



**PRODIGAL**

**CHURCH**

SERIES: **PRODIGAL CHURCH**

SERMON TITLE: **VOICES**

DATE: **SUNDAY, 28TH OF JUNE 2020**

SPEAKER: **CRAIG VERNALL**

SCRIPTURE: **1 CORINTHIANS 1**

**Q1. What impacted, challenged or encouraged you the most about Sunday's sermon?**

Remembering that Paul mentions Jesus Christ 9 times within the first 9 verses of his letter to the Corinthians should be a clue about the main focus of what his letter is about. I don't think Paul could have made a clearer statement about whom the Corinthians should be focused upon.

So, when Paul starts to talk about division within the church it's no surprise that he identifies factions who are following different leaders at the cost of their unity.

**Q2. In what ways can we, as Jesus followers, find the balance between unity and uniformity?**

## **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-12**

*A Church Divided Over Leaders*

<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. <sup>11</sup> My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. <sup>12</sup> What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas" (Peter); still another, "I follow Christ."

**PAUL: THE FOUNDER OF THE CHURCH IN CORINTH.**

**APOLLOS: A FINE SPEAKER FROM GREECE. (ACTS 18: 24-27)**

**CEPHAS/ PETER: JESUS' LEAD DISCIPLE.**

**CHRIST: THE FOCUS OF OUR SALVATION.**

For reasons which we can only speculate we read that the church in Corinth is dividing along the lines described above.

**Q3. Can you identify any church leaders/ authors/ prophets or apostles that you know as your favourites?**

**Q4. Could you see ways in which these preferred leaders could possibly draw you away from Christ? Or away from your church life? How so?**

Differences in what we believe are not uncommon within the Christian faith. Yet the differences are relatively small compared to what we do share in common.

**Q5. How comfortable are you about affirming another Christian when that person holds onto a belief that you don't hold onto? Please note that I'm not describing heresy. But rather the differences that may exist between Christian denominations.**

The overriding theme in these 5 verses is about different voices leading the church in different and divisive directions. Which leads us to the question about how we allow varying voices of influence into our lives.

**Q6. How do you discern a healthy voice from an unhelpful voice?**

**Q7. Do you have a measure or a filter by which you can discern what's right or wrong, helpful or unhelpful?**

**Q8. Can you remember a time when you were being led astray and had to make a course correction within your faith?**

When Paul wrote to Timothy who was pastoring in Ephesus, Paul warned Timothy about a future that was filled with division. He described it this way:

**READ 2TIMOTHY 4:3-4.**

*"For the time will come when people 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. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths".*

Human history has never before had anything at its disposal like the internet. Given that the internet is less than 25 years old, we realise that its influence upon all of us has been immeasurable. Now we have access to every doctrine, philosophy, understanding, criticism and experience known to the human race. Every voice, be they little or large, wise or stupid has a level playing field from which to be heard. Information is not lacking. But wisdom to distill and interpret these voices is now extremely important.

**Q9. How do you use the internet to keep God's purpose running through your life?**

**Q10. How do you stop being fooled, "tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching" (Ephesians 4:14)**

On Sunday I said that "the internet is like a mirror." When you check out your search history, you'll find your personality and interests reflected there. Therefore, the internet is not a neutral medium for searching out information. Its algorithm is designed to keep bringing up articles or videos based around your previous searches. You'll find your enquiries or interests will be consistently fed along the same lines that you've previously searched for. In some cases, this can be quite helpful.

**Q11. But in what cases could this algorithm work against you?**

The nature of the internet is that it aims at your mind, to move your heart, to tap into your wallet. But for the Christian the mind and heart need to be guarded with great intent. Maybe over the years you've become increasingly dependent upon the internet. Maybe you're a news junky. A Facebook fanatic, a TikTok a YouTube consumer or a Netflix binger.

There's no problem being on the web to learn how to fix the car or learn a new cake recipe or keeping up to date with people. But it's the stories that catastrophize present day events into worst case scenarios. Unfounded and untraceable information that speculates wildly about the future. Or maybe a speaker who moves into heresy with a new take about Jesus. Maybe a church that defines itself as the only group with the truth. All these things are common and for some people, very attractive and persuasive.

Which leads to the question of addiction.... Addiction is defined by what you can't stop doing.

**Q12. Do you think you have a need to detox from social media? Maybe for a season of rest? I'm not suggesting that you ditch your device totally. But in what ways can you take responsibility for or control over the voices you allow to have persuasion in your life?**

To measure whether your consumption of social media is helpful or not will require you to test the condition of your soul. Does your soul experience peace, faith, confidence and trust? It seems that we rarely lose our peace overnight. But our peace can be slowly eroded by the destructive voices of the world around us.

However, we're not to be naive about our world. Jesus said in John 16: 33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Furthermore, Paul describes to the Philippians a strategy that allows us to keep our peace intact.

*"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Philippians 4: 8*

**Q13. Do you regularly take the time to measure the condition of your soul? Would Paul's suggestion to the Philippians be a helpful one for you right now? If so, then how would you put this into effect in your life?**

**Below are some resources that you can use to study scripture. Also, there are a few suggestions about how to detox from social media.**

<https://www.bible.com/en-GB/reading-plans/12674-killing-it-a-study-of-1-corinthians/day/2>

<https://www.cygnussystems.com/5-useful-apps-for-your-next-digital-detox/>

<https://www.bible.com/en-GB/reading-plans/20318-1-corinthians-a-35-day-reading-plan/day/1>

**END YOUR TIME TOGETHER WITH PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER.  
HAVE A WONDERFUL WEEK!**