

LEAVING IDEALIZED CHURCH

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1 Corinthians 1:10-18

10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. 12 What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." 13 Has Christ been 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 so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with

eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. 18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. The first generation of Christ's followers was riddled with division, discord, and disagreement. Many of Paul's letters were written to address these issues.
 - a. What issues appear to be getting in the way of the church at Corinth?
 - b. What/who is Paul appealing to for the church to reunite and refurbish its focus?
 - c. What divisions, disagreements, and discord are fracturing the 21st-century church?
3. Have you ever experienced divisions or discord in a church? What happened? What did you learn from that experience?
4. One of the reasons people give for leaving the church is that it is "full of hypocrites." That can mean a lot of

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things, but maybe most especially: churches don't often treat each other with Christ's compassion, kindness, justice, or inclusivity. Will the church ever be a place entirely free from this kind of hypocrisy? Why or why not?

5. Idealizing a church and expecting it to be perfect can lead to disappointment. What distinguishes a healthy church from an unhealthy church is not the presence of problems, but *how* the community commits to and addresses problems when they inevitably emerge.
 - a. What are some *unhealthy or unhelpful* ways to address problems in a church?
 - b. What do you think are *healthy or helpful* ways to address problems in a church?
6. Paul uses the phrase "being saved" in verse 18. Our salvation or spiritual healing is *an ongoing process*. What does this mean, and why might that be good news for church communities?

February's sermon series will be exploring the "rise of the nones" and "the great de-churching." To learn more about these seismic shifts in US religious life, check out the resources and links below:

[ON POINT interview](#) with Michael Graham and Jim Davis, co-authors of *The Great Dechurching*.



Ryan Burge is an American Baptist Pastor and professor of political science who has become the "go-to guy" for presenting and interpreting the data on changes in religious behavior. [His substack "Graphs about Religion" includes graphs, commentary, and highlights.](#) You can also read, listen or watch an [interview he gave on "the nones"](#).



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