DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 2: A Disciple Chooses the Cross Over Status

Main Idea: Built Different: Disciples unite under the cross of Christ; they do not divide by personalities, popularity, or human achievement.

Discipleship Rhythm: Worship

1 Corinthians 1:1–9

"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." (1 Corinthians 1:10).

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people and discuss the Observation and Interpretation sections.

Observation Exercise 1: The divisions in Corinth

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10–17. What was the problem in the Corinthian church? What was the source of the divisions?

Suggested Response: The Corinthian church was experiencing division. Paul said some believers claimed to follow Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or Christ. Allegiance to personalities was clouding the centrality of the cross of Christ, which was the basis of their salvation.

Observation Exercise 2: The message of the Cross

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–25. How did Paul describe the message of the cross? Make a list. What are the different responses to it?

Suggested Response: Paul said the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but the power of God to those who are being saved. He said the Jews demanded signs, the Greeks looked for wisdom, and Paul preached Christ crucified. Christ is a stumbling block to some and foolishness to others, but to those God has called, He is the power and wisdom of God.

Observation Exercise 3: No Boasting

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–2:5. Why did Paul say no one can boast about their salvation?

Suggested Response: Paul said God chose the foolish, weak, lowly, and despised things of the world. Therefore, their salvation was not based on intelligence, sophistication, prominence, persuasiveness, or notoriety. It is by God's grace only, not deserved or earned.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Interpretation Exercise 1: Why division contradicts the gospel

Why did Paul respond to the Corinthians' factions by asking whether Christ were divided, whether Paul was crucified for them, and whether they were baptized in Paul's name.

Suggested Response: Paul wanted them to see that their divided loyalties contradicted the gospel itself. Christ alone was crucified for them, and baptism marked their belonging to Him. They had a common source and content of their faith. This unites rather than divides. Human leaders may serve the church, but none of them can become the source of the church's identity or the center of its loyalty.

Interpretation Exercise 2: Why the cross looks foolish

Why did Paul say the message of the cross appears foolish or weak to the world, yet reveals the wisdom and power of God?

Suggested Response: The cross overturns normal ideas about power, success, and greatness. A crucified Messiah looked like defeat, shame, and weakness, but through the cross God defeated sin and brought salvation. What the world dismisses as foolishness is actually wiser and stronger than anything human wisdom or strength can accomplish.

Interpretation Exercise 3: God alone deserves worship

Why does God choose the weak to do great things?

Suggested Response: Paul was showing that everything the Corinthians had comes from God's grace. They were not chosen because they were impressive, and they did not stand before God because of their own wisdom, strength, or status. Since Christ was the source of their righteousness, holiness, and redemption, their worship and boasting belonged to God alone.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

Question 1: What part of this section of Corinthians caught your attention the most?

Suggested Response: Responses will vary. Listen closely so you can use follow-up questions to invite your group into deeper transparency and discussion.

Question 2: What kinds of differences easily become divisions for Christians?

Suggested Response: Differences in worship style, politics, age, background, personality, church traditions, or preferred leaders can quickly become reasons to separate from one another. These differences may matter, but they should not become more important than our shared identity in Christ.

Question 3: How can loyalty to a preferred leader, church style, or ministry begin to compete with loyalty to Christ?

Suggested Response: Preferences can become identity markers. I may begin to measure faithfulness by whether someone agrees with my favorite leader, shares my style, or belongs to my group. When that happens, I am giving human personalities a place that belongs to Jesus.

Question 4: Why is the cross such a powerful answer to pride, comparison, and status?

Suggested Response: The cross reminds me that I am not saved because I am impressive, wise, strong, or deserving. Nor am I saved to follow another person. I come to God with empty hands and receive everything through Christ. That leaves no room for boasting in myself or looking down on others.

Question 5: Where are you most tempted to build your confidence on your own abilities?

Suggested Response: I may depend on my intelligence, communication skills, experience, planning, reputation, or the approval of people I respect. These things can be useful, but they cannot become the foundation of my confidence or faith.

Question 6: What would it look like for your worship to become more centered on Christ and less shaped by personalities or preferences?

Suggested Response: I can learn to appreciate gifted leaders without making them the center. I can pay more attention to whether Christ is being honored than whether my preferences are being met. Worship becomes healthier when

my praise, trust, and allegiance are directed to Jesus. I want to more intentionally remind myself that worship brings unity to the church and builds us up.

Question 7: What can we do this week as a group to protect our unity and keep Christ at the center?

Suggested Response: A priority is to worship together. This builds unity and edifies us. Also, we can resist comparison, speak carefully about leaders and churches, refuse to create unnecessary camps, and remind one another that Christ alone was crucified for us. We can also pray that our confidence and praise would rest in God rather than in human personalities.