A Call To Unity
1 Cor 1:10-17
SS Lesson for 06/29/2014

Devotional Scripture: Eph 4:3-16

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND APPROACH TO LESSON
Key Verse: 1 Cor 1:10
Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary
Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator
Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

THE APPEAL FOR UNITY (1 COR 1:10)
UNITY - WHAT IS IT
Definitions
From Holman Bible Dictionary
From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary
From The New Unger's Bible Dictionary
From Holman Bible Dictionary
Appeal in the Name of Jesus (10)
Appeal in the Name of Jesus because there is a blessing for the person who comes in it (Matt 21:9)
Appeal in the Name of Jesus because it cancels condemnation (John 3:18)
Appeal in the Name of Jesus because there is power promised (1 Cor 5:4)
Appeal in the Name of Jesus because justification comes through it (1 Cor 6:11)
Appeal in the Name of Jesus because we should do all things in the Name of Jesus (Col 3:17)
Appeal in the Name of Jesus because we are commanded to believe in it (1 John 3:23)

Appeal for no divisions (10)
The Church and divisions (from Barnes Notes)
No divisions because they bring judgments (1 Cor 6:4)
No divisions because they cause harm (1 Cor 11:17-18)
No divisions because they will eventually cause destruction if not resolved (Gal 5:14-16)
No divisions because they come from the sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21)
No divisions because they come from worldly wisdom (James 3:13-17)

Appeal for the unity of minds (10)
Unity of the mind through the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:5-6)
Unity of the mind through being firm in one spirit (Phil 1:27)
Unity of the mind through being like-mindedness (Phil 2:2)
Unity of the mind through the brotherhood of believers (Ps 133:1)

THE ARGUMENT FOR UNITY (1 COR 1:11-16)
Need unity because of contentions (11)
Contentions through mistreating and hurting a fellow saint (Ps 55:12-14)
Contentions through acting out of the "old sinful nature" (Col 3:9-11)
Contentions through participating in quarrels and arguments with saints (Genesis 13:7)
Commentary from the Life Application Notes
Contentions through having a lack of love (Galatians 5:14)
Commentary from Life Application Notes

Need unity because of different leaders (12-13)
Different leaders who seek to please those who are driven by their own desires (2 Tim 4:3-4)
Different leaders who maybe after their own dishonest gain (Titus 1:10-11)
Different leaders who maybe false prophets (2 Peter 2:1-3)
Different leaders who may appeal to lustful desires (2 Peter 2:18-19)

Need unity because of different baptisms (14-16)
- A baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-16)
- A baptism into Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-4)
- A baptism of repentance (1 Cor 10:2)
- A baptism into the body of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12:13)
- A baptism of fire (Matt 3:11)

Unity through the Gospel (1 Cor 1:17)
- The Gospel leads to unity through obedience to God (Acts 5:29)
- The Gospel leads to unity through having the same goal to please God (2 Cor 5:9-10)
- The Gospel leads to unity through hearts that have been tested by God (1 Thess 2:4)
- The Gospel leads to unity because it teaches the way of God in accordance with truth (Matt 22:16)
- The Gospel leads to unity because it comes with the Holy Spirit’s power (1 Cor 2:4)

Unity through wisdom (17)
- Wisdom that makes God’s way known to man (Isa 42:16)
- Wisdom that displays the glory of God (2 Cor 4:6)
- Wisdom that allows man to know God better (Eph 1:17-18)
- Wisdom that teaches unity through humility (James 3:13)
- Wisdom that comes through guidance from Jesus into a spirit of unity (Rom 15:5-6)

Unity through what Jesus did on the cross (17)
- What Jesus did on the cross allows Christians to show the world that God sent Jesus (John 17:20-23)
- What Jesus did on the cross allows unity because the Holy Spirit provides the power (Eph 4:3)
- What Jesus did on the cross allows unity because unity in prayer produces power (Acts 4:24,31-32)
- What Jesus did on the cross allows unity because in Jesus all are one (Gal 3:28)
- What Jesus did on the cross allows unity because it is commanded (1 Cor 1:10)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR (DATED 06/04/06)

PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR
Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson examines Paul's plea to the Church for A Call to Unity. The study's aim is to understand that unity is essential to Christian life and witness. The study's application is to see ourselves as one with all people who own Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. (From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary).

Key Verse: 1 Cor 1:10

10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Dissension in their church was the first problem openly addressed by Paul. Paul appealed to brothers, not to adversaries, in the most authoritative fashion, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the 10th reference to Christ in the first 10 verses, leaving no doubt as to the One Paul believed should be the source and focus of Corinthian unity. His appeal was for harmony, not the elimination of diversity. He desired a unity of all the parts, like a quilt of various colors and patterns blended together in a harmonious whole. Instead of this unity, however, the fabric was coming apart at the seams, or so Chloe’s servants said. While the divisions were certainly real, it is possible, on the basis of Paul’s remark in 4:6, that he made adaptations with regard to party heads so that the names cited—Paul, Apollos, Cephas—were illustrative, in order to avoid worsening an already deplorable situation. The three questions in this verse were rhetorical and expected a definite no. The universal body of Christ is not divided, and neither should its local expression be. No man won salvation for the Corinthians, nor did any of them owe their allegiance to anybody except Christ. Paul’s imitation of Christ apparently touched every aspect of his ministry. According to John 4:2, Jesus did not baptize, but left it to His disciples. This was usually Paul’s practice too. Could Paul then have believed baptism was necessary for salvation? Such is impossible (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15; 9:1, 22; 15:1-2). Not that baptism is pointless. It was commanded by Christ (Matt. 28:19) and practiced by the early church (Acts 2:41), which makes it, with the Lord’s Supper, an ordinance of the church. But it is what an ordinance gives testimony to, not what it effects, that is more important. Paul’s primary charge was to preach the gospel (9:16) not with words of human wisdom. Brilliantly persuasive eloquence may win a person’s mind but not his heart, whereas the unadorned words of the gospel, though seemingly foolish by human standards, are made effective by the Spirit of God (2:4-5).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

We have in this passage a powerful recipe for church unity among the community of believers. And we need this! Hardly a day goes by that I fail to hear about another church problem, more discord and division, pastors resigning, boards splitting, and churches being unable to focus on their mission because they are caught up in internal tension and turmoil. Brothers and sisters, this should not be! It is clear what God wants from the community of believers. First, He wants our public statements to be in agreement: "Ye all speak the same thing." It does not help anything for every person to think that his opinion is the only thing that matters. Let us try to find points of agreement and maintain a common and cooperative mind-set. A simple affirmation of a church decision can often do more good than the expression of a hundred opinions. Second, God wants us to avoid "divisions." This term refers to tears in the fabric of the church, representing factions, splits, and parties. Do we want a happy, unified community of believers? Then we should not join or start any kind of faction in the body of Christ. Sometimes we get the idea that we simply must stand with others against the rest of the church or the church leadership, and somehow we think we are doing God's business. Many times we are not; we are just creating divisions. God says not to do it. Third, we are to have the same "mind" and "judgment." That is, we are to cultivate a sense of common purpose and support the decisions that are made in the life of the church. Sometimes we may not fully agree with a decision that has been made. But let us ask ourselves, Is it really that important? Can I not just go along? Is it going to kill me to be cooperative and supportive? God wants unity. That is what the Lord is seeking. So how are we going to achieve this kind of unity? First, remember that God is asking us to do this. Paul said, "I beseech you, brethren." God is speaking earnestly in those words. It is a call, a divine appeal. We should respond. Second, it is to be done and sought in "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is what the Lord wants—unity. He is the Lord of His church. We are obligated to do as He
wishes, not please ourselves. Agreement is possible in the body of Christ if we remember who is asking us to work at it. We should rather do anything else than displease the Lord. Preserving unity may require a change of attitude. It may mean we must keep quiet sometimes. It may mean we refuse to join with others who are promoting disunity. But if we seek to please the Lord, we can and will have unity. This is what God is calling us to do.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The concept of the outline of the lesson came from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing,</td>
<td>The Appeal For Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and in the same judgment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?</td>
<td>The Argument For Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the</td>
<td>Unity Through The Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cross of Christ should be made of no effect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

At the end of a worship service in some British churches, those gathered say "The Grace" together. This traditional benediction is based on the final verse of 2 Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all" (KJV). I have taught this to the churches I have ministered within the United States. My father and stepmother learned this as members of a church I was preaching for in Seattle. They did not think much about it until they took an Alaskan cruise. On Sunday aboard the ship, they attended a Protestant worship service led by an Anglican priest. Much of this service was strange to them, but the priest closed the service by having those gathered say "The Grace." And my parents knew it! Suddenly, they felt an unexpected kinship with the other Christians gathered that morning. They were surprised at being able to share in an element of unity familiar to them. Unfortunately, church disunity exists. We sometimes idealize the churches of the first century as authoritative exemplars of unity for churches today. It is true that first-century churches have much to teach us about unity, but we should not sugarcoat the reality that those churches had problems too. Exhibit A in this regard was the church in Corinth.

Paul's second missionary journey began as a trip to visit the congregations he had planted on his first journey (Acts 15:36). After doing so (Acts 15:41), the restless Paul desired to move on to new territory with the message of the gospel. God influenced Paul's itinerary through a vision that directed him to cross the Aegean Sea to the region known as Macedonia (Acts 16:9, 10). He eventually arrived in Corinth in about AD 52, where he remained for some 18 months (see Acts 18:11, 18). Corinth was a busy and wealthy center of trade in Paul's day, a cosmopolitan city with residents from many regions. It was a place of lax morals and influential pagan religions. Acts 18:4 tells us that Corinth had a synagogue (as was the case in most of the large trading cities of the Roman Empire). Paul began his preaching in that synagogue, which was composed of both Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:4, 5). But opposition caused him to leave and focus on the Gentiles of the city (Acts 18:6, 7). Nevertheless, there was a strong contingent of Jewish believers in the Corinthian church (Acts 18:8), and it was to this mixed congregation that Paul wrote the two Corinthian letters while on his third missionary journey. The four or so years that elapsed between Paul's time in Corinth and his first letter back saw ungodly trends develop—trends that needed to be corrected.

Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*
10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

**Unity - What is it**

**Definitions**

*From Holman Bible Dictionary*

State of being undivided; oneness.

*From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*

Oneness, harmony, agreement. Unity was apparent on the day of Pentecost when the believers "were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). The church is a unity in diversity, a fellowship of faith, hope, and love that binds believers together (Eph 4:3,13).

*From The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*

Used to signify a oneness of sentiment, affection, or behavior, such as should exist among the people of God (Ps 133:1). The "unity of the faith" (Eph 4:13; Grk. henotes, "oneness") is the unanimity of belief in the same great truths of God, and the possession of the grace of faith in a similar form and degree.

*From Holman Bible Dictionary*

Jesus prayed that His disciples would experience unity modeled on the unity Jesus experienced with the Father (John 17:11; John 17:21-23). Such unity verifies Jesus' God-sent mission and the Father's love for the world. Jesus' prayer for unity was realized in the life of the earliest church. The first believers were together in one place; they shared their possessions and were of one heart and soul (Acts 2:1; Acts 2:43; Acts 4:32). As in the Old Testament, sin threatened the God-ordained unity. The selfishness of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), the prejudice of those who neglected the Greek-speaking widows (Acts 6:1), the rigidity of those who demanded that Gentiles become Jews before becoming disciples (Acts 15:1)—all threatened the unity of the church. In every circumstance, however, the Holy Spirit led the church in working out creative solutions that challenged the church to go beyond dissension to ministry (Acts 6:2-7; Acts 15:6-35). Paul spoke repeatedly of believers as "one body in Christ" which transcends varieties of giftedness (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Cor. 12:27-30) and human labels (Galatians 3:28; Ephes. 2:14-15; Ephes. 3:6). For Paul, the unity of the church reflects the unity of the Godhead: one God (1 Cor. 12:6); one Lord (Romans 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:5; Ephes. 4:5); and one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:11; also Acts 11:17). Christian unity has various aspects: the shared experience of Christ as Lord and confession of Christ in baptism (Ephes. 4:5; Ephes. 4:13); the shared sense of mission ("one mind," Phil. 2:2); the shared concern for one another (1 Cor. 12:25; "same love," Phil. 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8); and the shared experience of suffering for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. 1:6; Phil. 1:29-30; 1 Thes. 2:14; 1 Peter 5:9).

**Appeal in the Name of Jesus (10)**

*Appeal in the Name of Jesus because there is a blessing for the person who comes in it (Matt 21:9)*

9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

*Appeal in the Name of Jesus because it cancels condemnation (John 3:18)*

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

*Appeal in the Name of Jesus because there is power promised (1 Cor 5:4)*

4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present,
**Appeal in the Name of Jesus because justification comes through it (1 Cor 6:11)**

11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

**Appeal in the Name of Jesus because we should do all things in the Name of Jesus (Col 3:17)**

17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Appeal in the Name of Jesus because we are commanded to believe in it (1 John 3:23)**

23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

**Appeal for no divisions (10)**

*The Church and divisions (from Barnes Notes)*

[And that there be no divisions among you] Greek, [schismata], "schisms." No divisions into contending parties and sects. The church was to be regarded as one and indivisible, and not to be rent into different factions, and ranged under the banners of different leaders; compare John 9:16; 1 Cor 11:18; 12:25.

**No divisions because they bring judgments (1 Cor 6:4)**

4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!

**No divisions because they cause harm (1 Cor 11:17-18)**

17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.

**No divisions because they will eventually cause destruction if not resolved (Gal 5:14-16)**

14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. 16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

**No divisions because they come from the sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21)**

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**No divisions because they come from worldly wisdom (James 3:13-17)**

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

**Appeal for the unity of minds (10)**

*Unity of the mind through the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:5-6)*

5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Unity of the mind through being firm in one spirit (Phil 1:27)

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

Unity of the mind through being like-mindedness (Phil 2:2)

2 Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Unity of the mind through the brotherhood of believers (Ps 133:1)

1 How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!

The Argument For Unity (1 Cor 1:11-16)

11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.
12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."
13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?
14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,
15 lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.
16 Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

Need unity because of contentions (11)

Contentions through mistreating and hurting a fellow saint (Ps 55:12-14)

12 If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. 13 But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, 14 with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.

Contentions through acting out of the "old sinful nature" (Col. 3:9-11)

9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Contentions through participating in quarrels and arguments with saints (Genesis 13:7)

7 And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

Commentary from the Life Application Notes
Rivalries, arguments, and disagreements among believers can be destructive in three ways. (1) They damage goodwill, trust, and peace—the foundations of good human relations. (2) They hamper progress toward important goals. (3) They make us self-centered rather than love-centered. Jesus understood how destructive arguments among brothers could be. In his final prayer before being betrayed and arrested, Jesus asked God that his followers be "one" (John 17:21).

Contentions through having a lack of love (Galatians 5:14)

14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Commentary from Life Application Notes
When we are not motivated by love, we become critical of others. We stop looking for good in them and see only their faults. Soon the unity of believers is broken. Have you talked behind someone's back? Have you focused on others' shortcomings instead of their strengths? Remind yourself of Jesus' command to love others.
as you love yourself (Matthew 22:39). When you begin to feel critical of someone, make a list of that person’s positive qualities. If there are problems that need to be addressed, it is better to confront in love than to gossip.

**Need unity because of different leaders (12-13)**

*Different leaders who seek to please those who are driven by their own desires (2 Tim 4:3-4)*

3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

*Different leaders who maybe after their own dishonest gain (Titus 1:10-11)*

10 For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. 11 They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach — and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

*Different leaders who maybe false prophets (2 Peter 2:1-3)*

2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

*Different leaders who may appeal to lustful desires (2 Peter 2:18-19)*

18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity — for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

**Need unity because of different baptisms (14-16)**

*A baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-16)*

15 When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 Because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

*A baptism into Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-4)*

3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

*A baptism of repentance (1 Cor 10:2)*

2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

*A baptism into the body of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12:13)*

13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

*A baptism of fire (Matt 3:11)*

11 “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

**Unity Through The Cross (1 Cor 1:17)**
17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Unity through the Gospel (17)

The Gospel leads to unity through obedience to God (Acts 5:29)
29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!

The Gospel leads to unity through having the same goal to please God (2 Cor 5:9-10)
9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The Gospel leads to unity through hearts that have been tested by God (1 Thess 2:4)
4 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.

The Gospel leads to unity because it teaches the way of God in accordance with truth (Matt 22:16)
16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.

The Gospel leads to unity because it comes with the Holy Spirit's power (1 Cor 2:4)
4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

Unity through wisdom (17)

Wisdom that makes God’s way known to man (Isa 42:16)
16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

Wisdom that displays the glory of God (2 Cor 4:6)
6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Wisdom that allows man to know God better (Eph 1:17-18)
17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Wisdom that teaches unity through humility (James 3:13)
13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

Wisdom that comes through guidance from Jesus into a spirit of unity (Rom 15:5-6)
5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Unity through what Jesus did on the cross (17)

What Jesus did on the cross allows Christians to show the world that God sent Jesus (John 17:20-23)

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

What Jesus did on the cross allows unity because the Holy Spirit provides the power (Eph 4:3)

3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

What Jesus did on the cross allows unity because unity in prayer produces power (Acts 4:24,31-32)

24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. 32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

What Jesus did on the cross allows unity because in Jesus all are one (Gal 3:28)

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

What Jesus did on the cross allows unity because it is commanded (1 Cor 1:10)

10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts From Bob Deffinbaugh

Obviously, there are just as many divisions in the church today as there were in Paul’s day. Some of us might argue that there are more divisions today than in his day. The thing that amazes me is the dramatic difference in the way we deal with those divisions and strife. In the church and in Christendom in general, the vast majority of cases are dealt with psychologically. This is the first level of appeal. If all else fails, turning to God and His Word is the last resort. What is the root of this evil of divisions? The secular world, and a distressingly large number of professing Christians, would answer this question without a moment’s hesitation: poor self-esteem. This alleged “malady” is said to be the root of crime, of moral evils (many of which are no longer a crime), and of inter-personal conflicts. It should come as no surprise that Paul’s “root problem” is just the opposite of the secular world. Paul indicates that the root of the Corinthian conflicts is pride. It is not that the believers in the church think too little of themselves; they think too much of themselves. It is not “poor self-esteem” but “inflated self-esteem” that is the problem. Why are these secular “cures” being embraced by the church? Why when we seek to heal conflicts and strife do we turn to a psychology book rather than to 1 Corinthians? When Paul deals with strife among the saints, he begins at the beginning—the gospel of Jesus Christ. His introductory words have already taken us to God and to His sufficient provisions for salvation and godly living. Now, after setting the standard of Christian unity, Paul seeks to correct the ungodly divisions in the church. He does so by turning us immediately to the gospel. Our salvation is Christ-centered and not man-centered. How then can Christians divide themselves from other Christians on the basis of the men whom they have chosen to follow? We were saved in the name of Jesus Christ; how is it that we now take pride in the names of the men we follow?

In the past, I have advocated “biblical thinking,” and I still do. But this text has forced me to see that Paul’s thinking goes even deeper. Paul is a model for us in what might be called “gospel thinking.” Baptism is a command of our Lord, and it is an important part of our obedience to Christ. But Paul makes it clear that proclaiming the gospel takes a higher priority in his life than performing baptisms. The Bible teaches us many truths, but the one truth which stands above all is that of the gospel. If any other truth begins to overshadow the gospel, something is wrong. Notice with me how the gospel
colors Paul’s thinking in almost any situation. In Acts 20:24, we see that Paul refuses to take the “advice” of the saints to avoid going to Jerusalem. Paul knows that “bonds and affliction” await him there, but Paul’s consuming desire is to fulfill his mission of proclaiming the gospel. Preaching Christ is more important than saving his skin. In Philippians 3:15, people who have “a different attitude” Paul leaves to God to change their hearts. However, in Galatians 1, Paul has a scathing rebuke for those who have “a different gospel” (see verses 6-10). When Paul is imprisoned, and some use this fact to further themselves at his expense, Paul rejoices because even in this, the gospel is preached (Philippians 1:12-18). In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul documents his right as an apostle to be supported by the churches where he ministers. He purposefully sets aside this right for the sake of the gospel (see verses 15-23, especially verse 23). When Paul encourages the saints in Corinth to give to the poor, Paul appeals to the gospel for their motivation in giving (2 Corinthians 8:9). Over and over and over again, it is the gospel which provides the standard, the basis, the motivation, and the guiding principles for Christian living. The gospel is not merely that truth which we believe in order to be saved; it is the truth which we are to seek to grasp more fully day by day, and the truth which we are to live out in our everyday lives (Colossians 2:6-7). Paul gets to the root of the problem of division and strife when he goes to the gospel, for the gospel is the key, the basis for all human relationships (Ephesians 4:32-5:2; Philippians 2:1-8; Colossians 3:12-15).

Pride is not the root of all evils (see 1 Timothy 6:10), but it is the root of many evils, including strife and division in the church. Pride was the cause of Satan’s downfall (see Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:1-19). Pride and wisdom are closely linked. In his pride, Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the garden. God had reserved certain knowledge for Himself, and that knowledge was there on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God forbade Adam and Eve to eat of this tree, to gain this knowledge. Eve saw that fruit, that knowledge, as desirable, and sought it by eating the fruit even though this required disobeying God. And the result of this act was division and strife, from that point onward in history. Man does not want to admit that only God is all-wise. Man seeks wisdom because he wishes to bolster his pride. It was pride that prompted David to stay at home when he should have gone to war. As a result, he committed adultery with another man’s wife, and he tried to cover this sin with murder. As a result of David’s pride, he numbered the troops of Israel, and thereby brought upon his people the wrath of God. It was pride that God warned the nation Israel about, knowing that these people would eventually take credit for that which God had accomplished by His grace. Pride is a great evil, and it has for all of history been a prominent factor in human strife and division, even among the people of God. Paul spotlights pride as the root problem among the Corinthians. He does not advocate months or years of therapy. He does not see the need to know the childhood, the background, or the individual struggles of each Christian. All they need to know is the gospel. It is by means of the gospel that God removed the conflict, the enmity, between sinners and Himself. It is also by means of the gospel that the enmity between men is removed (Ephesians 2:11-22). The gospel is incompatible with human pride. When saints strive with other saints out of pride, the cure is not to enhance their pride, to improve their “self-esteem”; it is to remove that pride. The self-esteem of the saints does not need to be commended; it should not even be criticized. It needs to be crucified. Do you wonder why our Lord instructed His church to remember His suffering and death every week by the observance of the Lord’s Table (communion)? You should not. Communion is the commemoration of the work of Christ, the gospel. Communion is not simply a remembrance of an act which our Lord accomplished in the past; it is a way of life which we are to emulate every day of our lives.

How often, when men seek to evangelize the lost, or when they attempt to motivate Christians (and unbelievers) to give or to serve, do they appeal to human pride. They glorify certain tasks and positions, so that people will fill them for that glory. They publicly laud the gifts or service of people, so that they will be proud of their contribution. Gospel thinking requires us to do just the opposite. In order to be saved, we must confess our sin and admit that we are unworthy of God’s gift of salvation. We must humble ourselves and accept the free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. We must cease trusting in our goodness, in our works or efforts, in our worthiness, and cast ourselves on the sinless Son of God who died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sin, and giving to us His righteousness as a free gift. The gospel which saves is the gospel which humbles, and that humbling gospel is the basis for Christian unity and harmony. If you have never accepted the gospel message, and the gift of salvation in Christ of which the gospel speaks, I urge you to do so this very moment.

From URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/multiplying-divisions-1-cor-110-31

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator (dated 06/04/06)

Today there are perhaps thousands of denominations within Christianity and perhaps just as many theologies and interpretations of biblical truth. New denominations seem to be springing up almost daily. Most, to be sure, are the result
of the sincere efforts of godly people who are seeking the Lord’s will. For many people, however, including many Christians, the numerous variations of Christian belief are confusing. Whether denominations are a good thing or not can be debated, but that is not what Paul was addressing when he called for believers to be “joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” Paul wrote about different gifts and personalities and functions in the church body. Because of such diversity among believers, it seems only reasonable that we would see things differently at times. Argument and disagreement in themselves are not really a bad thing. Disagreements force people to think things through more deeply and to examine things more carefully. As a result of this, new things are learned that might not have been if questions had not been raised. The most successful businesses are those that have people who think differently and will argue for their viewpoints but still have the same goals in mind; and that is the focus. Just because there is a disagreement does not mean they are not united. When Paul came to the Corinthian people, he said he “determined not to know anything among [them], save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). This should be the goal of all Christians. We need to realize what our main goal really is and keep it in front of us. Our main goal is to keep the main thing the main thing. The main thing for Christians is the spread of the gospel, or as Paul said, “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” We have one central message, which is Christ. That message is spread by love, which is the greatest commandment. If we have this attitude, we will then be better able to deal with various disagreements and conflicts. In Acts we are told about Paul and Barnabas. They had a great time preaching the gospel together, but in chapter 15 we see how they split up because of a disagreement. They went their separate ways and had two great missionary trips instead of one. They had the same mind and spirit, even though they were in disagreement over a specific issue. We can still have unity because we love each other and because we are focused on what has brought us together instead of on the things we might not agree on. We appreciate the different gifts we have as believers. Perhaps we would have better unity if we also tried to appreciate our different viewpoints as well.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Believers are to seek unity, not uniformity (1 Cor. 1:10)
2. Only open and honest communication can hope to solve divisions in the church (vs. 11)
3. Division always results when we emphasize the messengers over the message (vs. 12)
4. Jesus, our Head, is not divided; nor should His body, the church, be divided (vs. 13)
5. Christians are to be united in the one Lord, in whose name we are saved and baptized (1 Cor. 1:14-15; cf. Acts 4:12; Eph. 4:5-6)
6. The preaching of the gospel, not ministry styles, must be our main concern (1 Cor. 1:16-17)