

January 26, 2020 | Sanctuary & Journey worship services

TEXT: [1 Corinthians 1:10–18](#)

TITLE: **Majoring in the Minor**

By the Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Enrique Fiallo, a life coach, speaker, and writer states the 11 warning signs that you are or may be majoring in minor things include:

1. Too many hobbies, and not being particularly good at any of them
2. Avoiding meetings—or I might add scheduling and attending too many meetings
3. Subscribing to dozens of magazines, mailing lists, blogs, newsletters
4. Paying maniacal attention to an overflowing mailbox, in other words, unimportant junk mail
5. Climbing down an Internet rabbit hole, expanding searches, going deeper and deeper as the path twists and turns
6. Having dozens of pages open in your browser
7. An insanely long To Do list full of trivial items—and a false sense of accomplishments from completing many each day
8. Constant Procrastination
9. A cluttered desk with half started tasks and assignments
10. A series of home projects in progress, gathering dust
11. Excessive TV watching, especially news programs

Fiallo goes on to say:

The trivial, the mundane, the distractions, the shiny objects, the squirrel flitting from branch to branch. These are almost like a drug, reaching out to you, interrupting, engrossing, diverting, interfering, confusing, and preoccupying your thinking and focus. Distractions keep you from your real mission. Distractions prevent you from concentrating on and accomplishing the truly important things in life.

(<https://medium.com/@EnriqueFiallo/10-deadly-mistakes-cost-me-everything-the-4th-mistake-majoring-in-minor-things-e39212f9c74a>, accessed January 21, 2020)

If we are honest with ourselves, many of us find that there are items on Fiallo's list that we identify with. We spend way too much time on things activities and distractions that don't advance the kingdom of God here on earth. The people in Corinth found themselves majoring in insignificant aspects of their Christianity. Corinth was a large, prosperous, urban center with an ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse population. Some of the inhabitants of Corinth were people of considerable prominence. However, the majority were most likely people with lesser means and lower socioeconomic standing. Paul writes his letter to the Corinthian Christians, because it has come to his attention that there are serious disorder and divisions within the church. Much later in Paul's letter we learn what some of the issues are. Some people are strategizing to control others, there is an indifference to flagrant immorality; some people are exhibiting a disregard for others they consider as not enlightened about proper Christian conduct; and most distressing is the marginalization of the more disadvantaged members of the community.

The more things change, the more they remain the same. In society, in families, yes, even in churches we are exhibiting behaviors that marginalize, depreciate, and disparage others; while turning a deaf ear and blind eye to those who flagrantly wield their authority by trying to control and diminish others. We spend inordinate amounts of time talking about our differences in the body of Christ rather than focusing on the attributes that bind us together as family, the love of God, Jesus Christ's sacrifice, and the indwelling power of Holy Spirit.

Now like any wise and judicious person, Paul graciously begins his letter by extolling the positive virtues and gifts of the Corinthian Christians writing: "I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge...so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift" (1 Cor. 1:4-7a). Then Paul then gets to the heart of the matter. It has been brought to my attention by Chloe's people that there are quarrels and dissension among you. You're arguing over and picking sides over unimportant things. Things like who baptized you, or to which camp you belong. Who has the most charismatic pastor, the most education, money; who has the lived in the community the longest, or has the longest tenure on the job; or God forbid who has the most authentic theology.

The problems in the church of Corinth are still present and are often considered reasons or excuses for us to be divided as the body of Christ. One commentator contends, we are easily divided by "'social justice' issues pitted against 'biblical faithfulness,' progressivisms against traditionalisms, and a stand on one issue can divide the true hearted from the reprobate" (Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 1, Alan Gregory). Now I will be the first to admit that I hold my beliefs very close to heart, that I can be intolerant of others and don't easily give some people the benefit of the doubt. I will affirm that I'm not as flexible as I should be in some cases and formulate negative opinions about some people, particularly when I believe they are on the wrong side of an argument as it relates to how they treat others. The Word of God says that the truth will set us free, and I seek to be free and transparent about my people issues. Yet, I am, we are, compelled to see people as we are seen by Christ, as siblings beloved, not as enemies, or inferior, or to be controlled, all of which we see manifested in our relationships, workplace, and sometimes in the church.

In *Daring Greatly*, Brene Brown contends that shame, internalized belief that we are flawed, not worthy, or don't belong and scarcity are two factors that cause us to manifest fear, disengage, and stifle innovation, creativity, productivity, and trust. Brown states "signs that shame has permeated a culture include: bullying others, criticizing subordinates, public reprimands, favoritism or rewards systems that intentionally belittle, shame, or humiliate people" (p.189). Brown suggests that when we allow ourselves "to shift from controlling to engaging with vulnerability—taking risks and cultivating trust we create space for others to flourish, to engage positively, to perform, and to problem solve, to come into their own; and that while vulnerability can make us feel powerless, it is actually a total power move" (p.209).

You might say that by taking sides, stating who baptized whom, the Christians in Corinth were setting up camps and divisions, rather than recognizing they all belonged to God. “Commentator Alan Gregory states that “Our theological and ethnical disputes, our controversies over Christian practice, are hopelessly compromised as soon as we fail to recognize those with whom we contend as also ‘in Christ.’ All our initiatives, parties, groupings, causes are, as it were, ‘inside the brackets,’ Christ alone is outside, as ‘Lord of all.’” (Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 1, Alan Gregory)

Paul exhorts the Corinthian, “I appeal to you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and have the same purpose. Now Paul is not advocating for, nor implying that unity connotes or commands uniformity. Paul is the first to acknowledge that God has graciously endowed us with various and manifold gifts and talents to build up the body of Christ. And if you will indulge me, I believe that our individual and various life experiences, ethnic, racial, gender identities, social and economic positions or status all add to the flavor and strength of the body of Christ.

Rather than allowing minor things to become major in our collective life, we are called to major in the thing that matter: worshiping God, reading and meditating on The Word, creating opportunities and accompanying those who are disadvantaged among us, giving everyone an equitable and equal chance, creating an atmosphere where people can exercise their gifts freely and become all that God created them to be, being gracious and loving and kind, and valuing all of God’s creation and world. If we spent more time focusing on those things, we wouldn’t have the energy or time to focus on things that have no kingdom value.

Paul is clear. Christ did not send him to baptize. Now don’t get it twisted, baptism is one of the two sacraments, graces in the church that connect us mysteriously and spiritually to God and to one another. Baptism isn’t a minor thing. But according to Paul, baptism isn’t the major thing. The major thing is proclamation of the gospel. To proclaim the good news that Christ came, lived among us, died on the cross and was resurrected on the third day and now sits at the right hand of God making intercessions on our behalf. The major thing is that in Christ Jesus there is no division, for he and he alone is the foundation of our faith, and that’s where our time, energy and attention is best focused.

Fiallo says that distractions or minor things prevent us from accomplishing the important things in life, our life’s mission. Brown states that shame and scarcity prevent us from daring greatly and opening space for others to do the same.” (p.248) Paul’s words echo and are yet as relevant today as when he wrote to the Corinthian Christians: “Now I appeal to you, brothers, sisters, siblings, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose” (1 Cor. 1:10). May we all begin to major on those things. Amen.