

I chose the second lesson, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, for today's message text.

The title for today's message is: **Are you looking for style or substance?**

Paul said: ***I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you,***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

I heard a story about a woman driving alone over the Sierras on Highway 80 in the middle of winter, who ended up in a huge winter snow storm.

It was snowing so hard that it was near white-out conditions. Therefore it was very difficult for her to see more than a foot or two in front of her car.

So crawling along, she sees a snowplow and thinks, great! I'll just follow him. The road will be clear behind him and he knows where he's going."

So she followed the snowplow for about 30 minutes, when it suddenly stopped and the driver hopped out of the cab.

Walking over to her car window he asked her, "Lady, where do you think you're going?"

"I'm heading up to Reno she said, and I thought if I stayed behind you I'd be safe and I figured you know where you're going."

The driver laughed and said, "yeah, I do know where I'm going. I've been plowing this same parking lot for the last 30 minutes, other than that, I'm not going anywhere."

My friends, do you ever feel like you're moving in circles, or maybe running around aimlessly?

Who are you following in your life? I mean, does it seem like your just like the woman following the snowplow?

Sometimes we have an idea, a plan, a philosophy in life, and we follow it with all we've got, only to find out that we're going nowhere.

And this can happen to churches too, I mean, after all what are churches full of but People, non of which are perfect.

Are the members of Christ The King perfect? I can tell you that I am about as far from perfect as "A" is, from "Z."

So, is it possible that as individuals, and as members of a church, we are sometimes following the wrong plan, the wrong philosophy?

But the Good News is. Our leader, our heavenly Father in Heaven, will always point us in the right direction.

All we've got to do is look for where God is at work, and join Him! Today, let's take a look at how we do that.

Let me first say this, the members of the church in Corinth were not perfect either, in fact, far from it.

As it turns out, they were like that woman following that snowplow, the people in Corinth were following a plan and a philosophy that was leading them nowhere.

Now, in our text for today, the Apostle Paul is literally throwing this plan and philosophy in the face of the people of Corinth.

He's saying: "what you're doing now is dividing yourself, not uniting yourself. God gave you faith to believe, and claims you as His redeemed children.

He did this through His Son Jesus Christ. So why are you fighting with each other? Why are you trying to out-do each other, when Jesus did it all for you?

So let me ask you, in our own personal lives, and in our lives as members of God's Church here at Christ The King.

What is a good plan, and a good philosophy for us to follow? Certainly I think you all will agree that we don't want to be going nowhere.

That's what life outside of the Church, and outside of Christ Himself brings us.

Look, as Christians, we all have a God-given goal, a goal that calls us to choose substance over style.

Something was wrong at the church in Corinth. Paul wanted all of the people there to agree with each other. But that wasn't happening.

The church in Corinth was split up into different groups of people, and they were arguing, and fighting with each other.

Paul even describes what kind of quarreling was going on: "One of you says, 'I follow Paul;' another, 'I follow Apollos;' another, 'I follow Cephas.

And then you had the independents, they liked Christ. Now, what does that sound like to you?

Doesn't this almost sound like election time, with people supporting their favorite candidates?

Like little political parties going on, inside the church. It's silly, and Paul wants to send them a wake-up call.

Paul wants to re-direct their focus from themselves, to focusing upon what really matters in the Church, focusing upon God.

Why was this problem taking place in the Corinthian church in the first place? Why were these different groups developing?

Because the people were focused more on style, than on substance. Each pastor at that church had his own personality, his own style.

Whoever you liked, whoever you clicked with, well, that's who you would listen to.

And those other pastors, well, they had the same message, but if you didn't like their style, you didn't want to listen to them.

And what was the result of this? Not only in the church in Corinth, but in any church today that does the same thing?

It brought about trouble, it divided the church in Corinth, and they couldn't grow. They were like the woman and the snowplow, they were going nowhere fast.

You see, instead of wanting to be lead and fed spiritually, they were more concerned about who had a better preaching style.

And don't we, to some extent, still find that to be true today? Isn't a church's style what people evaluate when picking a church to attend.

What I'm saying is that the most important thing, as you seek to grow closer to God, is to hear God's Word, and to joyfully worship Him.

Paul's words call out to us even today, and it tell us to turn to God, to repent our sin, including the sin of focusing more on style than on substance.

And without repentance, without our faith, ultimately, our souls will end up in hell. So rather than style, Paul urges us to focus on substance.

Paul says, "For Christ did not send me to baptize" but to preach the gospel, not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."

Focus on the message, the substance, not the preacher, or the preacher's style, that's what Paul is saying here.

He says we should focus on? Jesus Christ, our Savior, His Gospel, that God is an amazingly gracious, forgiving and loving God.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord who died and then rose again as our Savior, He died so that we can live.

And He lives, so that we can live eternally. And when we remember that, that's the substance of the Gospel.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.