17, for Christ, did not send me, to baptize people, but to preach the gospel.

Not with words, of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ, be emptied, of its power. What's Paul saying here? He's saying, when I came to Corinth, I didn't try and set up a new group.

I did come and say, oh those guys, don't know what they're talking about. Come and follow me, I know what's really going on. Or that church down the road, those Presbyterians, can you believe? No, no, come let's go start our own church.

That's not what I did. What I did was, I came to call all people, Corinthians, Greeks, Romans, Filipinos, Africans, Americans, Australians, whatever you are, black, white, Chinese, all people.

[22 : 25] And I said, if you're a human being, come, let's follow Jesus together. Don't follow me, I'm Paul, I'm nothing, I'm a nobody. Don't follow me, I'm just some idiot from Cape Town.

No, Jesus, he's the one that this church has to be built on. Don't follow Niels, he's a smart guy, he's from Netherlands, this church can't be built on Niels. No, Jesus, that's, that's who we follow.

Friends, Christ is the savior, is the end of patronage and classism and social status. Because Christ alone can give us a status and an identity and a security that melts and dissolves the fractions and the divisions.

One of my heroes is a guy called Charles Spurgeon. He's this very old British guy, he died, I think 1890, somewhere around there, in London.

He was an amazing, amazing preacher. And, he started leading his church when he was 20 years old. And, the church grew rapidly and moved into this new venue called the Surrey Gardens, I think it was called, seated about 5,000 people, eventually outgrew that.

[23 : 36] And so, they built this building called the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, seated probably 7,000 or 8,000 people. And so, Spurgeon's leading this church, 30 years old, you know, like 10,000 people.

And, on the day that they move into their new venue, he preaches a sermon about the centrality of Christ. And, I want to read just a paragraph from his sermon. This is from 1860, somewhere around there.

I was meant to have this on the slide, but I apologize. You're going to have to just listen up. He says, I would propose, ladies and gentlemen, that the subject of the ministry of this house, in other words, this church, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this church will be frequented by worshipers, the subject of the ministry of this house must be the person of Jesus Christ.

I am not ashamed to call myself a Calvinist. I do not hesitate to take the name Baptist. But, if I am asked, what is my creed? I reply, it is this, it is Jesus, Jesus Christ.

My predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left an admirable and excellent heritage in this church. But, the legacy which I hope to leave forever is Christ, Jesus Christ.

[24 : 50] He is the arm and the substance of the gospel. He is himself all theology. He is the incarnation of every precious truth. Prince Spurgeon was right.

As long as this church is frequented by worshipers, may the foundation be Christ and Christ alone. And that is what Paul is saying in Corinthians here. Now, Paul talks about baptism, and in about 45 minutes of time, we are going to baptize a couple of people, Jeremy and Jacka, and Michael and Hannah.

Why do we do that? Why do we baptize people? What does it mean? Well, Niels is going to do the baptisms, and you'll notice, what he's not going to say is, we baptize you in the name of Niels.

He's not going to say, we baptize you in the name of Watermark Church. If you've been baptized when you joined Watermark, maybe at your previous church, and you moved to Hong Kong, we don't re-baptize you because you must be baptized in our name.

No, you were baptized in Christ's name, that's good enough. What does baptism mean? When Niels is baptized later, he's going to say something along these lines. He's going to say, because of your faith in Christ, because you've repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus, we now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[26 : 04] And baptism is this, it's this wonderful picture of people saying, my old life that I lived for myself, for status and identity and security and elevate myself, now that I've been united to Christ, I am united in His death.

They go into the water, it's like I'm buried, my old life is dead, it's gone, it's buried, and I've been united with Christ in His resurrection. I'm a new person, and that new person is centered on Christ.

United in His death, united in His resurrection, now I get to live for Jesus. Friends, Tim Keller, Tyler Statton, John Markoma, John Piper, Wong Yi, or maybe, let's say, Warren Buffett, Jack Ma, Stephen Curry, great men, and great women of God, some of them, maybe not all of them.

Friends, they, some of them aren't Christians, okay, your favorite business person, whoever your hero is, they didn't go to the cross for you, they didn't die for you, you can't be baptized in their name.

You can't align yourself to them, and be dead to sin, and raised to Christ. You can't unite yourself to them, and you hope. Friends, Christ, Christ, alone, Christ can do that, and He does do that, if we will receive Him, if we will bank our lives in Him.

[27 : 24] Friends, if you'll receive Him as your Lord, and master, if you'll surrender to Him, Christ will change you. There's a power, verse 17 speaks about, the cross has a power, there's a power in believing in Christ, that will change your life.

There's a power that will give you a new identity, a new status, a new security. Jesus will give you a peace, that nothing in this world can give. Jesus will give you a heart rest, that nothing in this world will give.

Jesus will give you an identity, that will allow you to cross over the aisle, to somebody else that's different from you, and differs from you, and will allow you to say, we can still be friends. Even though I differ with you, and I disagree, and even though we're so radically different, if you want to follow Jesus, now follow Jesus, we can do that together.

Friends, I would propose that the subject of this church, as long as this church will stand, will not even be something like the gospel coalition, or gospel centered, it'll be Jesus, Jesus alone.

So, how should we respond? Well, I've got two questions for us. First one is this, is Christ Jesus precious to us this morning? That's the question. Is Christ Jesus precious to us?

[28 : 34] And you can answer that in two ways. Individually, is Christ precious to me, and to us as a church, is Christ Jesus precious to us? In fact, is he the most precious thing?

Because if Jesus is secondary, or tertiary in our lives, something else will be primary, and that thing will cause division, and conflict, and fighting. And when somebody challenges that thing, the thing that's primary, oh, factions and division will arise.

Friends, whatever is more precious to us than Jesus, will end up dividing us. Here's the second question. Is there anybody in Christ's body, that we are tempted to look down upon, or separate from, or judge?

Is there anybody else in Christ's body, either in this church, or maybe a church down the road, that we're tempted to judge, or look down upon, or divide ourselves around, or tempted to separate from?

Friends, remember, that person is a sinner saved by grace. And so are you, so am I. We're sinners saved by grace. And therefore, we can meet each other across the hour.

[29 : 40] I began the sermon telling a story, about a time when my own insecurity, and pride, I was going around judging, all sorts of people, including other pastors, and other church leaders, speaking about some of them, behind their backs.

I tell you that story, with deep shame. It's not a story of pride at all. How did God change me? Well, He's still changing me, but two things happen in particular. The one is, Claire preached the gospel to me.

One day, we were going for a walk. We were on the morning trail, at the peak, towards the peak. And I was feeling very insecure, and Claire said to me, you know, Kevin, you're the leader of Watermark Church, not because you earned it, or because you deserve it, or because you're good, or anything inside of you.

Because God, by His grace, chose you. And that's the foundation. Do you see how that's the gospel? Friends, how are we saved? If you're a Christian, it's not because you have anything you've done, or deserved, or achieved, or good works in your heart.

It's because God, by His grace, somewhere in history, chose you. And so Claire preached, the same gospel that saved me, she preached it, and applied it to the heart, my calling. She said, yeah, you maybe aren't good.

[30 : 50] Maybe you suck, and maybe you're not qualified. But God, in His grace, has chosen you. And so be secure in that. She preached the gospel to my heart. The second thing is, one night, around that time, I was reading a book called, The Reformed Pastor, by Richard Baxter.

It was written in 1656, almost 400 years ago. And in this book, Richard Baxter, he says, some ministers are so proud, and so self-righteous, that they talk about other pastors, and ministers behind their backs.

And as I read that, it was like someone shot an arrow, through my heart. And I remember lying in bed, it was about 11 o'clock at night, and I sobbed, and I sobbed, and I sobbed. And I said, God, you've got to change me.

And the next day, I phoned this one pastor, and I said, we need to have lunch. And I took him to lunch, and I confessed my sin to him, and I said, I am so sorry for what I've done. This is how I've spoken about you.

Please forgive me. And today, that guy and I are friends. We buy books for each other, and we have lunch together, and we're friends. Friends, that's what the gospel does.

[31 : 55] The gospel can take insecure, idiots like me, and can start to change us, can start to give us a security, an identity, that can melt the division, and the conflict in our hearts, and can change us, and make us more like Christ.

But what do we need to do? We need to keep Christ at the center. We need to keep Jesus, first and foremost. We need to come surrender to him. We need, as we sang earlier, Jesus, may your name be louder.

Jesus, be the center, not only of our church, but of our lives. Let's pray together. Father God, passages like this, they expose our sin.

They expose what's really going in our hearts. God, and it's easy for us to look at the Corinthians, and scoff at them, and ridicule them. God, if we have the eyes to see it, there's a lot more of the Corinthians inside of us, than we like to admit.

And so, holy and sovereign God, the one who dwells in light eternal, and one who's inapproachable in your glory, God, have mercy on us.

[33 : 08] Have mercy on me. God, come and heal the divisions. Lord, if in our church, if in our hearts, there is even a smidgen, a God of pride, and self-righteousness, that causes us to look at others, with any disdain, oh God, I pray, come and forgive us, and then heal us, and then change us.

Jesus, we want to be like you. We want the grace of God, that has changed us. We want to be dispensers of that grace to others. God, I pray, come and be the center of our church.

Jesus, be the center. In your name I pray. Amen.