

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2026: *1 and 2 Corinthians*

Lesson 3 “Unity in Christ”

Read for this week’s study

1 Corinthians 1:12–17; Romans 1:29; 1 Cor. 1:10, 1 Corinthians 3:1–4; Philippians 2:5–8;
2 Corinthians 11:23–28; Colossians 1:24.

Memory Text

“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” (1 Corinthians 1:10, ESV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Problem of Cliques in the Church
- III. Centered on Jesus
- IV. Wisdom and Maturity
- V. Christlike Servanthood
- VI. A Lifestyle That Reflects the Cross
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

- 1. This week we are looking at 1 Corinthians 1-4, where the apostle Paul dealt with the problem of quarrels in the church and how to overcome them. (Sabbath Afternoon)
- 2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:12-17. How does Paul articulate the absurdity of divisions in a local church? How do cliques like this happen? (Sunday)
- 3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:10, which seems to state the central theme of the first letter to the Corinthians. How would you express the issue he was dealing with? Can one take being united in mind and judgment too far? How would that work? Read 1 Corinthians 3:3. What two words express the underlying causes of divisions in the church? (Monday)
- 4. What was Paul’s solution to the divisions in Corinth (1 Cor 1:2-10)? What does it mean when Paul speaks over and over again about the “Lord” Jesus Christ? How

does Jesus articulate what true Christian leadership is all about (Matt 20:25-28)? How does this fit into Paul's letters to the Corinthians (2 Cor 3:18)?

5. The author of the lesson states: "By and large, cliques result from too high a view of human leaders. If we treat human leaders as central to our Christian identity, we risk moving Christ from the correct position in our lives." Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. What does Paul see as the real source of divisions in the church at Corinth? Have you ever been very disappointed in someone you greatly admired? What lessons did you learn from that experience? (Tuesday)
6. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, Paul hints that cliques in the church result from a lack of spiritual maturity. But before stating that he says, "we have the mind of Christ". So spiritual maturity arises as believers grow into the mind of Christ. Paul's clearest description of the mind of Christ is found in Philippians 2:5-8. (Wednesday)
7. The author of the lesson suggests that while cliques tend to form around human leaders, it does not mean that we should not support our leaders. Leaders who are growing into the mind of Christ are worthy of being heard and followed. Only the cross has the power to reverse manipulative forms of control. If the cross exhibits the character of God, how did that character manifest itself before creation? (Thursday)
8. Why is unity in Christ a powerful argument for the truth? Why is lack of unity a powerful obstacle to the church's mission? (Friday)
9. What is the difference between cliques and small groups? How can a small group avoid becoming a clique? (Monday)
10. In 1 Corinthians 4:16, Paul encourages the Corinthian church to imitate him. How can you imitate a human leader without raising that person onto a pedestal? (Friday)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And the significant thing is, the only basis for genuine unity is not force, or manipulation, or even the baling wire of rules and regulations, but truth, trust, and love; and are not these the fruits of the Spirit? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/59MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/60MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

When disunity came into Judaism and Christians began, Paul went out to restore unity in Judaism. And how did he do it, in Acts 26? He arrested these Christians. He punished them. He put them in prison, and he consented to their death. When Stephen said words before the Sanhedrin that seemed to be a threat to unity, how did those Sabbath-keeping saints seek to

keep unity? They stoned him to death. They saw nothing wrong with that use of force. It was to them justice.

In the name of God, Paul went out to keep unity in the church. That's been very popular through the years. Hundreds of thousands have been tortured to death at the stake to keep unity in the Christian church. Has it worked? You cannot force trust and love. It just can't be done. It's the very antithesis of freedom. And Jesus cleared that all up, and the angels realized that that's the truth. And that's the greatest protection against hostility and disunity and apostasy and defection in the hereafter. There is not one streak of arbitrariness in our God. He is not exacting, vengeful, and severe.

But it does mean that He'd rather give His life than give up freedom. Remember, Paul says that even if an angel should disagree with me on this, he's wrong; God says, "That's right. I absolutely will never budge on this. I will run My universe in this manner. Therefore, I can only save people who can be entrusted with this kind of freedom. People who also, altogether, love, trust and admire this kind of God." That's "the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God."

So I believe that God's people, wherever they are on this planet, in whatever church, or no church, or wherever they are in the universe, God's church, His true people, are those individuals who, in the highest sense of freedom have decided that they love, trust, and admire that kind of God. And then there is a unity among them, no matter what happens. And that unity will last forever, because it wasn't contrived in the first place. It wasn't forced in the first place. Are you willing to let God run His universe this way? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Ephesians & Colossians, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/67MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/68MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

There is, of course, a much more positive understanding of perfection if one could refer to the Greek again. You know, the word itself *teleiotes*, means maturity. It means being grown up.

When a person has been converted and reborn and won back to trust God, it's true God treats him as if he were perfect. Not just claims for this in the Bible, but many, many demonstrations—real evidence. But of course, if one has just been reborn, one is very inexperienced and needs a great deal of protection. First the crib and then the playpen, and then all the laws at the foot of Sinai, and all the other things that God has added because of transgression, to protect us, to be our *paidagōgos*, you remember, our Guardian. How graciously God has protected us in the days of our ignorance and immaturity lest we lose our freedom before we've learned to use it responsibly.

But now, does God want us to remain in the playpen? Does God want us to remain camped at the foot of Sinai for the rest of our lives where, because of the thunder and lightning, we promise, terrified, “All that the Lord has said we will do”?

Paul was very disturbed that Christians were not growing up. When people do not develop physically, we become very concerned, don't we? When our children do not develop mentally we become highly alarmed, but when people do not grow up spiritually, we sometimes say, “Isn't that so sweet; he still has the faith of a little child.” On the contrary, he's retarded. And there's nothing more dangerous than to be retarded spiritually. In fact, Paul says that those who refuse to grow up, eventually there is no hope for them. That's the difficult passage in Hebrews 6 as you recall. Paul says by now you are to be teachers, and that wasn't many years after he took the good news to them. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation – Perfection, Requirement or Generous Offer? Recorded December 1983, San Diego, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMPERFECT> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMPERFECT> (Part 2)

But if the Bible is a record of God's revelation of Himself in many and various ways, and one of His ways is through the people who so loved and admired Him that they imitated Him and became like Him. That doesn't sound like Paul before the Damascus road. Look at him now. He's so tender of heart and gracious. Wonderful things had happened to Paul. And I think that fits in very well. In fact, I think things like this are among the most important parts of scripture.

“Jesus wept.” Think what that says about God. God attended the funeral of one of His friends, and the Bible says that He cried. And when He raised Jairus' daughter, He says, “Wait a minute, everybody. This little girl is hungry, and somebody get something for her to eat.” That's theology! Why do we put other things above it? See, that's “Let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus,” who said, “This little girl is hungry. Get her something to eat.” And He cried at a funeral. That's the mind of Christ. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/69MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/70MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural

agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart. {DA 678.1}

It is the will of God that union and brotherly love should exist among His people. The prayer of Christ just before His crucifixion was that His disciples might be one as He is one with the Father, that the world might believe that God had sent Him. This most touching and wonderful prayer reaches down the ages, even to our day; for His words were, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.” John 17:20. While we are not to sacrifice one principle of truth, it should be our constant aim to reach this state of unity. This is the evidence of our discipleship. {PP 520.3}

We seldom find two persons exactly alike. Among human beings as well as among the things of the natural world, there is diversity. Unity in diversity among God’s children—the manifestation of love and forbearance in spite of difference of disposition—this is the testimony that God sent His Son into the world to save sinners. {SD 286.2}

The most powerful evidence a man can give that he has been born again and is a new man in Christ Jesus, is the manifestation of love for his brethren, the doing of Christlike deeds. This is the most wonderful witness that can be borne in favor of Christianity, and will win souls to the truth. . . . {SD 293.4}

The Creator of all ideas may impress different minds with the same thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet without contradiction. The fact that this difference exists should not perplex or confuse us. It is seldom that two persons will view and express truth in the very same way. Each dwells on particular points which his constitution and education have fitted him to appreciate. The sunlight falling upon the different objects gives those objects a different hue. {1SM 22.1}

Through the inspiration of His Spirit the Lord gave His apostles truth, to be expressed according to the development of their minds by the Holy Spirit. But the mind is not cramped, as if forced into a certain mold.—Letter 53, 1900. {1SM 22.2}

The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one. {MH 422.1}

With the trusting faith of a little child, we are to come to our heavenly Father, telling Him of all our needs. He is always ready to pardon and help. The supply of divine wisdom is inexhaustible, and the Lord encourages us to draw largely from it. {SD 121.3}

Jesus declares that the Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. The Holy Spirit understands man’s every necessity. He will bestow upon the earnest seeker that for which he hungers and thirsts. The

blessings that God has to bestow are unlimited. We cannot comprehend their height and depth and breadth. All heaven is at the command of those who, realizing their lack of wisdom, come directly to the source of wisdom. To such ones God gives liberally and upbraids not. But let them ask in faith, nothing wavering. . . . The one who receives wisdom from on high is the one who holds fast to the promise, the one who feels his need, and will not be turned aside. . . . {HP 294.4}

God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need and to give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand. He will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. {AA 242.1}

If men will walk in the path that God has marked out for them, they will have a counselor whose wisdom is far above any human wisdom. {2BC 993.1}

The Lord's angels are appointed to keep strict watch over those who put their faith in the Lord, and these angels are to be our special help in every time of need. Every day we are to come to the Lord with full assurance of faith, and to look to Him for wisdom. . . . Those who are guided by the Word of the Lord will discern with certainty between falsehood and truth, between sin and righteousness. {AG 201.4}

The study of God's word is continually expanding the mind and strengthening the intellect. There is nothing that will so refine and elevate the character, and give vigor to every faculty, as the continual exercise of the mind to grasp and comprehend weighty and important truths. {4T 545.3}

Jesus assumed humanity that He might meet humanity. He brings men under the transforming power of truth by meeting them where they are. He gains access to the heart by securing sympathy and confidence, making all feel that His identification with their nature and interest is complete. The truth came from His lips beautiful in its simplicity, yet clothed with dignity and power. What a teacher was our Lord Jesus Christ! How tenderly did He treat every honest inquirer after truth, that He might gain admission to his sympathies and find a home in his heart. {TM 190.1}

God permits every human being to exercise his individuality. He desires no one to submerge his mind in the mind of a fellow mortal. Those who desire to be transformed in mind and character are not to look to men, but to the divine Example. God gives the invitation, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." By conversion and transformation men are to receive the mind of Christ. Every one is to stand before God with an individual faith, an individual experience, knowing for himself that Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. . . . {TMK 134.3}

Had Christ come in His divine form, humanity could not have endured the sight. The contrast would have been too painful, the glory too overwhelming. Humanity could not have endured

the presence of one of the pure, bright angels from glory; therefore Christ took not on Him the nature of angels; He came in the likeness of men. {5BC 1131.1}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of "the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal." Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. {DA 22.2}

Man's need for a divine teacher was known in heaven. The pity and sympathy of God were aroused in behalf of human beings, fallen and bound to Satan's chariot car; and when the fullness of time was come, He sent forth His Son. The One appointed in the councils of heaven came to this earth as man's instructor. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world, and to meet the necessities of human nature He took humanity upon Himself. To the astonishment of the heavenly host the eternal Word came to this world as a helpless babe. Fully prepared, He left the royal courts and mysteriously allied Himself with fallen human beings. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14. {CT 259.2}

Christ undertook to redeem man and to rescue the world from the grasp of Satan. The great controversy begun in heaven was to be decided in the very world, on the very same field, that Satan claimed as his. {PP 69.2}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. {8T 265.5}

Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father's heart. {AG 189.5}