

Intro: I first noticed the “*following a man syndrome*” in churches before I even became a Christian. I grew up in a small town...2 or 3 thousand...half a dozen churches. A new pastor would come...crowd moved...over and over! Even then I thought to myself...that’s weird...I thought they were following God, not a man.

That’s the issue Paul is addressing with the Corinthian church in Ch 1-4. Remember what is happening: Church was established, then after Paul moved on they began to have “issues”. So, they wrote him a letter with some questions, and he is now responding to their questions to help them get back on track. The first one is Divisions in Church.

Read 1:10-12

1. Messy Grace People Follow Men Rather Than Jesus!

Two descriptive words:

- No divisions: Lit = A splinter off of a piece of wood...or the grown after it has been plowed: Broken
- Perfectly United: Lit = a word to describe mending a torn net; ... or a Dr repairing a broken bone!

Paul is saying to the church, “Listen, when you start following a man...ANY man...rather than Jesus, then you are doing damage to the church of Jesus Christ! It’s ok to love someone, it’s ok to admire someone, it’s ok to honor someone, but when you start ELEVATING them to the place that you are following THEM, rather than Jesus, it’s a problem!

3 Men They Were Following!

- Paul: The one God used to plant the church, establish the church, teach the church
- Peter: The man God used to knit the Jews and the Gentiles together...to bring the Jews into the Church
- Apollos: A great early teacher...Eloquent; Passionate; Knowledgeable; GREAT TEACHER

ILLUS: I can almost hear the conversation now: *Well, Paul got a good start..BUT now, I know SO much more since Apollos was here! And that Peter guy...you know I never really liked him very much...denied Jesus 3x I heard!*

2. Messy Grace People Value the MESSENGER MORE THAN THE MESSAGE!

1:13-17; 3:5-9

This is the heart of the problem. People start following the messenger...and devalue the message!

Paul addresses this head on in 1:13 to 17

First he tells them: **Focus on the Message, Not the Messenger!**

- When you were baptized: Was it in MY name? Or was it in the name of Jesus?
- Do you REALLY think that it was the ELOQUENCE of Apollos that saved you? NO...THE CROSS!
- Do you seriously believe that Peter, the Apostle to the Jews, is responsible for your faith? Are you going to heaven because of Him? Did Peter save you, Did Peter die for you? Did Peter rise from the dead? NO!

Then, he reminds them: **Messenger is ONLY a Servant!**

- Servant: One who serves ANOTHER: You are looking at servant: Watch the Master! JESUS!
- Has a task: Paul’s role before God was to Plant...Apollos was to water and help grow...Peter unite/invite
- Co-workers: With God! God sets the tasks, God empowers each of us, we are responsible to HIM...We are no more than workers in God’s field, builders of God’s house: He owns field, designed house

ILLUS: I have never forgotten something one of my professors in bible college said one day about this. He said, “*If someone walks out of one of your sermons and says, WOW! What an amazing sermon...so eloquent, so powerful, so much content and so on target...what a great preacher...you have been an absolute failure. Gentlemen, YOU are the messenger...NOT the message. You never want anyone to say what an amazing preacher...what an amazing SAVIOR!*”

KEY: Over in 1 Cor 11:1 Paul gives us the KEY to this entire discussion!

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

3. Messy Grace People Are Spiritually Immature And Need To Grow!

3:1-4

- You are believers...you have put your faith in Jesus, but you are SPIRITUALLY WEAK: (Brothers and Sisters)
 - >Not living by spirit, but by the flesh: Worldly Wisdom: This MAN can help me! No: JESUS
 - >Infants in Christ: Spiritual babies, unable to distinguish good from bad
 - >Worldly: Living my worlds standards and way:

Jealously: *Envy of others, Factionalism*

Quarrelling: *Divisions, arguing, strife and heated discussions*

Paul’s message is pretty clear! GROW UP! Quick acting like spiritual babies that are captured by every flashy thing that comes your way! Never confuse the Messenger with the Message. Yes, God used them...He uses a LOT of people

4. Healthy Grace People Focus On The Message Of The Cross, Not The Messenger!

2:1-4, 2:9-10

Here is the solution! This is what you need to do when you find yourself falling into the trap of following an individual instead of the Lord. Focus on the message of the Cross! Forget the messenger! They are just a servant...a instrument!

The Message is what is important:

- Jesus is the perfect, holy Son of God
- Lived a perfect life, taught us about the Father
- He was unjustly condemned and nailed to a Cross
- Died...was buried...and on the third day rose from the dead
- Those who put their faith and trust in Him, who repent of their sin, accept His death for THEM
- Experience NEW LIFE! Their sin is forgiven and by the power of God through the Cross, made a child of God!
- 2:1-4: Read Again; 2:9-10 Again; 15:1-8

The Messenger is no more than a simple servant!

- 3:5 *“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.”*

Illus: This is a trap that MANY Christians fall into on a regular basis. “I love...Francis Chan, I love Perry Noble, I love...I love Andy Stanley...Fill in the blank.

Listen: I love some people too! I Love Tony Evans, I love John Jenkins, I love Charles Stanley, THEY ARE MEN!

If you have complimented me on a sermon anytime in the past 10 years you typically hear me say the same thing. Thanks, I'm thankful God was working: All the credit goes to Him. One day he used a donkey...another threatened rocks: BETWEEN What am I? Only a servant...doing what God called me to do.

Want a compliment: *“God used you today...God spoke through you today, God was present...”*

5. Healthy Grace People Know What To Look For In A Leader.

Ch 4

Paul closes this discussion on how to deal with divisions in the church by teaching the Corinthians what they SHOULD be looking for in a spiritual leader. This is an incredible passage of scripture...and sometime in the next 3 to 5 years will become VERY important to you. As some of you know, I turn 65 this September. I know, only look 35. 😊

Sometime soon, as I said, in 3-5 years, this church will be in the position of having to call a new pastor. That is tough in the best of circumstances, but it is incredibly more difficult when you are calling someone to replace a long term pastor, and that is magnified even more by the fact that I'm a founding Pastor. Track record...not so good: Often called...and UNINTENTIONAL INTERIM Listen, you don't want to do that to a pastor and his family. Get it right! This is how you should REGARD us: Lit = this is the inventory you should take...the things you should look for!

- Servant: 1 1st qualification: Does this leader SERVE: Jesus said: Son of man came to serve!
Lit = An under rower: The slave in the hold, pulling oar...listening to cadence of master!
- Steward: 1 Lit = the manager of another's property and people: NOT boss...Not Owner: MANAGER!
- Faithful: 1 Lit = Reliable and Trustworthy: Able to do right when master is away! (Accounts correct!)
- Rightly Accountable: Not afraid of men and their judgements...Always an eye toward God and His judgment!
3-4 George Whitefield: *“I am content to wait for the day of judgment for the clearing up of my character...and after I am dead I desire no other epitaph than this...”*
- Right Motives: 5 Lit = inner counsel of the heart, motives: Why does he do what he does? Self, others, Jesus?
- Committed to Scriptures: 6 Do not Go Beyond: Preach the Word...not opinions, desires, thoughts:
- Not Prideful of position: 6 Not boastful
- Sacrificial: 8-13 Willing to lay down their life for the Gospel
- Following Christ clearly...so you can see how to follow! 16
- Consistent: What I teach everywhere! 17
- Willing to Stand up when needed! Rod of Discipline if needed! 21

CONCL: Divisions in the church are as old as the church itself! Even in Acts, the formation of first deacon board in Acts 6 was because of treating people differently. But, if you Focus on Message more than the Messenger Focus on Cross, Follow a true Godly leader...you can avoid a LOT of those problems Who Are YOU Following?