

GOD, THE GOSPEL & HIS GLORY

FOCUS & DISCIPLINE – Titus 3:9-15

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'I am my own biggest problem'

And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people. But everyone knows that you are obedient to the Lord. This makes me very happy. I want you to be wise in doing right and to stay innocent of any wrong. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. (Romans 16:17-20, NLT)

Church Discipline

- Very important issue, but difficult and often misunderstood, not to be confused with weakness, doubt, vulnerability, new to the faith.
- Applies to all of us (see Apostle Paul applied danger to himself - 2 Corinthians 12:7).
- Notice the involvement of Satan.

Some Characteristics Of Divisive People

- May be very nice, personable and gifted people.
- Underlying problem always one of pride, ambition, attention seeking but will manifest as recurrent complaints, offences against the church and especially the pastors.
- Difficulties accepting correction.

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly. Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:2-3, ESV)

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. (Proverbs 12:1, ESV)

- Often very little self awareness especially of collateral damage.
- Like titles/position.
- If not dealt with it is progressive and spiritually deadly. It can gradually escalate over many years.
- Ingratitude.
- Often divisive issues in other areas of life i.e. marriage/work.
- These 'issues' are usually 'non deal breaker issues' (grumbling) involving personal taste and style, 'chip on the shoulder'.
- Like to 'know things' that are none of their business (John 21:20-23, 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12).
- Often will 'gossip' issues (in direct disobedience to Jesus teaching in Matthew 18).
- Often reluctant to talk to the pastors and if they do so, they may become confrontational and verbally abusive. (End stage bitterness).
- Overfamiliarity and lack of understanding of the role of senior pastor.
- Critical of pastors wife and children.
- Basic lack of understanding of the gospel and alienated from God.

Exodus 16:10, 17:2, 32; Numbers 12:1-16,16,17; 2 Samuel 15-18; Jeremiah 9:8; Psalms, Matthew 7:15, 10:16; Luke 10:3; Acts 20:29; 1 Corinthians 1:1-31, 3:1-23; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 5:13, 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:23, 3:1-9, 4:14-16; Hebrews 12:15; James 3:14

Prevention

- Know the gospel and preach it to ourselves daily, repentance, humility.
- Develop personal insight with the help of the Holy Spirit.
- Deal with inevitable issues, questions and offence Biblically and with love and humility (Matthew 18:15-35).

Blessed are those who fear to do wrong, but the stubborn are headed for serious trouble. (Proverbs 28:14, NLT)

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. (Psalms 51:10, NLT)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Psalms 139:23-24, NLT)

The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve. (Jeremiah 17:9-10, NLT)

- Do good.
- Spiritual discipline! Staying focussed.

Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come. (1 Timothy 4:8, NLT)

Church Discipline

The aim is to confront a divisive person early with aims of restoration and protection of the church. The need to be proactive.

And there's more life to come, an eternity of life! You can count on this. I want you to put your foot down. Take a firm stand on these matters so that those who have put their trust in God will concentrate on the essentials that are good for everyone. Stay away from mindless, pointless quarrelling over genealogies and fine print in the law code. That gets you nowhere. Warn a quarrelsome person once or twice, but then be done with him. It's obvious that such a person is out of line, rebellious against God. By persisting in divisiveness he cuts himself off. (Titus 3:8-11, MSG)

The word 'warn' is not a threat, but 'admonish' as in Ephesians 6:4.

Fathers, don't frustrate your children with no-win scenarios. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master. (Ephesians 6:4 MSG)

And now, friends, we ask you to honour those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love! Get along among yourselves, each of you doing your part. Our counsel is that you warn the freeloaders to get a move on. Gently encourage the stragglers, and reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs. And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out. (1 Thessalonians 5:13-15, MSG)

Run away from childish indulgence. Run after mature righteousness, faith, love, peace, joining those who are in honest and serious prayer before God. Refuse to get involved in inane discussions; they always end up in fights. God's servant must not be argumentative, but a gentle listener and a teacher who keeps cool, working firmly but patiently with those who refuse to obey. You never know how or when God might sober them up with a change of heart and a turning to the truth, enabling them to escape the Devil's trap, where they are caught and held captive, forced to run his errands. (2 Timothy 2:22-26, MSG)

If this doesn't work, we are sadly at the stage where the person has developed such a warped mind and hard heart, they effectively cut themselves off from fellowship and we have to let them go. (best OT example is King Saul). The words here mean 'muzzle' the sheep has been exposed as a wolf and has to be prevented from harming the flock. Remember the exposed wolf continues to be nice and gifted and still sees themselves as the sheep and the church leaders as the wolves.

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20, NLT)