

A Problems that cause disunity:

❖ Divisions and contentions.

- What were the divisions that existed in the church of Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12)?
- Various leaders had passed through Corinth, and each believer had his favorite preacher (Paul, Apollos, Peter...) This had reached the point of generating disputes among them (1 Cor. 1:11).
- Without realizing that they were all preaching a common message, they focused on irrelevant aspects (1 Cor. 3:5-8).
- Slowly, the life of the church was affected (1 Cor. 3:3). The lack of unity distorted the celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:33), and they even went so far as to sue each other in court (1 Cor. 6:1).

B How to maintain unity:

❖ Unity in Jesus.

- “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:13). With these questions, Paul wants to make them reflect.
- Unity can only be achieved by having Jesus as our Lord. Unity is not achieved by adhering to the thoughts or ideas of a brother or sister, or by forming closed groups.
- But unity in Jesus is not uniformity. It does not imply that we all think the same about everything, or that we all act in the same way.
- Small differences of opinion, the different gifts that each one has, when they are centered on Christ, instead of generating disunity, generate unity (1 Cor. 12:12-13, 25, 27).
- Unity in the church is only achieved by dying to self and living for Jesus.

❖ Wisdom and maturity.

- Paul calls immature Christians, “children in Christ,” “carnal” (1 Corinthians 3:1). These types of Christians focus more on people than on Jesus.
- When undue importance is given to some leaders at the expense of others, groups form that divide the church. This is a result of immaturity. Therefore, Paul invites us to reach maturity in Christ (1 Corinthians 2:6).
- *Immature*: they are like children (1 Cor. 3:1); they feed on milk (1 Cor. 3:2); they are carnal (1 Cor. 3:3); they are swayed by the opinions of others (1 Cor. 3:4).
- *Mature*: They are adults (1 Cor. 14:20); they eat solid food (Heb. 5:14); they are spiritual (1 Cor. 2:13); they have spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 2:14).

❖ Service and humility.

- Just as today, in the first century people were divided by political, philosophical, religious, and other beliefs. How can we prevent this way of thinking from infiltrating the church and creating division?
- The leader's attitude plays a significant role. Church leaders must be clear about their role as stewards. They are not the owners of the church; they simply manage it for Christ.
- The leader of the church is Jesus, all others lead it as “servants of Christ” (1 Cor. 4:1).
- The servant who administers must behave as his Lord behaves: always willing to humbly give himself to the service of others (Phil. 2:3-8).
- What unity would there be in the church if everyone – not just the leaders, but every single member – acted this way?

❖ Respect for leaders.

- The existence of rivalries and factions surrounding leaders does not mean we should reject them. On the contrary, Paul supported and defended Apollos' ministry and his work in Corinth (1 Cor. 3:5-6; 4:6; 16:12).
- When leaders act faithfully, they are worthy of honor (1 Cor. 4:2; 1 Tim. 5:17). But even when they do not receive that honor, they remain faithful because they know that it is God himself, not men, who should judge them (1 Cor. 4:3-4).
- Christian leaders follow in the footsteps of Jesus by being willing to suffer for their brothers and sisters, and even, if necessary, to die for their ministry (1 Cor. 4:11-13; 2 Cor. 11:23-28).
- Neither leaders nor members are called to fight or argue with each other, but to unite in praising Jesus and preaching the message of the cross.