

1. In one respect I respectfully disagree with Paul. In 1:14 he writes that he is happy that he did not baptise many people in Corinth. I would quite like to baptise some of you – but not to bind them to my name. Having some baptisms would be good for us all!

At that time there were not yet any unbaptised believers. Believers who don't get baptised or don't join a church – that is a harmful modern practice. Believers should join a church.

So, that's off my chest.

2. Much of what we read today is not applicable here in Knaphill. In the churches of Corinth and Ephesus, they had Apollos, who was an excellent speaker. Comparisons were being made with Paul. It seems we here in Knaphill don't talk much about previous ministers and that is good! Preachers are not supposed to be idols or celebrities; not to be gossiped about or to be venerated.

3. Much of what we read today is not applicable to us. I am unaware of major differences of opinion in the church. Maybe people are sometimes pursuing their own interest within the church. It seems that those who differ over Covid and the merits of vaccination are co-existing quite well. But we may want to reflect on this: do we truly respect each other or do we politely ignore each other? Do we always speak well of each other? Do we look down on people with a different view?

4. In one respect, what Paul writes is highly relevant: in Knaphill the few believers are divided over five churches. Maybe 300 or 400 churchgoers (out of 10,000 people) had a choice of five churches today – plus other churches in Woking. Hetty and I have come to like and love the local Methodist sisters and brothers; it would be great to be in the same building together! But they start at 10 and we at 11.

4. So what other relevance do Paul's words have for us? Paul tackles individualism and competitiveness. He would say that no one can be a believer on their own. Unity is a great good.

5. Our Baptist Union is currently lacking this unity. As Baptists we are struggling to hold on to each other. Unity is a challenge for the BU. There is obvious diversity – but where is our unity? We need to pray for each other and the BU leadership.

Jesus prayed for unity in John 17: 'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.'

6. To turn the things above into positives:

- It is the congregation that meets and worships and has Communion! There is no such thing as private worship on Sunday morning. You can't be a believer on your own. You need the fellowship and they need you.
- Never become a follower of any one leader; only follow Jesus!
- A church needs a common vision: Jesus and the salvation in Him.

[The risk of a sermon like this is that those who need to hear it are absent on Sunday. Let's hope they read it afterwards.]

- In 3:1-2 Paul writes: 'Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly – mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.'

How is that with you? Are you growing in faith and ready to receive solid food?