

Defeating Divisiveness
Discovering the Kingdom (1st Corinthians) Series [A] - Part 2
How Divisiveness Starts and How to Help End It
January 15-16, 2022
1 Corinthians 1:10-31

Introduction

Recap - Where we are at...

- **The Year: Year of Discovery** - getting our mind blown with the mystery of God being revealed, so we can bond with Him and align our lives more accurately with His will and heart.
- **The Series: "Discovering the Kingdom"** - The Kingdom of God is the sphere of reality where things are as God wants them. When God operates He operates according not only to a different perspective and philosophy of what's real, but with a different set of rules of what's possible (supernatural). We are trying to learn how to understand and walk in that reality.
- **Last Message** - Studying a letter where Paul's responding to a 4-year-old church plant in Corinth¹, bucking The Apostle Paul's leadership.
 - **Identity Before Correction** - Paul begins by reminding them what God has done for them and to them. He affirms their identity in Christ. Now it's time to get down to the business of correcting them.
- **What's Wrong in Corinth?**
 - **The PROBLEM of Pride** - we find out from here and moving forward that the young Corinthian church is puffed up with pride. We will learn that they are wealthy and highly gifted. The very source of their clash with Paul is that they think they know better than he does and don't want him telling them what to do.
 - **The OBJECT of Wisdom²** - The first and significant object that their pride focuses on is the issue of Wisdom. In Greek the word is Sophia. Their city and culture has a high value for Greek philosophy and the Greeks were obsessed with higher learning that they called Sophia. Once these people in Corinth got saved, they realized they were being invited into a supernatural reality that brought with it power and revelation. They became enamored and wanted

¹ city in modern day Greece

² "This quarreling is in some way being carried on in the name of "wisdom." The Greek word group sophia/sophos ("wisdom"/"wise") dominates the discussion throughout chaps. 1-3. The high incidence in these three chapters of this otherwise infrequent word group, plus the fact that in most cases the word is used in a pejorative sense, is a sure indication that this is a Corinthian way of speaking, not Paul's." NICNT Commentary, Gordon Fee

more and more. This will be the crux of Paul's challenge to them in the message today and honestly for the first 3 chapters of this book.

- **General Info on Wisdom** - Wisdom is wonderful. It's what every Christian should be operating in to help them navigate the world in which they live. True wisdom comes from God. But as with all other things there is the legit version and then the counterfeit version. When man seeks to know or teach truth outside of God's revelation, distortion causes all sorts of damage. Because we are going to get into that in depth today, let's stop with the fill in the blank...

GOD'S wisdom is greater than HUMAN wisdom

Lesson

- **Chill Out!**

- **Paul Appeals for No More Division**

- **1 Cor 1:10** - *"I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."*
- **The Symptom: Division** - The first thing that Paul tackles is the division in the Corinthian church. Differing opinions were leading to schisms in the church, and that was not okay.
 - **Typical Reasons for Division** - Usually the separation of Christians tends to be either: **A.) Doctrinal or belief systems; B.) Relational conflicts.** Unfortunately, many times relational conflicts are masked by claiming it's doctrinal when it's not. Too often it's immaturity and emotional dysfunction that separates Christians but instead of growing, maturing and working through difficult issues, we divorce.
 - **The Immediate Corinthian Problem** - In this immediate context, Paul is addressing doctrinal and belief divides. He'll get to other types of division later in the letter.
 - **Unity in the Church** - Paul says that the Corinthians need to be **unified in mind** (agree, same mind), **and in action** (no divisions & same judgment). We will see that Paul clarifies later that he firmly believes in and values diversity³, but the core needs to be unified. It's not an argument for uniformity. So let's talk about those three important pieces that interact in the Body of Christ, when it comes to belief systems (doctrine):

³ Chapter 12 and Galatians 2:1-10 are clear about diversity in the Body.

- 1 **Unity** - (the opposite would be division) - unity means agreement.
- 2 **Diversity** - (the opposite would be uniformity) - diversity means difference & disagreement exists.
- 3 **Division** - Division means not just disagreement but separation.
 - **Where's that Line?** - Where is the line of unifying with diversity and dividing over heresy or sin? It's a bit complicated but let's begin by talking about the boundaries of what it's not and then we can mess around in the middle of what it is.
 - **It's not judgmental, elitist separation**
 - **It's not compromising, watered-down meaningless blending**
 - **The Beauty in the Middle⁴** - In the middle, what we are seeking, is the reality of being clear in our perspective, clear in others' perspective and making healthy determinations of necessary gaps. It means that we look honestly at what's on the table and seek to embrace all that is of the Lord and seek to unify as much as possible, while being clear and respectful about areas that we simply cannot find common ground.
 - There seems to be **3 layers in the greater Church** (especially among different local churches): **Family, Kinship & Partnership**
 - **Family means** that **God may consider them part of His kids but it's difficult to see how.** But if they are proclaiming that Jesus is the way, don't actively stop them⁵. It's like your human family, there are a couple in there that you wish weren't part of your family, but they are and you don't quite know what to do with them. This category requires extreme maturity because it means that you might be wrong in your theology and God may see it very different than you and you are possibly creating unnecessarily divides.⁶

⁴ "Avoiding divisiveness doesn't mean doing nothing, it means addressing our concerns in an appropriate manner." Pastor Brian Kiley

⁵ It's trying to discern Matthew 12:30 - "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." With Mark 9:38-40 - "John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us."³⁹ But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰For the one who is not against us is for us."

⁶ I would put Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses in this category for me. I really struggle with their doctrines and it seems like they have shifted out of the Family of God, but then again I have met so many Mormons that don't actually adhere to all Mormon doctrine and are actually more doctrinally clear and solid than some of my mainstream Christian friends.

- **Kinship means** that in all the Core doctrines you agree but in a lot of the secondary issues you don't. That means that you can do general things with them, you can love them, you can support them, you can praise God for them, but you won't be doing a lot of partnership with them because there's too much conflict. I would suggest that this category is what Jesus was praying for His church to work through and be diverse but fully unified (John 17) and allow the differences to exist and allow the diversity to create iron sharpening iron⁷.
- **Partnership means** that on most areas, certainly all the important ones, you pretty much see the same and can do ministry relatively easy together. It means not everything has to be or should be the same but there's no consistent conflicts about core issues that keep stopping the ability to lift up the name of Jesus in all the most vital ways⁸. But again, there is still going to be considerable disagreement on issues.
- **A Doctrinal Venn Diagram Reminder** - Do you know what a Venn Diagram is? It's where you put a couple circles on a board and fill them with ideas and wherever those perspectives or issues align, they are in the overlap portion. It's when you see all the areas that there is commonality that you have your sweetest spot of agreement. But our goal, again, is NOT uniformity. We aren't looking to exclude. We are not looking to *dysfunctionally* blend. We are looking for where we can share fellowship and participation. But on top of our Venn Diagram, created by human beings is **God's circle of family**. His circle is shockingly broad⁹ compared to a prideful tunnel vision version. *Since salvation is based on His grace,*

⁷ I would put 7th day Adventists in here, some extreme Pentecostal movements, Catholics, Orthodox and some modern liberal movements in here.

⁸ I would put almost all denominations in this category from the Charismatic to the Conservative. From Anglican, Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Charismatic, Pentecostal, AME, etc.

⁹ This means that from a human perspective we believe we are right and everyone has to align with us. We are all wrong to some degree. Although the Bible says that broad is the road to destruction and narrow is the road that leads to life, it's talking about saving potentials (many saviors vs. one). From God's perspective we are all wrong and His grace is extravagant. So it seems to me that from His perspective the inclusiveness of who He saves is shockingly broad/big. Everyone being saved will have bad theology and doctrine. No one has it right. Praise the Lord He's not saving us based on our accuracy. He's saving us based on His love.

not doctrinal adherence, it's going to encompass areas we will disagree with.

- **Fighting Fair**

- **Paul Calls Out the Quarreling Problem**

- **1 Cor 1:11** - *"For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers [and sisters]."*

- **Chloe's People** - Who are these folks? Clearly, they are a group of Christians who had been talking to Paul. Whether they came along with the delivery of the last letter with Stephanas & Co, or they came later, they have certainly talked with Paul by the time he needs to write this letter. So he has not only the Corinthian letter to him, but also eyewitness testimony as to the situation in the church.

- **Quarreling & Division** - It's important to note that some of us come from households where argument is scary. Others of us come from households where arguing is as normal as the air we breathe, and it only means sorting stuff out. So, when I talk about the lines of quarreling, disagreeing, and dividing, I need you to consider your own emotional bias. Disagreement is normal. It's healthy. Differing opinions are actually incredibly helpful for discerning wisdom. The problem comes when the disagreement becomes either personal attack or divisive where there is no longer fellowship. So, we are not seeking for a calm, quiet, everyone-hold-in-your-feelings-and-put-on-a-plastic-face, environment in the church. There's nothing wrong with passionate debate, even if it gets intense. The key is the hearts involved. What is the goal of the debate? What is the intentions of the individuals for each other? Are they seeking one another's best or their own? What Paul is concerned about is that it's become unhealthy and likely nasty. That's not okay.

- **What's the Alarm Sound?** - How do we recognize when someone is promoting divisiveness so that we can be less likely to be influenced by it. First look at the **intention** of the comments or information, if you are able. Sometimes we are not close enough to the speaker to know their intentions or motivations. The second thing to do is look at the **fruit** of what they are saying? What is the outcome? What does it lead to? When people do what they say, do they look more like Jesus Christ or not? That takes some time so we can't make snap judgments on whether someone is divisive or not, we need to let it play out a bit to make a full opinion.

- **Brothers and Sisters** – Paul consistently throws in the term ‘brothers and sisters’. *Adelphoi* (brothers) in Greek is actually brothers and sisters depending on context. Paul’s point is that we are family. Yes we can disagree but at the end of the day we are with each other and nothing should ruin that.
- **Dysfunctional Camping**
 - **Paul Exposes the Christian Camp Problem**
 - **1 Cor 1:12-16** – *“What I mean [about divisions] is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” 13 Is Christ 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 may 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.)”*
 - **Divisions Over Leaders & Ideas** – Paul brings out a practical example of the most obvious divisions: dividing over opinions as expressed by prominent teachers/preachers in the area. Who are these guys? Paul you know and Christ you know. Cephas is the Apostle Peter (we don’t know if they just know ABOUT him or if he visited and they knew him personally. Apollos is the new guy on the block, but we know a good deal about him.
 - **What we know about Apollos** - In Acts chapter 18 we learn that he was an Egyptian Jew who seemed to be highly educated, passionate and a brilliant speaker. He seemed to not only be a traveling evangelist¹⁰, but a key partner in Paul’s ministry. After he initially got saved he was discipled by Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus. He was the best of both worlds, being both trained up in Jewish and Greek (Hellenistic) philosophy and theology, so he could minister in most environments.
 - **Ac 18:24–19:1** – *“Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸ for he*

¹⁰ We have recorded testimony of him being in Ephesus, Corinth and Crete (1 Cor 16:12). Who knows where else he went?

powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus. 19 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus.”

- **The Apollos Trigger**¹¹ - Some scholars¹² believe that the Corinthians fascination with Wisdom as it coincides with the Christianity reality, may have come from the ministry of Apollos. We know from the book of Acts that Apollos was a brilliant orator and it's likely that he was a beautiful blend of Greek style and Christian content. This church seemed to be enamored with him and they wanted Paul to either be more like him or walk away. Although there is good support for this position in the book, it's still significant speculation. I think there's something valuable in the view.
- **Paul's Baptism Defense** - it sounds funny to us to read Paul trying to defend how he didn't baptize anyone but then coming up with a handful of people he did baptize. What was his point? His point was that when it comes to ultimate authority, it's always Christ. Yes, we have earthly leaders that serve as role models and guides for our lives and yes they are significant and important. But they are never Jesus Christ. To become overly obsessed with a leader and not only put them on a pedestal but follow everything they say as gospel fact (without a healthy scriptural filter on) isn't good. It's wrong. It appears the Corinthians were arguing and using the names of leaders to create camps to bolster their points against each other. Paul will explain later why theologically it's absurd to rely on or cite leaders as your gospel authority over Christ, later in the book so we'll talk about that more in depth in coming weeks.

¹¹ "The question remains as to how these four elements comprise a single issue. Although the answer to this is largely speculative, nonetheless some good guesses can be made. Interpreters commonly see the emphasis on wisdom as stemming from their response to the ministry of Apollos, either from his content or his style, or perhaps both. This has much to commend it and very well may be so. But since very little in the church in Corinth, as seen in this letter, reflects a Jewish background,¹² it seems better to see the problem as stemming from Hellenistic influences. In this case, therefore, it is possible that the key lies with the phenomenon in the Hellenistic world of the itinerant philosopher, many of whom were sophists—more concerned with polished oration than with significant content. The coming and going in turn of Paul, Apollos, and Peter (if indeed he had visited the church), and especially some marked contrasts in style and content among them, had perhaps led the Corinthians themselves to begin to think of their new-found faith as an expression of *sophia*—the divine *sophia*, to be sure, but *sophia* nonetheless. Within this kind of context they were quarreling over their leaders as teachers of wisdom, boasting in one or the other, and judging them from this merely human perspective. From this perspective neither Paul nor his gospel comes off very well. The message of a crucified Messiah, preached by an apostle who lived in considerable weakness, is hardly designed to impress the "wise," as they now considered themselves. In any case—and this is the crucial item for these chapters—the greater issue for Paul is not the division itself; that is merely a symptom. The greater issue is the threat posed to the gospel, and along with that to the nature of the church and its apostolic ministry. Thus, in a more profound way than is usually recognized, this opening issue is the most crucial in the letter, not because their "quarrels" were the most significant error in the church, but because the nature of this particular strife had as its root cause their false theology, which had exchanged the theology of the cross for a false triumphalism that went beyond, or excluded, the cross." NICNT Commentary, Gordon Fee

¹² one of which includes Gordon Fee

Back to the baptism point. Why is Paul highlighting baptism? Because many times the one that led someone to Christ would baptize the new Christian and they would be seen as kind of a 'spiritual parent'. Paul was saying, "No one should be able to play the 'I'm more important because the Apostle Paul baptized me personally', card, since he didn't baptize many people in Corinth. He was ruining their pride arguments to restore unity.

- **K.I.S.S**

- **Paul Highlights Keys to the Gospel Message**

- **1 Cor 1:17-18** - *"For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. 18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

- **Paul's Very Specific Mission** - Paul explains that the whole idea of being the spiritual parent in baptizing people wasn't really his goal and certainly not the key to what God asked him to do. He was not setting up camps. He was preaching the gospel. Paul knew his job from the Lord. He could have tried to be so many things that God didn't ask him to do but he stayed in his lane. He was a preacher, evangelist and church planter. And he did it brilliantly.

- **The Problem of Eloquence** - We love great speakers. I love great speakers. I want to be a great speaker and some people consider me a great speaker. I have a high value for excellence in preaching and teaching. But **there is a significant problem with great preachers, they can distort the power of God.** What do I mean? A great preacher/teacher can move people. They can influence, motivate and inspire. They can catalyze and alter people. If they are bad they can manipulate, distort and misguide people. But the real problem, even with good-hearted teachers/preachers is that the greater their message is the more THEY are the highlight. Not only are people looking to and mesmerized by them personally, but their message becomes the power instead of the raw interaction with God, or the raw scripture. If someone walks away amazed by me as a preacher only, we lose. If someone is moved emotionally by my delivery but not by the power of the gospel, we lose. **Paul's point is not that we need lamer preachers, but that we need to let the power of God shine brighter than our abilities.** The gospel can't be outshined by the messenger.

- **The Problem with the Message of the Cross** - Paul said 'the gospel message can be foolishness to the unsaved, but for Christians it's a message of power and transformation.' How is that? Think about what we are really saying to the unsaved world: the key to getting to heaven is believing and trusting a man who lived 2000 years ago that you can't see or hear. That's weird. It's absurd. But that is only because the Holy Spirit hasn't illuminated it and made it true for you yet. You haven't experienced the power of God yet, so it's just a weird philosophy. In the same way when someone is called by God and it's their time to have their heart and eyes opened (when the scales fall off or the veil is removed), the gospel message makes all the sense in the world and it's like water to a dry spirit. The difference is the Holy Spirit. But let's make no mistake, on the surface the messaging seems ridiculous. And that's Paul's point that he is going to build off of.
- **Stupid Wisdom**
 - **Paul Contrasts Worldly vs. Godly Wisdom**
 - **1 Cor 1:19-25** - *"19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." 20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*
 - **Why God Wants to Frustrate Secular Wisdom and Discernment** - Doesn't it seem odd that God would want to 'destroy the wisdom and discernment?' I thought those were good things. Well, it depends on your definition. In a secular world what is called wisdom and discernment is likely void of God and that makes them foolish and harmful. Those are the things that God wants to shut down because it leads people further away from Him.
 - **Why God Chooses a 'Foolish' Message** - Why does the Gospel have to be foolish? Why not have a cool, provable method of getting saved? Why not an obvious way to God? Why the mystery, faith and weird pathway? Because PRIDE is such a problem for human beings. God

cannot and will not save someone who is the god of their own life. They will not only remain dead in their sins but they will be resisted as offense to Him. They are sitting in His seat (throne) and have no interest in getting out. That's never going to work. There is ONE GOD and you aren't it. He's not going to fight you for it. He knows who He is. Since He's the ONLY source of good and life, either you are going to come to Him or there's no salvation. I cannot stress enough how damaging and destructive and dangerous pride is.

- **Gospel: Stumbling Block and Stupidity** - To the Jews, the Gospel of Jesus Christ being the Messiah is a problem because they don't think He matches up so they can't get over it. They would have to admit they are wrong and receive Him as the rightful King. That's going to be a problem. The Greeks/Romans/Gentiles just think that it's too bizarre to be real so they aren't going to go along with it.
 - **Christ = Power and Wisdom of God** - Christ personifies and demonstrates the power and wisdom of not just the Father but the Triune God. He is the expression of God's brilliance to save mankind who rebelled and is dead in their sins. His cross takes care of a seemingly insurmountable problem. At the same time we see that not only does God have the power to Incarnate into Human Reality, but that He can die and raise again at will. The message of the cross is so compelling and powerful because within it is the message of love and healing and reconciliation all in one.
 - **God's Foolishness & Weakness is better than Man's Wisdom and Strength** - Clearly we see that what the world rejects as silly, is the true power of eternal life. We see that everything the secular world offers, leads to nothing beyond this life (and truly nothing that matters in this life either). We see that what the world observes as weakness (humbling ourselves to be a servant of Christ), is actually the way to power (connected to the divine). Bottom line - all that God does embarrasses anything the world can bring.
- **Put In Their Place**
 - **Paul Highlights The Humble Status of God Followers**
 - **1 Cor 1:26-31** - *"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not,*

to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God¹³. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

- **The Corinthians Are the Perfect Example** - Paul says, 'let's take you guys for example...' This church was full of regular people in the beginning. They weren't the best and brightest. They weren't the wealthiest and most influential. But God took them as they were and remade them in such a way that they are not struggling with pride over what He designed in them. What a transition! What a transformation! They have personally experienced the power of God odd, humbling and mysterious ways changing reality.
- **A Living Testimony to the World** - As the Corinthians were taken from humble beginnings to a highly influential and gifted church, the world can see the power of God played out in front of them. They have to acknowledge that God is doing something special and that He is real.
- **The Point** - If God only chose the currently wise, wealthy and powerful then people would think that mankind achieved and earned it on their own. They would think that God is simply selecting out the best of humanity because they provided everything themselves. But nothing could be further from the truth. God picks the nobodies to demonstrate that it's His power alone that brings people into the Kingdom of God and eternal life. It reinforces the idea that it's God and not mankind doing it. **There's nothing to brag about when it wasn't you doing it.**
- **What We Should Brag About** - After the brilliance and power demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus Christ, that's something to brag about. Brag about how we are jars of clay indwelt by the Almighty God. Brag about how God brilliantly solved the problem of sin. Brag about how His love fulfilled His Truth and Justice to bring His children home to Himself. **Brag about God not yourself.**

Conclusion

- **Godly Wisdom vs. Earthly Wisdom** - Although we are going to go deeper into what wisdom means in God's mind versus the world in future messages, let me just say this as we wrap up...

¹³ "God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise. That doesn't mean that wisdom and knowledge are bad, but it does mean that there are Kingdom values (humility, meekness, etc.) that must be present in us, even if they make us look foolish in the eyes of the world." Pastor Brian Kiley

- **Worldly Wisdom** - Worldly wisdom asks the questions: What can we know about our universe and what is the possibility of man? As amazing as that sounds it falls short.
- **God is the Center & Solution** - Godly wisdom asks the questions: What can we know about natural & supernatural reality and what are the depths of God? You see Godly wisdom is released into the dimensions of God. It transcends this world and this universe. It transcends the limitations of mankind and flies into the reality of deity. When it's all about God and He is infinite, wisdom expands exponentially. For every true problem, God not only knows the answer, He is the answer. The world excludes Him therefore it cannot answer any questions that truly matter.
 - **That may be you're A-Ha Moment - but there's more.**
- **My Mind-blowing A-Ha! Concept - The Heart of our Divisiveness is our Heart.**
 - **The Difference of outcomes between diversity, difference, disagreement and Divisiveness is HEART.** Paul was trying to address a problem in the Corinthian Church with a truth that we need to apply. It's great to study how amazing God is versus the limitations of the world¹⁴, but when it comes down to what God is expecting us to change in ourselves from today's message it takes us back to **Paul's challenge**. Why are we causing or allowing division in the Body of Christ?
 - **Causing Division vs. Being a Unifier** - Are you someone actively seeking to bring unity in the body of Christ or division? Do you fancy yourself a Church or Christian watchdog? Are you arrogant enough to think that you know all the right answers and everyone else is wrong and it's your job to tell them and others what the truth is? Or are you someone humble enough to be able to say, this is how I see it and I can't see how your viewpoint is true, but maybe there's something we can learn here? A unifier looks at the world as already bent toward division by the selfishness of mankind. So the goal is to try to build bridges. A Divider tends to see the world as ignorant sheep that fall for anything so the goal is to point out dangers everywhere. I understand the temptation to protect that way, and yes, there are times when we need to bring correction or warning, but the Church spends far too much time attacking itself than making a difference in the world.
 - **Allowing Division vs. Being a Peacemaker** - If you and I are not actively causing unity or division, we may be party to it. We may be the ones in the small group or missional community that allow the unhealthy dialogue of

¹⁴ Another message with another challenge to consider, but not for this particular message.

slamming other churches or leaders. A peacemaker isn't just concerned about promoting unity from their own heart and words, but promoting unity in the hearts and words of others.

- **How do we recognize a divisive spirit in ourselves?** - I don't think that anyone sees themselves as divisive. Usually they feel completely justified and actually on God's side. The Pharisees thought so. Saul of Tarsus thought so. They felt noble being the ones to divide and persecute. But they were on the wrong side of God's heart in that situation. So, how do we recognize when we have a divisive spirit, if it's almost undetectable in feeling? **Look at the fruit.** What is the fruit of your efforts? Are people more healthy? Are relationships stronger? Is God more glorified? Is there more joy from what you talk about? Are people falling in love with Jesus from your words and actions?
- **It's Okay to Disagree, Debate and Bring Challenge and Change, it's how you do it and what heart you do it with.**