



GRACE
in the
MESS

*A Call
to Unity*

A Call to Unity

A Journey through 1 Corinthians 1

Introduction

Welcome to *Grace in the Mess*, a guide designed to walk you through the beautiful yet challenging realities faced by the early church in Corinth. As we explore 1 Corinthians together, you'll see that many of the struggles they encountered are the same struggles we face today. Yet the message is clear: there is grace, even in the mess.

The Call to Unity

The Context of Corinth

The city of Corinth was a thriving, bustling hub of trade, travel, and unfortunately, sin. Much like modern cities such as Las Vegas, New Orleans, or San Francisco, Corinth was known for its immorality and pagan practices. Paul, understanding the gravity of the situation, planted a church there and remained for 18 months, longer than in most places he ministered.

Despite the difficult environment, many people came to know Christ. But over the next five years, cultural influences began seeping back into the church, leading to divisions, lawsuits among believers, sexual immorality, spiritual arrogance, and even doubts about the resurrection.

Paul's Opening Words

Despite all the mess, Paul begins his letter not with harsh criticism but with gratitude:

"I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus." (1 Corinthians 1:4)

Paul's heart is a reminder to us: extend grace first. Even when addressing issues, lead with love.

Why Unity Matters

Before dealing with any specific sins, Paul tackles the critical issue of unity. Without unity, the church cannot effectively address its problems or fulfill its mission.

Unity was, and still is, essential because:

1. Jesus Prayed for It - (John 17)
2. Jesus Commanded It - (John 13)
3. Unity Is Our Testimony to the World

Paul writes:

"I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same convictions." (1 Corinthians 1:10)

What Unity Is and Isn't

Unity is NOT:

- Uniformity: We are diverse by God's design.
- Avoiding Issues: Problems must be addressed biblically.
- Overlooking Sin: Sin must be confronted lovingly but firmly.

Unity IS:

- Extending the grace God has given us.
- Differentiating between absolutes, convictions, and preferences.
 - *Absolutes* (e.g., Jesus is God, salvation by grace through faith) must be agreed upon.
 - *Convictions* (e.g., mode of baptism) can differ without division.

Because He Lives

- *Preferences* (e.g., music style) should never divide us.
 - Honoring God's unique design for every believer.
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The Danger of Division

Where God desires unity, Satan seeks division.

Division often doesn't begin over absolutes but over preferences and minor disagreements.

We must always fight for unity through humility, grace, and love.

Reflection and Response

What action steps do you need to take today?

- Are you extending grace to others?
- Are you distinguishing between absolutes, convictions, and preferences?
- Are you promoting unity through your words and actions?
- Is there a relationship you need to reconcile?

Let's remember: we are called to be a testimony to a world desperate for real love, peace, and unity.

May we be known not just for our truth, but for our grace.

Final Prayer

Father, thank You for the church, Your beautiful design for community and mission.

Help us extend grace as freely as we have received it.

Teach us to cherish unity, even when it's hard.

Empower us to be light in a world divided.

May our love for one another point people to You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Because He Lives