

Peace and Love in Jesus



SABBATH—JULY 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:12–17; 1 Corinthians 3:1–4; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; Colossians 1:24.

MEMORY VERSE: “My Christian friends, I tell you this with the authority [in the name] of our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Please agree with each other. Do not become separate groups. Be united [joined together as one] and think about things in the same way’ ” (1 Corinthians 1:10, EASY).



Jesus will help us agree with each other and work together.

IF YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WILD ANIMALS, you know that some animals live in herds or groups. These groups can be big or small. Wolves, dolphins and other sea animals, and army ants all stick together. Chimpanzees have close relationships, too. Some chimpanzees live together in groups of 15 to 150 chimps. Their relationships are not always peaceful. Sometimes the chimps fight each other.

Humans are much the same. They most often live in groups. Sometimes members of these groups fight each other. The same thing happens in our churches. Worse, sometimes one church group doesn't get along with another group.

Did you ever see that happen in your church?

If yes, you can understand Paul's troubles in Corinth. This week, we will look at 1 Corinthians 1–4. In these chapters, Paul talks about the problem of fighting in the church. He will show us the answer to solving our fights: we must have peace and love in Jesus. Jesus will help us agree with each other and work together.

SEPARATION IN THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 1:12–17)

Paul gave the Corinthians this advice: “ ‘Please agree [cooperate] with each other. Do not become separate groups. Be united [joined together as one] and think about things in the same way’ ” (1 Corinthians 1:10, EASY). Paul talks about the idea of working together in peace in 1 Corinthians 1–4. This topic connects all parts of Paul’s letter together.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:12–17. How do these verses help us understand why we should not say we are the followers of a church leader? How does Paul solve this problem?

Paul uses strong words to talk about the fighting in the church at Corinth. Paul uses the Greek words ‘schisma,’ which means ‘separation’ (1 Corinthians 1:10), and ‘eris,’ which means ‘arguing’ (1 Corinthians 1:11). The Greek word ‘schisma’ is used elsewhere in the New Testament to talk about the different views that cause separation in the church. New Testament writers often include the Greek word ‘eris’ (‘arguing’) in their lists of bad behavior. Arguing is something that Christians should not do.

Read the lists of sins in Romans 1:29; Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 12:20; and Galatians 5:20. What other sins do you see in these lists, along with ‘eris’ (‘arguing,’ ‘fighting’)? What do these lists show us about how bad arguing and fighting are?

Some church members got into fights. Then they went to the judges in the courts of law to solve their problems (1 Corinthians 6:1–3). Paul wrote to the church: “I say this so that you will feel ashamed. There is surely [for sure] a wise person in your group who could decide quarrels between yourselves” (1 Corinthians 6:5, EASY). Worse, members didn’t stop fighting before they celebrated the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17–22).

The fighting in the church worries and frightens Paul. So, the first thing he talks about in his letter to the Corinthians is the need for working together in peace.

Read again 1 Corinthians 1:12–17. Then think about how these verses help us understand why groups that cause separation put the church in danger. What can your church do to avoid this problem?



Members didn’t stop fighting before they celebrated the Lord’s Supper.

FOLLOW JESUS, AND NOT HUMAN LEADERS (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10. What do you think Paul meant when he wrote, “Be united [joined together as one] and think about things in the same way” (EASY).

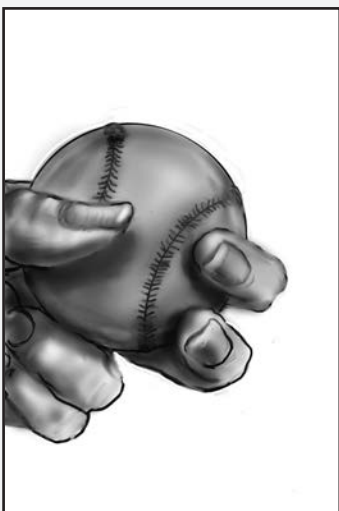
When we fight and separate, we reject Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:10). God “chose you to be joined together with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9, NLV). Jesus is our Lord. He is the most important part of our life. So, then, what is the answer to these questions Paul asks: “Does Christ take sides [does Jesus divide His church? Does Jesus cause separation]? Did Paul die on the cross for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:13, Nlrv)? The answer to each question is “No!” We were baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19, WE).

Paul says, “All of you together are Christ’s body. And **each of you** is a part of that body” (1 Corinthians 12:27, EASY, boldface added). The body has many parts. Each part has a job to do to make the body work. At the same time, all the parts make one body. This symbol helps us understand that Paul wants peace and agreement, and not for everyone in the church to be the exact same.

Another important idea for Paul is the teaching that Jesus is our Lord. Paul talks about this idea again and again. We see it in the opening of his letter (1 Corinthians 1:2, 7, 8, 9, 10). So, before Paul talks about the problems with separation and following human leaders, he talks about Jesus. Paul wants us to remember everything that Jesus as our Lord gives to us. The church doesn’t follow human leaders. We follow Jesus.

Look at Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 1:10. The word written as “united [joined together as one]” comes from the Greek word ‘katartizō.’ ‘Katartizō’ means that something is made new. When church members follow human leaders, relationships in the church must be healed and made new. Only Jesus can make that happen. He helps us die to self. Then we can work together in peace in the church.

In the past few years, many Seventh-day Adventists started small-group Bible studies. How is a small group different from a group that makes a human leader more important than God? How can we be careful that our small groups don’t do that?



The body has many parts. Each part has a job to do to make the body work.

WISDOM AND GROWTH (1 Corinthians 3:1–4)

How does separation in the church start? Separation starts when we praise human leaders too much. We make these leaders more important than they really are. Worse, we make them more important in our lives than God. This habit is not good for the church's spiritual health.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1–4. How does Paul talk about the spiritual growth of the church members at Corinth?

Spiritual growth helps Christians to respect God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6, 7). The Holy Spirit teaches us to understand God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:13). God's wisdom is different from human wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6; 1 Corinthians 2:13). God shows us His wisdom in the cross of Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:1–4). Paul wants the church to work together in peace (1 Corinthians 3:1–17). But first, he wants his readers to understand their need for God's wisdom and growth in Jesus.

Wise Christians are spiritual people. They do not live for the pleasures of this life. They are not the same as newborn babies (1 Corinthians 3:1). Wise Christians compare spiritual things with the Bible. That's because "only God's Spirit can explain them [the message that comes from God] to people" (1 Corinthians 2:13, 14, EASY). Wise Christians need spiritual "food" and not "milk" (1 Corinthians 3:2; compare with Hebrews 5:12). This spiritual food is a symbol for deep Bible truth. The Christian "who lives on milk is still [continues to be] a baby. He knows nothing about right teaching [Bible truth]. But solid food is for those who are grown up. They are mature [wise; grown up] enough to know the difference [to tell them apart] between good and evil" (Hebrews 5:13, 14, ICB). Wise Christians don't say, "Paul is my leader" Or, "Apollos is my leader" (1 Corinthians 3:4, EASY).

We are all God's workers (1 Corinthians 3:9). We, as a church, are the same as God's field, building, and temple (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16, 17). We all belong to God because of Jesus (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Did you praise or follow someone in the past who later disappointed or hurt you? What lesson did this experience teach you?



We, as a church, are the same as God's field, building, and temple (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16, 17).

SERVING AS JESUS SERVED (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2)

In 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2, Paul tells us how we should think about leaders in the church. What is Paul’s advice?

In 1 Corinthians 3:1–4, Paul says that separation happens in the church when members aren’t growing in Jesus. Before Paul talks about this topic, he first says, “But we think about these things in the same way that Christ [the Savior] thinks” (1 Corinthians 2:16, EASY). Living the way Jesus thought and lived is not always easy, right? In the time of ancient Greece and Rome, leaders and thinkers fought each other for control and power. The church at Corinth wanted the people in their city to accept them. So, they did the things that the Corinthian people liked and praised. The church today may be in danger of doing the same thing.



When we serve people as Jesus served them, we become “Christ’s [the Savior’s] servants” (1 Corinthians 4:1, EASY).

Read Philippians 2:5–8. How does this verse help us understand what it means to “think . . . in the same way that Christ [the Savior] thought” (1 Corinthians 2:16, EASY)?

Separation also was happening in the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:1–4). But maybe the separations at Philippi were not as bad. Philippians 2:1–8 teaches us that we must serve the way Jesus served. How do we do that? We must die to self. We must stop being selfish. We must live to bless people more than ourselves. Jesus did that.

When we serve people as Jesus served them, we become “Christ’s [the Savior’s] servants” (1 Corinthians 4:1, EASY). The words “Christ’s servants” help us understand the idea we serve Jesus as His assistants or helpers. We will have the correct view about our leaders when we understand Jesus’ example of leadership. The servants of Jesus are also managers for Him (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2). What is a manager? A manager takes care of the property that belongs to someone else. Everything we own belongs to Jesus.

Pray about the message in Philippians 2:5–8. What do these verses tell us about God’s love for us? Why must we die to self? How will that help us show God’s love to other people?

A LIFE THAT SHOWS THE CROSS (2 Corinthians 11:23–28)

We must not worship our human leaders. But we should support them. Let's be thankful for our leaders. Help them lead out in church work. God chooses people to do His work on this earth. We should respect good church leaders whose lives are examples of Jesus and the Cross.

Only Jesus can help someone become a good leader. The Cross helps leaders die to self. Then they won't try to control other people. Good leaders in the church praise God for all their success. When Jesus worked on this earth, He gave all the praise for His success to God (John 17:4).

Paul tells us that our work for God must start with the Cross. The Cross shows us God's wisdom and power to save. At the same time, the Cross shows us that human wisdom is weak and silly. In 1 Corinthians 4:1–13, Paul talks about leadership and the Cross. First, God decides what the rules are for good leadership (1 Corinthians 4:1–5). Second, Paul says that suffering is part of any work we do for God (1 Corinthians 4:9, 11–13). Let's talk a bit more about this second idea.

What does it mean to suffer for Jesus? Read 2 Corinthians 11:23–28 and Colossians 1:24 for the answer.

Christian leaders must follow Jesus. They must be willing to suffer for their brothers and sisters as Jesus did. Leaders must be willing to die for Jesus as they work for Him. Paul says that he and Apollos are "like [the same as] men sentenced to die" (1 Corinthians 4:9, ICB). Paul adds, "We continue to be hungry and thirsty. Our clothes have become old. Sometimes people hit us for no reason. We do not have our own homes" (1 Corinthians 4:11, EASY). Paul and Apollos also were hurt, attacked, and insulted. People behaved as if Paul and Apollos were the same as "garbage. We are [the same as] everybody's trash, right up to this moment" (1 Corinthians 4:13, NIV; also read verse 12). Paul also says the Corinthians are rich, wise, important, and the same as kings. Why does Paul say these things? He wants to show us that the Corinthians are filled with pride. Pride is not part of real Christian leadership. Pride is the cause of all separation in the church (1 Corinthians 4:6).

How much did you suffer for Jesus in the past? What about now? What does your answer teach you about yourself?



Christian leaders must follow Jesus. They must be willing to suffer for their brothers and sisters, as Jesus did.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Training of the Twelve,” pages 17–24, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“When we work together in peace in the church, we show everyone on earth that we are God’s chosen people. We show that we have the truth. Our working together in peace confuses and upsets the enemy. Satan does everything he can to destroy our peace and love in the church. When God’s people believe the truth and live it, they become powerful. Then their lives can change the lives of other people for the better.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 327, adapted.

“God wants His people to be in perfect peace and love. His people will agree about Bible truth. Jesus died to make us ‘free from all evil. He wanted to make us pure [clean and holy]. He wanted us to be his very own people. He wanted us to desire [want] to do what is good’ [Titus 2:14, NIV]. Jesus wants to remove the spirit of fighting from the church. Then the church can grow and become strong. Then we can do God’s work without destroying each other. God wants all His people to work together in peace and love. Jesus prayed before He died on the cross. He prayed that His followers would be joined together as one, just as He was joined as one with His father. Then everyone on earth will believe that God sent Jesus. Jesus’ prayer is wonderful and touches our hearts. His prayer is also for us today: ‘I do not ask this for these people only; I ask it also for the people who will believe in me when they hear what these people say’ [John 17:20, WE].”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 4, page 17, adapted.



“Jesus prayed that His followers would be joined together as one, just as He was joined as one with His father.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① At the end of Jesus’ work on earth, He prayed for His followers to work together in peace (John 17:21–23). Why is this peace in our hearts powerful proof that God sent Jesus to save sinners? Why is fighting a problem for the work God gave the church to do?
- ② Read 1 Corinthians 4:9–13. What do these verses say about God’s chosen leaders? How are these leaders different from the leaders we see today?
- ③ In 1 Corinthians 4:16, Paul tells the Corinthians to copy him. What does Paul mean? How is copying a leader different from praising a leader too much?

TWO PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

When Dante Hermann grew up, he wanted to be very rich or to be a tattoo artist. People said, “If you want to be rich, you must work hard.”

Dante said, “No, I can get rich without working.”

Dante needed a miracle to make his plan happen.

Dante was a miracle child. His mother tried for years to have a baby. Finally, the doctors told her to give up. Then Dante was born. But he was a very sick baby. The doctors said he needed to move to a tropical place, or he would die. So, his parents left their home in Germany to live in the Canary Islands.

At the age of 16, Dante wasn't rich or a tattoo artist. Dante caused his teachers a lot of problems in class. So, his teachers told him to drop out of high school to work as a handyman. But the work was hard. He didn't earn much money. So, Dante started to sell drugs. A year later, he made a deal with the devil. Dante sold his soul to Satan for drugs, wild living, and rock 'n' roll. Dante got his hand tattooed as proof of his deal with Satan.

For a while, Dante felt happy. He wasn't super rich. But he had all the money and fun he could wish for. So why did he feel empty inside? He saw that his drugs were destroying lives. A voice in his heart said, “Do you think it's OK to get rich from destroying people's lives?”

Then Dante got into trouble with the police. To escape, he went to Germany. Life wasn't better in Germany. So, Dante went back to the Canary Islands seven years later, when he was 25. Dante quit drugs. A friend taught him how to be a tattoo artist. Dante was happy to be doing one of the things he planned in life. He earned a lot of money. But he wasn't super rich.

Then Dante's dad went to court. A company that made drinks was using a brand name that Dante's dad owned. But the company was using it without permission from Dante's dad. So, Dante's dad was taking the company to court. Dante's dad offered to give his son 10% of any money he got if Dante helped him win in court.

At the same time, a friend gave Dante a Bible. Dante started to read it. He read, “The blessing of the LORD brings wealth [makes a person rich]. And it [the blessing] comes without painful work” (Proverbs 10:22, NIV).

Dante thought, “If I give God my heart, He will bless me and make me rich.” He decided to give his heart to Jesus.

Today, Dante is a pastor in Germany. He is rich. But not because he has a lot of money. He said, “When I was a tattoo artist, my heart was empty. I thought if I were rich, I would be happy. But all I needed was Jesus.”

INSIDE *Story*



Dante heard a voice in his heart say, “Do you think it's OK to get rich from destroying people's lives?”