

The Church Was Divided

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 1:10-31

MAIN POINT: Paul wrote that Christians are joined together by faith in Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 2:20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why does God want us to obey Him? Obedience is our response to God's love for us.

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

Paul helped start the church in Corinth, a city in southern Greece, during his second missionary journey. Corinth was known for its wickedness. If any city needed a church, this was it. Paul remained in Corinth for about 18 months and then continued traveling to share the gospel and plant more churches.

Six years later, Paul received word from Chloe, a believer in Corinth, that the church there was struggling. The church was fractured and openly engaging in various sins. Some believers were even denying the resurrection! This news surely troubled Paul, so he sat down to write a letter to the church.

One of the first issues Paul addressed was the church's division. Even if he could help resolve the other issues, a divided church would never be healthy and impact the city the way it needed to. According to Chloe's report, several factions had formed in the church. Some claimed to follow Paul. Others Apollos. Others Peter. And some even claimed to follow Jesus, which wasn't as good as it sounded. This group was most likely simply trying to sound more spiritual than the others.

Paul told the Corinthian believers that they should not be divided; they should all be one because of their shared faith in Jesus. Jesus isn't divided, and He alone died on the cross for them. Paul's message was clear: the gospel does not divide believers, it unites them.

We all—kids included—are experts in finding ways to divide ourselves. Sin and selfishness divide, but Jesus and the gospel unite. God designed the church to show what true unity among a beautifully diverse people looks like. This week, pray that the message Paul shared with the Corinthian believers takes root in your heart and in the hearts of your kids. Pray that God would break down the barriers we create and bring your kids together as brothers and sisters in Christ.



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The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

The Church Was Divided

1 Corinthians 1:10-31

• Use your space:

Form two groups of kids to sit a few feet apart as they listen to the story. After telling about believers getting along, instruct kids to close the gap.

• Play background

music: Play intense, dramatic music quietly in the background during the first four paragraphs of the story. Then play calm, peaceful music to portray unity.

The city of Corinth was known for its wickedness, so what better place to start a church? **Paul started the Corinthian church and stayed there for about a year and a half. Then he traveled on to keep preaching the good news of Jesus.**

Six years later, Paul heard that the church in Corinth was struggling. These believers were arguing and suing one another, and they had questions about their faith. **So Paul wrote a letter to help the church solve its problems.**

The believers in Corinth were divided. One group bragged about following Paul. Another group chose Apollos. A third group followed Peter. And a fourth said they followed Jesus. **Paul said that the believers should not be divided; they should all agree on what they believe. Paul wrote that Christians are joined together by faith in Jesus.**

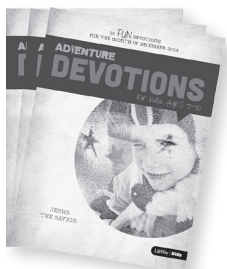
“Is Jesus divided?” Paul asked. “Was it Paul who died on the cross for you? Or were you baptized in Paul’s name?” **Of course not! Jesus died on the cross, and the believers were baptized in Jesus’ name. They should come together because of the gospel. Believers all agree that Jesus is Lord, so Paul said they should get along and love one another.**

Paul explained that the good news about Jesus seems foolish to those who are lost—those who do not believe in Jesus. But to those who believe, the cross is God’s power. Many people think they know a lot, but what they know is worldly wisdom. They do not know God, and to them, the good news about Jesus is foolish.

Paul encouraged his friends in Corinth to think about the fact that God chose them to be in His family. God did not choose anyone because of that person's wisdom or power or family.

Paul said that God saves people who trust in Jesus. No one can earn salvation, so no one can brag about being saved. If the Corinthian believers wanted something to be proud of, they could be proud of Jesus and what He has done.

Christ Connection: Paul told believers in the Corinthian church to come together because of the gospel of Jesus. He reminded them that Jesus saves sinners. Because of Jesus and what He has done, believers can humbly come together as one body.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
ADVENTURE!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover how God's Word can help them grow in the gospel. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Introduce the STORY

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BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 1:10-31

MAIN POINT: Paul wrote that Christians are joined together by faith in Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 2:20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why does God want us to obey Him? Obedience is our response to God's love for us.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask them about a time they had a disagreement with a friend or sibling. How did they handle the disagreement?

SAY • When we disagree with others, we often feel angry or frustrated at the other person. Growing angry is not a very helpful response to a disagreement. Today we will hear about a group of believers in a place called Corinth. They had a lot of disagreements, and Paul wrote them a letter to help them deal with their disagreements in ways that honored God.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Half and Half” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Half and Half” on the activity page. Challenge the kids to complete each picture by drawing the other half.

SAY • It's nice to see all your pictures whole. Today we will hear what Paul wrote to help the church in Corinth overcome differences that were splitting them apart.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Small differences

Invite a kid to draw a character from her favorite TV show on the board. Challenge the other kids to guess which show she chose based on the character she draws. Once a kid guesses the show correctly, let the first kid explain why she chose that show as her favorite. Allow other kids to draw characters from their favorite shows as time allows. You may wish to have kids whisper their ideas to you first, to avoid a kid drawing something inappropriate.

SAY • We all have small differences in our tastes in TV shows, movies, music, food, and other things. No matter what, it is important to remember that Christ unites all believers, no matter what TV shows they like or don't like. Today we will hear about a church that got distracted by the differences between people in their body.

OPTION 2: Puzzle time

Empty the contents of an age-appropriate puzzle onto the floor for the kids to see. Allow them to sort through the pieces and try to guess what the puzzle is a picture of without looking at the box or completing the puzzle. Then allow them to work together to complete the puzzle.

SAY • In a puzzle, each piece is different from the other pieces, but when they come together they make one beautiful picture. Today we will hear about a church that was not coming together but was dividing themselves based on their differences.



- dry erase board or chalk board
- markers or chalk

- puzzle

Transition to teach the story

Teach the STORY

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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader enters wearing hiking boots and a large backpack, and carrying a walking stick.]

LEADER • Hey, everyone! Welcome back to the trail head.

My name is *[your name]*, and I am a guide here. My goal is to keep hikers safe as they train and prepare to climb up this mountain! One of the ways I keep people safe is to connect the group to one sturdy rope. If one hiker begins to slip or fall, the other hikers who are tethered together can brace themselves and catch him. It's kind of like how people say "there is safety in numbers."

You know, in some ways it reminds me of our lives as Christians. It's important for us to stick together and see that we are united by Christ. That actually reminds me of a Bible story I want to share with you.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Who remembers our big picture question from last week? [*Allow responses.*] Great job! ***Why does God want us to obey Him? Obedience is our response to God's love for us.*** Some people may think that we obey God to earn His love, but that's backward! God already loves us. When we understand that God loves us enough to save us from our sin, we will desire to obey Him to show our love for Him.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

LEADER • We heard about Peter and Paul last week. Peter knew that God wanted him to treat Gentiles the same way he treated Jews, but Peter chose to avoid eating with Gentiles. **Paul wrote that we are saved through faith in Jesus alone.** He reminded Peter that obedience to the law cannot save us, only Jesus can. This week, we will learn about a church in a city called Corinth. Paul wrote to these believers to remind them not to let differences split them apart. Our story is called “The Church Was Divided.”

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 1:10-31. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Church Was Divided.”

LEADER • The believers in Corinth struggled to show love to one another. They argued and fought. One thing they were particularly concerned with was who was the best leader of the church. Some of the

• Bibles
• “The Church Was
Divided” video
• Big Picture Question
Poster
• Bible Story Picture
Poster

Corinthians claimed to follow Paul. Some claimed to follow another Christian teacher named Apollos. Still others said that they followed Peter. **Paul wrote that Christians are joined together by faith in Jesus.**

It is true that we are all different. Sometimes we may feel as if the ways we are different make it so that we cannot get along and show love to one another. Paul wanted the church to know that the Person who ties us together—Jesus—is stronger than the differences that seem to keep us apart. When we agree on the most important thing—the truth of the gospel—we can be united even when we disagree about less important things.

That is a huge part of the gospel message. God created us in His image, but our sin separates us from God. Even so, God loves us and unites us to Himself when we believe in Jesus. When we have disagreements with other people, especially with other Christians, we can choose to forgive and show love, just as Jesus forgave us and showed love to us.

Christ connection

LEADER • The Bible teaches us that while we were enemies of God, lost in sin, God sent Jesus to pay for our sins by dying on the cross. On the third day, Jesus rose again, defeating death and making the way for us to be united with God. When we believe in Jesus, we become a part of God’s family, all joined together as one body of Christ.

Paul told believers in the Corinthian church to come together because of the gospel of Jesus. He reminded them that Jesus saves sinners. Because of

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Jesus and what He has done, believers can humbly come together as one body. Jesus invites us into His family. God does not save people because of their wisdom or power or family. God saves people who trust in Jesus. We can be proud of Jesus and what He has done.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Galatians 2:20.

LEADER • It can feel impossible to live together with other people without fighting and arguing, but we know God gives us power to obey Him. Paul’s words to the Galatians remind us that our old selves, who were helpless to sin, have been put to death with Jesus. In Jesus, we have new life and He lives through us, helping us obey God.

Lead boys and girls in singing “Crucified with Christ.”

- Key Passage Poster
- “Crucified with Christ” song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • How does it feel to be a part of a team? Do you ever fight with your teammates? Think about that as you watch this short video.

Show the “Unit 31, Session 2” discussion starter video. Discuss with your group what they think will happen to the rocket the kids in the video were making. Do they think things might turn out better if the kids work together to build the rocket, instead of all focusing on their idea alone? Ask them what they think might divide believers today. Ask them how the church can remain united in Christ.

LEADER • The Bible tells us to live together in harmony and unity in Christ. That doesn’t mean we must

- “Unit 31, Session 2” discussion starter video

always agree on everything, but it does change the way we disagree with each other. With Jesus as our King, we can choose to stand together for what is most important—the gospel of Jesus.

• “Take My Life and Let It Be” song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • When we have faith in Jesus, He leads us in amazing ways. God can take our lives and use them in wonderful ways to glorify His name.

Sing together “Take My Life and Let It Be.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord, thank You for the love You showed us at the cross. We know that on our own we cannot obey You. Help us surrender to Your will. Fill our hearts and give us the power of the Holy Spirit to be united together for the sake of the gospel. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Apply the STORY

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- "Crucified with Christ" song.

Direct the kids to line up in a single row, shoulder to shoulder. Say the first word of the key passage, and then point to each kid in succession to say the next word, one at a time. When kids complete the verse, start again. You may display the key passage poster to help kids. Then sing "Crucified with Christ."

SAY • Each of you said a different word, but it took all of you working together to say the whole key passage. Our key passage reminds us that we are not the same people once we believe in Jesus. He gives us new lives, and as a result, we can live in a new way, united together to glorify God and spread the truth of the gospel.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- ball

Instruct the kids to sit together in the room. Ask each question one at a time, tossing a ball to a kid to answer. If he does not know the answer, he may toss the ball to another kid, who will come and whisper the answer to him. Then the two will answer the question together. Once the correct answer is given, retrieve the ball and ask the next

question, again tossing the ball to a kid to answer. Play until all the questions have been answered.

Questions:

1. Who wrote the Book of 1 Corinthians? (*Paul, 1 Cor. 1:1*)
2. Which book of the Bible comes right before 1 Corinthians? (*Romans*)
3. What was the major problem for the church in Corinth? (*division, disunity, rivalry among believers; 1 Cor. 1:10-11*)
4. Who were the different leaders the Corinthians claimed to be following? (*Paul, Apollos, Peter/Cephas, and Christ; 1 Cor. 1:12*)
5. What did Paul say would unite the Corinthian believers? (*Jesus and the gospel, 1 Cor. 1:22-25*)
6. ***Why does God want us to obey Him? Obedience is our response to God's love for us.***

SAY • In lots of ways we are all different from one another, but we don't have to let our differences divide us.

Paul wrote that Christians are joined together by faith in Jesus. Everyone who believes in Jesus is a member of the body of Christ. When we focus on the gospel, we can be united despite differences. The gospel reminds us of the incredible way we are all the same. We all need Jesus for salvation because we cannot obey God on our own, and we all are loved by God.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Three-legged race

Help the kids pair off. Give each pair of kids a bandanna and explain that they will stand side by side and tie the

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



•bandannas

bandanna around their two middle legs.

Give the kids a few minutes to practice getting used to moving while tied together. Then hold a series of races to see who can walk the fastest as a “three-legged person.”

SAY • It can be hard to cooperate with others. You cannot control what another person will do, but you must work together and communicate with each other to succeed. In a similar way, the church is made up of many different people. We don’t always agree, but we can focus on the gospel that unites us in Jesus. **Paul wrote that Christians are joined together by faith in Jesus.**

OPTION 2: Triple threat

Form teams of three kids. Read each of the following sets of three things. Each team will work together to solve each riddle by identifying what the three things have in common. Feel free to use those suggested or create your own!

Suggested triplet riddles:

- Apples, bananas, peaches (*all fruit*)
- Stop signs, tomatoes, blood (*all red*)
- Cities, countries, chickens (*all start with C*)
- Top, shop, mop (*all rhyme*)
- Cats, dogs, books (*all have tails/tales*)

SAY • Each set of three things had something that united them. Your job was to figure out what that was! Well, for us, we don’t have to figure out on our own what unites Christians. God has revealed it to us through His Word. **Paul wrote that Christians are joined together by faith in Jesus.** That means that even when we disagree on some things, we can remain

united and work together for the most important thing: spreading the truth of the gospel.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's Big Picture Cards for Families to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.