



## St Barnabas Cray

# United in Christ: Sharing the Good News Together

## Weekly Devotional Journey

### Monday - When Division Threatens Unity

#### Morning Devotion

##### Today's Verse

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 may be no divisions among you, but that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. (1 Corinthians 1:10 NIV)

#### Devotional Thought

Paul's appeal to the Corinthians feels remarkably contemporary. This young church, barely established, was already fragmenting along lines of preference and personality. 'I follow Apollos,' some declared. 'I follow Cephas,' others countered. Sound familiar? Perhaps we've never said such words aloud, but haven't we all felt the pull towards our preferred leaders, worship styles, or 'the way things used to be'? Paul's response is both gentle and penetrating: 'Is Christ divided?' The question cuts through our human tendency to create camps and hierarchies. Notice that Paul

doesn't dismiss these leaders or rank them in order of importance. His concern isn't with the leaders themselves, but with how the community's focus had shifted from Christ to comparison, from mission to preference. This is the subtle danger that faces every Christian community: losing sight of Jesus whilst arguing over lesser things. When we allow our differences—legitimate though they may be—to become divisions, we risk emptying the cross of its power in our midst. Paul reminds us that we were baptised not into the name of our favourite teacher, but into Christ himself. This is where our unity lies: not in uniformity of opinion, but in our shared identity as those called by Jesus to carry his good news together.

#### Reflection Question

In what areas of church life do you find yourself drawn to comparison or preference rather than focusing on Christ?

#### From Sunday's Sermon

"Paul does not rank these leaders or dismiss them. Paul wasn't concerned in this letter with the leaders... He was concerned that the Corinthians, the community, were putting their energy into preference and comparison, arguing over who was best, and in doing so they were losing sight of Jesus."

#### Today's Application

Today, examine your heart for subtle divisions. Do you find yourself thinking, 'I prefer when so-and-so leads worship' or 'Things were better when...'? These aren't necessarily wrong thoughts, but they become dangerous when they shift our focus from Christ to comparison. Practice speaking positively about different aspects of your church community, even those that aren't your preference. When you catch yourself in critical thinking, pause and ask: 'How is this helping me love Jesus more and serve others better?' If you've been harbouring grievances, consider how to address them constructively—perhaps through prayer first, then conversation with appropriate people. Remember, the goal isn't to eliminate all differences (that's impossible), but to ensure that Christ remains at the centre of how we navigate them. Choose one specific area where you've been focusing on what's lacking and instead thank God for what he has provided.

**Morning Prayer**

Lord Jesus, forgive me for the times I've allowed preferences to become divisions in my heart. Help me to see beyond my own likes and dislikes to recognise you at work in ways I might not naturally choose. Unite my heart with my brothers and sisters around your cross, not around personalities or preferences. Give me grace to speak words that build up rather than tear down, and wisdom to know when and how to address concerns constructively. May your love, not my opinions, shape how I engage with your people. Amen.

## Evening Devotion

### Christ Undivided

#### Evening Reflection

As this day draws to a close, Paul's question echoes quietly: 'Is Christ divided?' The obvious answer is no—Christ cannot be divided, fragmented, or diminished by our human squabbles. Yet how often we live as though he can be! Tonight, reflect on the conversations you've had, the thoughts you've entertained, the attitudes you've carried. Have you lived today as someone united to an undivided Christ? Perhaps you've caught yourself in moments of criticism or comparison. Don't despair—this is the very human struggle Paul addressed. The beautiful truth is that Christ remains whole and present, working through imperfect people in imperfect communities. His good news doesn't depend on our getting everything right, but on his perfect love holding us together despite our differences.

#### Evening Reflection

How have you seen Christ at work today, even in the midst of imperfection or difference?

**Evening Prayer**

Jesus, thank you that you remain undivided even when we are fragmented. As I rest tonight, help me to release any critical thoughts or divisive attitudes I've carried today. Unite my heart afresh with yours and with my brothers and sisters in faith. Amen.

## Tuesday - Embracing Healthy Difference

### Morning Devotion

#### Today's Verse

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV)

### Devotional Thought

Difference itself is not the enemy of Christian community—division is. This distinction is crucial for mature faith. God has created us wonderfully diverse: different personalities, different spiritual gifts, different ways of expressing worship and faith. Some prefer contemplative silence; others thrive in exuberant celebration. Some connect with God through ancient liturgy; others through contemporary expression. Some are naturally drawn to deep theological study; others to practical service. This diversity isn't a design flaw to be corrected—it's a feature to be celebrated. The problem arises not when we have differences, but when we allow those differences to become sources of judgment, superiority, or division. Paul's wisdom shines here: he doesn't try to eliminate the diversity in Corinth, but to redirect their focus from comparison to Christ. When Jesus called his disciples, he didn't choose twelve identical men. He called fishermen and tax collectors, zealots and sceptics, impulsive Peter and doubting Thomas. Each brought something different to the community, and each was transformed not by becoming like the others, but by following Jesus together. The question for us is not whether we will have differences—we will. The question is whether we will allow those differences to divide us or to enrich our shared mission of carrying the good news together.

#### Reflection Question

How might God be using the differences in your church community to create a richer, more complete witness to his love?

### From Sunday's Sermon

"Difference is not the problem. Difference is inevitable... The question is not whether we will have differences, but how we walk through them."

### Today's Application

Today, actively appreciate someone in your church community who expresses faith differently than you do. If you prefer quiet worship, thank someone who brings energy and enthusiasm. If you love contemporary music, express gratitude to those who value traditional hymns. Look for opportunities to learn from those whose spiritual journey looks different from yours. Consider having a conversation with someone whose perspective or approach to faith has puzzled or even irritated you—approach them with genuine curiosity rather than judgment. Ask questions like: 'What draws you to this style of worship?' or 'How has God met you through this?' Remember, the goal isn't to become identical, but to understand how God works through diversity. Practice using language that honours difference: instead of 'I don't like...' try 'I appreciate how God uses different approaches...' This isn't about being false or suppressing legitimate concerns, but about cultivating a heart posture that expects to see God at work in ways beyond your natural preferences.

### Morning Prayer

Creator God, thank you for making us beautifully different. Help me to see the gifts and perspectives that others bring to our community, especially those that challenge or stretch me. Give me humility to learn from those who worship, serve, and follow you in ways that are unfamiliar to me. May our differences become a symphony of praise rather than a source of discord. Show me how to contribute my own gifts whilst celebrating the unique ways you work through others. Amen.

## Evening Devotion

### The Beauty of Diversity

#### Evening Reflection

Tonight, consider how God might have used the diversity around you today—not just in church, but in all areas of life. Perhaps a colleague's different approach solved a problem you couldn't crack. Maybe a family member's contrasting personality brought balance to a situation. Or possibly someone's unfamiliar way of expressing faith opened a new window into God's character for you. The same Spirit who distributes different gifts in the church is at work in all these encounters. As you reflect on your day, ask yourself: did you approach differences with curiosity and openness, or with resistance and judgment? Tomorrow offers fresh opportunities to celebrate the rich tapestry God weaves through diverse people united in his love.

#### Evening Reflection

Where did you see God working through someone whose approach or perspective differs significantly from yours?

#### Evening Prayer

Lord, thank you for the beautiful diversity I encountered today. Forgive me for moments when I resisted or judged rather than remained open to how you work through others. Help me to sleep peacefully, knowing that your Spirit is big enough to work through all our differences for your glory. Amen.

## Wednesday - Harrowing Times and New Growth

### Morning Devotion

#### Today's Verse

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.  
(Romans 8:28 NIV)

### Devotional Thought

The image of harrowing is both disturbing and hopeful. When heavy chains are dragged across a field, the process looks like destruction—clods of earth broken apart, the surface torn up, everything that seemed settled now disrupted. Yet this apparent devastation is actually preparation for new life. Without harrowing, seeds cannot take root; without breaking up the hard ground, nothing new can grow. Many of us know what it feels like to live through harrowing seasons, whether personally or as a church community. Relationships strained, certainties shaken, comfortable patterns disrupted. These times can feel deeply unsettling, even frightening. We long for the stability of unbroken ground, the predictability of settled routines. But God's purposes often require a different kind of soil preparation. The harrowing isn't punishment—it's preparation. It's God's way of breaking up the hard places in our hearts and communities so that his new life can take root. This doesn't mean we should welcome chaos or create unnecessary disruption. But when harrowing times come—and they will—we can trust that God is not absent from the process. He is the farmer who knows exactly what kind of ground preparation is needed for the seeds he wants to plant. The mess and muddle, when given to God, become the fertile soil from which surprising new growth emerges. This requires a profound act of trust: believing that God can work even in—especially in—the broken places.

#### Reflection Question

Looking back on difficult seasons in your life or church, where can you now see evidence of God's preparation for new growth?

### **From Sunday's Sermon**

"Many of us would say St Barnabas has had a harrowing time recently... But the harrowing of a field is not simply just destruction and bad news—it is preparation. In the same way if we give God our brokenness as individuals and as a community in the mess and the muddle, he can turn what looks and understandably feels like destruction into preparation."

### **Today's Application**

Identify one area of current difficulty or disruption in your life or church community. Instead of simply enduring it or trying to fix it immediately, spend time in prayer asking God how he might be preparing ground for new growth. This doesn't mean being passive about genuine problems that need addressing, but approaching them with the perspective that God can work redemptively even in hard circumstances. If you're in a season of relative stability, use this time to prepare your heart for future challenges by deepening your trust in God's goodness and sovereignty. Practice gratitude for both the settled seasons and the disrupted ones, recognising that God uses both. Consider reaching out to someone who is currently in a harrowing season—not to offer easy answers, but to remind them that they're not walking through it alone. Sometimes the most powerful ministry is simply being present with others in their broken ground, trusting that God is at work even when we can't see the new growth yet.

### **Morning Prayer**

Faithful God, you are the farmer who knows exactly what our hearts and communities need to grow in you. When life feels like harrowing—when everything seems broken and disrupted—help me to trust that you are preparing ground for new life. Give me patience with the process and faith to believe that you can bring beauty from brokenness. Use even the difficult seasons to make me more like Jesus and more useful for your kingdom. Amen.

## Evening Devotion

### Seeds in Broken Ground

#### Evening Reflection

As you end this day, perhaps you can identify some of the 'broken ground' in your own life or community. Maybe it's a relationship that's been strained, a dream that's been disrupted, or a season of uncertainty that's left you feeling unsettled. Tonight, instead of seeing these areas only as problems to be solved, consider them as ground that God might be preparing. What new growth might he want to cultivate in these very places? What seeds of character, compassion, or faith might he be planting in the soil of your current challenges? Rest in the knowledge that the same God who brings spring after winter, harvest after planting, is at work in your life even when—especially when—things feel broken apart.

#### Evening Reflection

What 'seeds' do you sense God might be planting in the currently difficult areas of your life?

#### Evening Prayer

Lord, I give you the broken and unsettled places in my life tonight. Help me to trust that you are preparing good ground for new growth, even when I can't see it yet. Plant your seeds of hope, faith, and love in the harrowed places of my heart. Amen.

## Thursday - Abundance Over Scarcity

### Morning Devotion

#### Today's Verse

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

(Philippians 4:12-13 NIV)

### Devotional Thought

The difference between an abundance mindset and a deficit mindset can transform how we experience life and faith. Churches with deficit mindsets focus on what they lack: 'We don't have enough people, enough money, enough young families, enough energy.' Churches with abundance mindsets focus on what God has given: 'Look at the faithful servants, the gifts represented, the opportunities before us.' Both churches might have identical circumstances, but their perspectives create entirely different realities. Paul understood this secret. He had learned to be content not because his circumstances were always favourable, but because his focus was fixed on Christ's strength rather than his own limitations. This isn't positive thinking or denial of real challenges. It's a theological conviction that God is bigger than our limitations and that he delights in working through what the world considers insufficient. Consider how Jesus fed five thousand with a boy's lunch, or how he chose twelve ordinary men to turn the world upside down. God's kingdom operates on abundance principles: he takes our small offerings and multiplies them beyond what we could imagine. When we approach our church communities with gratitude for what God has provided rather than anxiety about what we lack, we create space for his power to work. This shift in perspective doesn't happen automatically—it requires intentional cultivation of thankfulness and deliberate focus on God's faithfulness rather than our fears.

#### Reflection Question

Where have you been operating from a deficit mindset, and how might God be inviting you to see his abundance instead?

### From Sunday's Sermon

"Some churches are small — but they are joyful that God has placed them where they are. Some are financially poor — but they believe they are rich because they have Jesus and are desperate to share him... This isn't about comparing ourselves to others — comparison is fatal — but about gratitude."

### Today's Application

Make a concrete list of the gifts, resources, and blessings present in your church community. Include everything from faithful volunteers to beautiful music, from caring relationships to opportunities for service. Spend time thanking God specifically for each item on your list. When you catch yourself thinking about what your church lacks, deliberately redirect your thoughts to what God has provided. This week, express appreciation to someone who contributes to your church community in a way you might normally take for granted—perhaps the person who sets up chairs, the one who manages the finances, or someone who faithfully prays for the community. Practice speaking about your church from an abundance perspective: instead of 'We're too small,' try 'God has given us an intimate community where everyone matters.' Instead of 'We can't afford that,' consider 'God will provide what we need for his purposes.' This isn't about ignoring real challenges, but about approaching them from a foundation of trust in God's provision rather than anxiety about insufficiency.

### Morning Prayer

Generous God, forgive me for focusing on what I think we lack rather than celebrating what you have abundantly provided. Open my eyes to see the riches of your grace in our community. Help me to speak words of gratitude rather than complaint, abundance rather than scarcity. Give me Paul's secret of contentment—finding my strength in you rather than in my circumstances. Use our community, just as we are, for your glory. Amen.

## Evening Devotion

### Grateful Hearts

#### Evening Reflection

Tonight, let gratitude settle into your heart like evening light. As you reflect on your day, notice not what was missing but what was present. Perhaps it was a kind word from a colleague, a moment of unexpected beauty, or simply the gift of breath and life itself. This practice of recognising abundance isn't naive optimism—it's training your heart to see as God sees. He looks at our small offerings, our ordinary lives, our imperfect communities, and sees not deficit but potential. He sees not what we lack but what he can do through what we offer. As you prepare for sleep, carry this abundance mindset into tomorrow, ready to see God's provision in places you might have previously seen only lack.

#### Evening Reflection

What moments of abundance—however small—did you notice in today's ordinary experiences?

#### Evening Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the abundance you've woven through this ordinary day. Help me to carry a grateful heart into tomorrow, ready to see your provision and to share your abundance with others. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Friday - Weakness Made Strong

### Morning Devotion

#### Today's Verse

But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV)

### Devotional Thought

Paul's understanding of weakness and power turns worldly wisdom on its head. He deliberately avoided impressive rhetoric and sophisticated arguments, not because he lacked ability, but because he understood something profound: if he were impressive enough, people might praise him instead of Jesus. This is profoundly liberating for ordinary Christians in ordinary churches. We don't need to be perfect, polished, or impressive for God to work through us. In fact, our weaknesses often become the very places where his strength is most clearly displayed. When we acknowledge our limitations—whether as individuals or as a church community—we create space for God's power to be revealed. This doesn't mean we should be careless or avoid growth and improvement. Rather, it means we can stop pretending to have it all together and instead trust that God delights in working through imperfect people. The early church was hardly impressive by worldly standards: a handful of fishermen, tax collectors, and ordinary people who had encountered Jesus. Yet through their weakness, God turned the world upside down. The same is true today. God doesn't need our perfection; he needs our availability. He doesn't require our strength; he provides his own. When we stop trying to impress others with our capabilities and instead point them to Christ's power working through our weaknesses, the gospel becomes credible in ways that polished performance never could achieve.

#### Reflection Question

In what areas of your life or church community might God want to display his strength through acknowledged weakness?

### From Sunday's Sermon

"It's okay that we are not a huge, shiny, perfect church. It's okay that sermons aren't flawless. It's okay that a wrong note gets played in worship. Our hearts are focused on Jesus. He is the perfecter of our faith — we are not."

### Today's Application

This week, practice honesty about your limitations whilst trusting in God's strength. If you're in a position of leadership or service, resist the temptation to appear to have everything together. Instead, model dependence on God's grace. When mistakes happen—in worship, in relationships, in ministry—use them as opportunities to point to Christ's perfection rather than trying to cover them up. Consider sharing with someone a specific area where you feel inadequate, and ask them to pray that God's strength would be evident there. If you've been avoiding certain ministries or opportunities because you don't feel qualified enough, prayerfully consider whether God might be inviting you to step forward in weakness, trusting his strength to fill the gap. Remember, the goal isn't to become impressive but to become transparent—letting Christ's light shine through the cracks in our lives. Practice speaking about your church community's limitations with hope rather than shame, trusting that God's power is made perfect in weakness.

### Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you that you don't need my perfection to accomplish your purposes.

Help me to embrace my weaknesses as opportunities for your strength to be displayed.

Free me from the exhausting attempt to appear impressive, and instead make me transparent to your grace. Work through our imperfect church community in ways that clearly point to your power rather than our abilities. May others see you, not us, when they encounter our community. Amen.

## Evening Devotion

### Perfect in Weakness

#### Evening Reflection

As this week of reflection draws to a close, rest in the beautiful paradox of the gospel: God's power is made perfect in weakness. You don't have to be strong enough, wise enough, or impressive enough for God to work through you. Tonight, release the pressure to have everything figured out, to be the perfect Christian, or to belong to the perfect church. Instead, offer your weaknesses, your questions, your inadequacies to the God who specialises in using the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. His grace is sufficient for you—not just for your strengths, but especially for your weaknesses. In your vulnerability, his power finds its perfect expression. Sleep peacefully, knowing that tomorrow offers fresh opportunities to experience his strength in your weakness.

#### Evening Reflection

How has this week helped you to see God's power at work through imperfection and weakness?

#### Evening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of weakness that makes space for your strength. As I rest tonight, I offer you all my inadequacies and limitations, trusting that your grace is truly sufficient. Help me to wake tomorrow ready to serve you not in my own strength, but in the power of your perfect love. Amen.