



Choose Love

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Sunday, January 25, 2026, Aledo UMC

Rev. Dr. David R. Schultz

Sermon, "Choose Love"

Did any of you happen to watch football last weekend? I had to watch football because it was research for today's sermon.

Last weekend was, of course, the Divisional Playoffs Round and it featured Buffalo at Denver; San Francisco at Seattle; Houston at New England; and Los Angeles at Chicago. And if you're wondering, the home team won every game except the last one.

Not only was it a big football weekend, but it was also Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. weekend. The league decided to honor Dr. King's legacy by adopting the phrase "Choose Love," and that theme was wrapped around the goal posts, painted at the backs of the end zone, and worn on the backs of players' helmets.

It's a good phrase. But football can be a violent sport, and I found it a rather ironic phrase to be paired with such a potentially violent game. But it is a game, and because it is a game, hopefully they—and their fans—will "Choose Love."

Since I've been a life-long Packer fan, and because Jordan Love is the quarterback for the Packers, I looked back to see if "Choose Love" was the theme when the Packers met the Bears in the Wild Card Round. Wouldn't "Choose Love" kind of mess with the minds of the Bears players?

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Turns out that for the Wild Card round, “Inspire Change” was painted in one end zone and “It Takes All of Us” was painted in the other. No “Choose Love” for Packers’ quarterback Jordan Love. But Love did get sacked by the Bears.

The legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King also inspired Monday’s devotional reading in the Upper Room. David Russell, a retired pastor living in Illinois, reflected on something he experienced in 1955 when he was just 11 years old. He and his mom spent the fall of that year at the home of his “adoptive” grandmother, Dr. Abbie Clement Jackson in Louisville, Kentucky. He reports that his neighborhood, school, church, and Boy scout troop were all Black. When the Louisville school district wanted to bus him 20 minutes away to a white school, Grandma Abbie and David’s mom convinced the school superintendent that David would be much more comfortable remaining at the school where he had friends.

Sometime later, David and his grandma attended a meeting at a church conference; Dr. Abbi was the keynote speaker, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. happened to be participating in that event.

At one point, Dr. King asked 11-year-old David, “What is it like being the only white boy in an all Negro school?”

David thought for a moment and then said, “It’s normal.”¹

It’s normal.

I love that!

I turned to another devotional, and once again, Dr. King was mentioned, this time in the context of 1 Corinthians 1:10-18, which I would like to read for you now.

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For it has been made clear to me by Chloe’s people...

We need to stop right there for a moment. Paul mentions “Chloe’s people.” Who is this Chloe? This is the only time she’s mentioned in scripture, but it’s enough to tell us that she must’ve had a leadership role in the early church in Corinth. She was also a woman of great influence who contacted Paul in the hopes of getting his help in resolving an issue in the church.

Chloe’s leadership in the church flies in the face of those who want to minimize the role of women in the church. Chloe was a leader who discerned a need in the early church and sought to resolve it. Let’s pick up again at vs. 11:

¹¹ For it has been made clear to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters.

¹² What I mean is that each of you says, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas,” or “I belong to Christ.” ¹³ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. ¹⁷ For Christ

¹ *The Upper Room*, Nashville, January 19, 2026.

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did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel—and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.²

That passage raises an important question, one that is just as relevant for us today as it has been for the past two millennia. And that is: Can the members of the body of Christ be in perfect agreement with one another and yet maintain those things which make them unique?

At first, Paul seems to say, “No. We must all be of one mind.” But that kind of imposed unity is the tool of cults. And we are not in a cult because we know how to think. Indeed, part of the genius of the Bible is that it was created to make us think.

Notice what Paul wrote to the church at Galatia:

²⁶ ... in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29).

Notice that the Jews remained Jews; the Greeks remained Greeks; the slaves remained slaves; the free remained free; the male remained male and the female remained female. Everyone maintains their distinctive characteristics. What changes is that they were all baptized into Christ. In fact, baptism is the link between 1 Corinthians 1 and Galatians 3.

In the Corinthian Church, the believers assumed that it made a difference as to who baptized you, whether Paul, Apollos, or Peter. Paul debunks that whole idea, but it also points out our human tendency to create artificial divisions among us.

Our nation has been plagued by racial divisions since the 1600s. Despite the best efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King, we’re still a divided people: black and white and brown and yellow and blue and red. Blue and red? I threw those last two colors in because it seems lately that if we’re not divided by race, then we’re divided by party affiliation: Are you red? Or are you blue? But God doesn’t see us through the lens of political affiliation any more than he sees us through the lens of race. The only lens that matters to God is whether or not we are “in Christ,” and that is universally celebrated at baptism.

So how are we to heal our divisions? Most divisions happen when we don’t really know someone on the other side. That’s one reason why welcoming the stranger was so important in Jesus’ day. He knew we hadn’t talked to them. He knew we hadn’t listened to them. He knew we hadn’t heard their story.

At best, we talk across our differences, but we never truly listen to the other. We want to be heard. But we don’t want to hear. We refuse to listen. And we certainly refuse to consider the possibility that the person across the great divide just might have a valid point or may have lived through an experience that changed their life in a way that is beyond our comprehension.

² Vs. 10, NIV; Vs. 11-18, NRSVUE.

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But still we talk. We make our case. But we never truly listen to the other. And we never bridge the divide.

I said at the beginning of this year that my sermons this month would connect with the idea of making resolutions. On January 4, I proposed the resolution that we breathe. On January 11, I proposed three resolutions: That we hear the cries of children; that we develop a fresh appreciation for the majesty of God revealed in Creation; and that we rededicate ourselves to the care of that Creation.

This morning I'm proposing that we simply listen, especially to the voices and stories of those who are different from us.

A few years ago, the story of Michael Kent went viral on social media. As a young white man, Michael became involved in a violent white supremacist movement in Arizona. In Michael's defense, one might say that Michael's racism evolved naturally. He grew up in a mostly black neighborhood, where, he says, they had to "fight to survive as a family".

When he was 12, a Black man broke into his house and tried to rape his mother. On another occasion, the mother of a black friend called him a "blue-eyed devil" and said she didn't want him in her house. Michael says that fueled his hate and he responded with all-out racism. He committed hate crimes and recruited young people. And he acquired several tattoos, including two swastika tattoos on his chest and a large "white pride" tattoo on his back.³

Michael eventually went to prison on drugs and weapons charges. After he served his time, was released on probation. At first, his probation officers came to him in pairs because they knew Michael was a violent man.

But one day, a Black female parole officer, Tiffany Whittier, came to see him all alone, even though she was fully aware of his past. She entered Michael's home and saw the swastikas, the Confederate flags, and the pictures of Hitler. And while Tiffany did not judge him, she suggested that he take down his Nazi paraphernalia, joking that he could replace it with positive influences like smiley faces. Michael, to his credit, took her seriously.

Little by little, he got rid of his Nazi stuff and said he started feeling better and less aggressive. And his rapport with Tiffany grew as she supported him and as she met his colleagues and his family.

Michael says, "She became involved in my life and the hate started drifting away and the love started building in my heart," Michael says. And he and Tiffany went on to become close friends. They attend one another's family get-togethers. And it all happened because two people were willing to look across that great divide. They got to know one another as human beings created in the image of God.

To complete his transformation, Michael contacted an organization called Redemption Ink, a not-for-profit organization which removes hate-related tattoos. They referred him to a company in Colorado, where Michael now lives, and they covered the old racist images with new designs.

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41816588>. Accessed Friday, January 23, 2026.

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A few years ago, Martin Luther King Jr.'s daughter, Dr. Bernice King, contacted Michael and Tiffany and invited them to speak at the King Center for what would have been her father's 90th birthday. That was on January 15, 2019.⁴

Tiffany says that she and Michael were just regular people who listened to one another and got to know one another. In the process, they rejected hate. Michael says that “love is so much easier than hate.” Together, Michael Kent and Tiffany Whittier chose love.

⁴ <https://blog.iamsecond.com/white-supremacist-meets-african-american-probation-officer>. Accessed Friday, January 23, 2026.