

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**Sunday Jan 3, 2021. "Let the Healing Begin: What Causes Division"**

### **I Intro.**

HAPPY NEW YEAR!! Welcome 2021.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

### **II Sunday.**

I was going to change the intro because it says we're still gathering in person, but wanted to leave that to let you know that on January 10th we will be back for in person worship. We haven't gathered in two weeks, including the 3rd, because of the holidays. We know there were a lot of family gatherings, and we wanted to be as safe as we could protecting our volunteers. We so value those who give of their time to keep NCC going and we're going to do all we can to keep them safe.

Sunday we began a new series talking about division, how it happens in communities, (like church), how we each play a part in causing these divides, and specific questions we can ask to help us be agents of healing for divisions within groups and faith communities.

We defined division as disagreements, differences, that grow into drawing lines, and forming of sides that force people into camps. We stopped short of actual splits, where people decide to go their separate ways. That is a different conversation and there are different processes to make those go more smoothly. This is basically differences that form cracks in unity, closeness, if left unaddressed can grow into splits. However, if we catch them early enough, do the work of finding the causes, do some intentional inner work, we can heal those divisions. So, as always we'll ask some questions.

**What do you believe are some of the causes of divisions in communities?**

**How have you experienced people becoming divided?**

**How does a divided community affect you?**

The passage we began with was in 1 Corinthians, where we'll be for the entire series, and it was Paul beginning to address the division at the church in Corinth. So, read **1 Corinthians 1:10-17**.

**What jumped out to you from this passage?**

**How did Paul frame some of the causes of division?**

**How did Paul begin to talk about what could heal those divisions?**

There were some specific things Paul seemed to mention that cause division within communities.

**1. Creating sides.** Because we want to belong and fit into a particular group, we will elevate less important things to non-negotiable things that draw lines that create divides. Unless you hold this position, this belief, this understanding I cannot be friends with you. This makes community dependent on agreement, uniformity, rather than a larger connection through Christ.

**What beliefs or values do you hold in which people close to you hold a different understanding? How do you value the relationship in those differences?**

**2. Lack of humility or unaware of my own pride.** In this passage Paul was addressing people who were making the center of 'rightness' around themselves. People had divided into camps, i.e. Paul, Apollos, Peter, making their belief the absolute center of correctness. Humility should always tell us that what we believe and hold as true, is as much born out of our own experiences, and preferences, as it is having a lock down on 'truth'. We always hold our beliefs loosely, because in humility we allow ourselves to be open to God continually speaking to us.

**Where do you struggle in your holding onto certain beliefs as the only way to believe?**

**3. Lack of understanding of the importance of diversity in the body.** There is something divine and holy about how beautifully different and diverse we are within the church. There is a purpose and a divine plan for us to live and work connected by the person of Jesus, and the work of the cross, rather than moving all of us to some bland, not compelling sameness.

**Who are some people groups or differences that you just struggle with?**

**4. Lack of an intentional self-aware dependence on God.** Divisions are often created by an overactive dependence on our own perceived rightness rather than the continual unveiling work of God. We often strive to push our own beliefs and preferences, rather than waiting on God to lead and guide us. We ought to have little warning signs when we begin to drift in our dependence on God.

**Where and how do you slide in wanting control rather than trusting in God?**

**5. Not having a theology rooted in a holistic, healthy understanding of scripture.** Over the years, scripture has become a 'case-law' book helping us prove we're right and have the correct beliefs, and proving others wrong. Not that scripture doesn't contain truths that can be used on guiding others towards a relationship with Jesus. But that purpose is to HELP GUIDE PEOPLE IN A GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. Scripture should be understood and interpreted knowing our own preferences, and experiences, and that there are passages that have commands for us, and others that simply tell us the history of God's interaction with his children.

There is no, do we do this. We do. The question is; **What things can we do to help us have a fuller and more holistic understanding of how to read and practice scripture?**

### **III Challenge.**

Ok...this was a tough one. No one likes to do a deep dive in negative stuff, but this teaching by Paul is so important to the health and vitality of a community. We all will face times of disagreement and division, and having the honesty and courage to face it head on in a productive Christ honoring way will make all the difference in guiding the group of people to a healthier place.

Final question. **What specific ways can you contribute to the overall health of your community?**