**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 1-8-2023
Follow THE Leader**

Having four daughters, over the years we’ve been blessed to spend a significant amount of time at parks and playgrounds. Maybe you can identify with me here, either from childhood or perhaps as a parent.

Sometimes the playgrounds and parks would serve as a break from a long drive. At other times, we would stop at one when we had some time to kill between activities. And at other times, the park and playground was the outing.

And one of the fascinating things for me is just seeing how others at these playgrounds would interact with my daughters. There have been multiple times when younger children especially would seem to just latch on to one or more of our daughters and follow them around. It was a bit like the Pied Piper, if you’re familiar with that story.

And because of these interactions, sometimes it wasn’t always easy for us to leave those playgrounds. There would be some sadness from these followers. It was like a close friend was moving away, even though typically no one even knew each other’s name.

These encounters remind me that all people are followers in some way or another. While I also think that we are also all called to be leaders in some way, I truly believe that we are also wired by God to be followers as well.

We see this tendency lived out in so many ways. Sometimes it is in following certain people or schools or teams or musicians. We may also follow certain news networks that we may prefer. My wife Kara has a favorite meteorologist that she prefers following. And none of these things are wrong in and of themselves.

But taken to the extreme, of course, all these things can become unhealthy.

And this leads to our first example of something that made the Corinthians Church a church gone wild. This was a church that was becoming more focused on the messengers than on the message. It was more focused on the preachers than on the One who was being preached about. They were losing their single-minded focus on Jesus Himself. And it was creating divisions within the church.

Now, it is very helpful to understand the general culture of the city of Corinth in regards to this. For Corinth, like many of the cities in and around Greece, there was a deep fascination with philosophy. In fact, there were many stoic philosophers that went around and made a good career out of by public speaking. They would speak with an eloquence that made them very captivating. They were charismatic in the sense that they spoke in a way that people were just drawn to their words.

And what become common in Corinth was that as these philosophers would become more popular, people would identity themselves with a particular philosopher. And they did this not just because they liked what they heard from them, but they felt like their own status would be raised up by identifying with them.

Again, think about Paul arriving into Corinth and beginning to preach. To the Corinthians, Paul would have been seen as another one of those philosophers. Paul wanted to make doubly sure that he was not to be understood as just another Stoic philosopher by doing something while in Corinth those 18 months. He didn’t receive any money from those that liked his teaching. Instead, he worked as a tent maker to provide for his needs.

Clearly, Paul was not interested in making a name for himself in Corinth, but instead, making Christ’s Name known and loved there.

And between the time when Paul was there in Corinth and when Paul wrote his first letter to the Christians in Corinthians, another gifted Christian preacher had come to the city. A man named Apollos. It is possible that Peter made his way through Corinth at some point, based on what Paul states in places in his letter to them.

And people were quickly becoming divided on which speaker or preaching they liked the best. Were they Paul people or all about Apollo or were they disciples of Cephes, another name for Simon Peter?

This type of mindset was understandably very concerning to Paul. Let us turn to see what Paul has to say to this. We actually pick up right where we left off last Sunday. We will be hearing from 1 Corinthians 1:10-25

**10I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+1%3A10-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28374a)**] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. 11My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+1%3A10-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28376b)**]”; still another, “I follow Christ.”**

**13Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16(Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.**

**18For 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. 19For it is written:**

**“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
    the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+1%3A10-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28383c)**]**

**20Where 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? 21For 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. 22Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.**

In this powerful response to the first of several concerns within the church on Corinth, Paul tackles this issue of who is the leader of the church head-on.

The one and only head of the church is Jesus Christ. **Jesus is Lord is likely the oldest of the Christian creeds** and it is a reminder that it is Jesus, and not the Roman Caesar, that is Lord. Jesus is the true Emperor of the world.

Apparently, there have been people from Chloe’s household, which were part of the church there in Corinth, that had informed Paul that many of the Corinthians have fallen into the trap of focusing on which of Christ’s servants more than Christ Himself.

But Christ is not divided. Jesus alone is the One who was crucified for the sins of the world. Christ alone took humanity’s place. It wasn’t Paul or Apollos or Cephes (another name for Peter) – it was Jesus.

A couple of chapters later in 1 Corinthains, Paul expounds on this a bit more.

He states, **What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.**

So again, Paul wants to make sure that the Corinthains understand very clearly that Jesus alone is Lord of His Church and God alone is to receive the glory. He alone saves and He alone enables people to grow.

Paul is not looking to gain followers. This isn’t Twitter. Paul is merely seeking to point people to following Jesus.

Elsewhere, Paul does say “Follow me as I follow Christ.” But Paul is not trying to point people to Himself, but only to Christ.

**Paul goes on to speak about the philosophies of this age and how they seek to sound really wise. They seek to look impressive and eloquent.**

But the saving message of Jesus is not about eloquence and sounding really wise and impressive. Instead, the message is about the simple but profound truth that Jesus was crucified for all of us. This message would sound like foolishness to many of the Corinthian people. It appears weak and powerless.

But it is this message that has the power to save. And it is because it is true. Jesus suffered and died on a cross for us all. And He rose from the dead on the third day.

Paul is telling the Christians of Corinth that they needed to look like fools for Jesus. In a culture where status and looking wise was considered to be so important, Paul was saying that to follow Jesus, you need to be willing to lay down your reputation. For in the end, their reputations were not important. What was important was their undivided allegiance to Christ so much that they must be willing to look like fools as his witnesses in the world. This is just so powerful!

So friends, as we consider Paul’s words for our lives today, what is the big takeaway?

**And I believe that it is simply this. We are to remember that while God has many servant leaders in His Church, there is only One King of the Church and His Name is Jesus Christ.**

I don’t want to make followers of me at Chestnut Grove and in this community. I want to make followers of Jesus Christ. I want people to be excited about being a part of this church community, not because of me, but because the simple but profound truth of Jesus Christ crucified and risen is taught and preached.

And this is what all of us are called to do as Christians. We are not called to generate followers of us, but of Jesus. Our role is to be pointing to and reflecting on the One Lord and Leader of all – Jesus Christ.

Our Church’s Leadership Team is now beginning the process of determining how we can best follow Jesus and best be that light on a hill sharing the love of Jesus Christ going forward. Is it to align with the Global Methodist Church or another denomination or to be independent? We invite your prayers for clarity and wisdom. But no matter what is recommended to the congregation in the coming months, I assure you that everyone on the leadership team is seeking to make sure that Jesus is the One that we follow as Lord.

I truly believe that one of the positives of connecting to the Global Methodist Church is I strongly believe that whom God will raise up in this new but historic denomination will not be interested in pointing people to themselves, but instead would be focused on pointing people to Christ – the One Leader and Lord of us all.

Brothers and Sisters, together we are God’s field and God’s building. Together, our Triune God is growing us up in and through Jesus Christ. Together, we will follow our Lord and Leader – Jesus Christ. And together, may we give God alone all the glory, honor, and praise. Amen.

Resources:

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

# <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UV5OUGG3Bwo> 1 and 2 Corinthians Historical Background - Part 1