

Unity & Division 2: When Christians Divide

(10/12/25)

Please turn to

LAST WEEK:

- God is first and foremost a Father and we—who know Jesus as our Lord and Savior—are His kids.
- God wants His kids to get along! To be in unity with each other as much as possible.
- Just like a human parent who knows when their kids are getting along or not, so does God.
- Just like a human parent is happy to see their kids in unity and grieved to see them divided, so is Abba-Father.
- He designed us to be different parts of the same body.
- Unnecessary division happens for 2 reasons: 1) when a Christian feels like they don't fit in and 2) when one part of the body falsely believes it doesn't need another part.
- There are no Christian “black sheep” who don't fit in. Why do I say that?
- The unifying Person for all who truly know Jesus is the Holy Spirit, and He's the same in every Christian.
- There is only one father, one faith, one Baptism, etc.
- God is the designer of the Body: he may have made you into a lesser known or lesser visible part, but He created you to fit in and not be alone.
- Claiming to be “the black sheep” in the church is to deny that God designed you or that He made some sort of error.

TODAY we ask and answer a hard question: **is there a time for Christians to divide? The answer is YES.**

When is the time? What are the right Biblical circumstances?

- Heretical teaching & beliefs.
- Lack of repentance for sins committed.

Heretical teachings and beliefs. The word “heresy” is an old word and basically means this: there's a group of people who've built themselves around the Gospel. A smaller group gets its own ideas radically separate from the Gospel they originally learned whether they make it up themselves or are influenced by another. They split off from the main group, form their own thing, and teach the same as truth.

Summation: **a heretical teaching is one that splits off from Biblical truth and goes in its own direction.**

Such teaching DIVIDES people, *causing them to leave churches and break relationships with other Christians*. It usually causes them to migrate to a church or group that embraces and teaches the what they believe.

Example: **Oprah Winfrey** was raised in a Bible-believing Southern Baptist Church. After she left her hometown and went off into the world, she began to believe in “progressive thought.” She began to embrace abortion, LGBT, etc. creating conflict within her own heart with what she’d been raised to believe. She testified that she revisited her home church as an adult where the pastor was teaching Biblical values such as marriage being between a man and woman only, and she decided—right then and there—that she no longer had fellowship with her church. She broke off from them and fully embraced progressive values and New Age teachings.

What happened to her was **she embraced heretical teachings and made them her own**. The result was she *cut off her former connection with the church and the truth*. Oprah should have stayed with the beliefs she was raised with and with her church.

When is the *right* time for a Christian to divide from their church or other Christians?

Answer: **If your church or group is teaching heresy.**

[1Co 11:18-19 KJV] 18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. 19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

Paul heard that **certain heresies existed in the Corinthian church** and these things needed to be exposed and rooted out. This can result in one of two things. 1) the people believing and teaching heresies repent and remain in the church. 2) they don’t and end up being asked to leave or leaving on their own.

In other epistles Paul points out **specific false teachings that qualified as heresy**, things like telling people they needed to be circumcised or keep the Sabbath to be Saved.

Peter said this:

[2Pe 2:1-2 KJV] 1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

Said FP's were *denying Jesus as Savior, Messiah, or God*. Peter urged his church to reject such people.

Even today there are “churches” who deny the deity of Christ, deny the Bible as God’s Word, actively promote lifestyles God calls sin (but claim the Lord approves,) have changed the Gospel into universalism, social justice, and more.

Churches like this have fallen away from the faith, listening to demonic spirits and their teachings. If you ever walk into a church that teaches such things, I recommend you leave immediately. Divide from that church and from Christians like that.

Beyond teachings that blatantly go against what the Lord shows us in the Bible, *you have to decide for yourselves if something you heard in your church was bad enough for you to leave*. I’ve had people leave Gateway because we speak in tongues as a private prayer language, have a pro-Israel stance, or continue to preach that marriage is between one man and one woman. I had one fellow tell me he couldn’t stay because he felt my sermons were on topics verses just going through entire books of the bible verse by verse. I had another woman say she wanted to come, but since we only had communion once per month vs every service, she wasn’t going to.

I’m not ridiculing any of these folk. **Their conscience convicted them that these were good reasons to divide from Gateway.** No 2 Christians agree completely on every teaching.

My stance is this: the main pillars of what it means to be a Christian are most important: Jesus is the only way, the Bible is God’s Word, the Trinity, Salvation by Grace, etc. Some call that “essential teaching.” **If your church or group teaches anything that goes against any aspect of essential teaching, you should leave.**

When it comes to what some call “non-essential” teaching such as the timing of the rapture, prophecy and tongues, deliverance, end times teaching, etc. **it should take a preponderance of those things that cause someone to leave.** In the end, you must decide.

The second reason Christians should divide is over a lack of repentance for sin.

[Luk 17:3-4 ESV] 3 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

“Your brother” is a fellow Christian. Look how Jesus tells us to handle this: *if a fellow Christian in your church sins against you or is living a sinful lifestyle, then talk to him or her about it.* “Rebuke” is an old word that simply means you point out the fact that he/she sinned against you.

For example: **you confide in sister Sally and ask her to keep what you told her private.** She says she will. Later on, Sally shares what you told her in confidence to someone else and it gets back to you. Go to her and say *“I asked you to keep that to yourself and went out and told someone.”*

If she apologizes then forgive her. If she doesn’t, you have a problem.

Brother Johnny borrowed money from you and hasn’t paid you back when he said he would. When you ask him about it, he lies and claims that he already paid you back. Correct him. If he repents and promises to pay what he owes, forgive him. You might even be inspired to forgive the financial debt: up to you. If he doesn’t repent, you have a problem.

We don’t divide from a church or Christians due to sin. If we did, we could never get together...not even 2 of us. Sooner or later, even 2 people getting together for church—one would sin against the other one.

We divide when there’s a lack of repentance for sin.

[Mat 18:15-17 ESV] 15 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

I don't like these verses any more than you do. I most certainly don't want to be on either end of them, either. ***Let's start with verse 15 and I'll repeat it here.***

“If your brother or sister sins against you, become offended, stew on it, and wait for them to come to you and make it right. When they don't, leave the church then make sure you tell everyone how you were mistreated.”

“If your brother or sister sins against you raise your voice, make accusations, name call, and escalate. When they refuse to repent, go tell others in the church and get them on your side.”

“If your brother or sister sins against you try and forgive them from a distance, then just let it go...sweep it under the rug.”

“If your brother or sister sins against you, call your Pastor and tell him. Once you feel more regulated, decide you DON'T need to confront the person who sinned against you even though your pastor tells you to.”

The truth is if someone in your church sins against you, including me, ***let's sit down and talk about it.*** Maybe someone misunderstood or misinterpreted or maybe it truly was sin. Let's figure it out. If I truly sinned against you, I need to repent. Period.

Why? Because we are brothers and sisters in Christ, **with the same Holy Spirit living within us.** The same Abba Dad in heaven. When the resurrection takes place, we're going to be raised together. We're going to live in God's Kingdom together and it'll be forever. When we're finally in the New Jerusalem, are we going to avoid each other? You walk on one side of the streets of gold and I the other?

We should remember that when a Christian sins against another one, ***our FATHER is aware.*** He's watching and listening. In other words, it's just between the 2 of us.

Let's go back to the family dynamic. **2 adult siblings can convince themselves their tiff is only between them.** But their dad or mom sees it too, and also sees how it's affecting the ENTIRE family dynamic in a bad way. Dad or mom then grieves to see 2 people they love at odds with each other. Dad or mom wants reconciliation, peace, and for all their kids to get along.

So does Abba God.

[Mat 5:23-24 ESV] 23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Context here isn't a church taking a money offering, but a person *bringing a pigeon to the Temple to have the priest ask God to forgive their sins.*

Jesus is telling us that reconciliation to another Christian needs to happen. Remember that reconciliation is a fork with 2 tines: **forgiving and asking for forgiveness of a fellow Christian.**

If we're confronted by another Christian, let's sit down and talk it out.

- Let the one doing the confronting be HEARD.
- It doesn't mean they're right. Maybe they misinterpreted because that does happen.
- Or maybe we did sin against them.
- Maybe said sin was something big like stealing or assault, perhaps we were having a bad day and took it out on them...that's still offensive.
- Even if we "didn't mean to" that's a hurtful thing to do that requires a humble apology.
- Maybe we came across to another in a way they took offense to.
- Maybe we're thinking we didn't really sin against them...but do we care enough about a fellow Christian to realize they're still hurting over it?
- Perhaps we can admit we could have been more gentle in our delivery, or something like that?

We're called to care enough about each other to extend patience and grace when another Christian has the courage to approach us about something potentially offensive we did.

Jesus says that if we can work it out, a beautiful thing happens: **you GAIN that person.** In other words, your relationship with that person gets better! If you didn't have one in the beginning, now you do! I've seen this happen over and over and it's wonderful.

If it truly is sin, and the person refuses to repent, **that's the time for additional witnesses.** That's when you approach church leadership and ask for an intervention and turn things over to them to handle. There can be personal counseling and mediation to see if things can be worked out. *If they can't be, that's the time for division.*

How about this: ***we make it our personal goal, applying to ourselves, to not let things get to that point.*** If we're approached by another brother or sister we do this:

- **Listen.** Allow them to express and explain themselves w/o interruption.
- **Understand.** Instead of being triggered and getting defensive, let's truly try and see where they're coming from.
- **Self-examine.** Ask yourself how you came across, if it could have been gentler. Ask yourself if you were angry about something else and took it out on this person. Ask yourself if what they're saying is true, and you did sin against them.
- **Reconcile.** Care enough about them to realize they've been hurt. Even if they misunderstood you, work toward reconciliation by admitting you could have communicated better. If you truly did sin against them, even "accidentally," apologize and make it right.

Let's not grieve Abba Father. Let's walk in the power that Jesus gave us which can be summed up in His famous verse:

[Jhn 13:34-35 ESV] 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."