

A Lesson In Unity

[remind people of the Covenant Seminar]

[introduce the video for small groups]

[Remember 9/11 and have a prayer for all who fell then and since]

intro: [SLIDE ONE] Do you remember what happened right after 9/11? Senators of both sides standing on the steps of the Capitol building, singing “God Bless America.” Women coming to our home in SC.

Something about understanding that you are under attack makes other differences disappear. (if robbers are kicking in our front door, I will NOT be saying to Kami as we flee the scene, “We ARE going to discuss the way you fold laundry, little lady!”)

Suppose you received the following letter:

“Dear brother – or sister – we must have help! You were a respected, godly influence when you were a member here. We have some terrible problems, and we are desperate for help. [SLIDE TWO]

This congregation has divided into at least four quarreling groups who have no respect for each other. One member, who never misses an assembly is living in open fornication with his stepmother. Most people act like there’s nothing going on and others are actually proud of it! Several brothers and sisters are visiting prostitutes. Contempt and disrespect motivate many members to take each other to court. Some are combining Christian practices with those of pagan religions. Men and women openly compete with each other in the assembly, trying to shout each other down as they teach, sing, pray, and this means most services are a mass of confusion and they break up in confusion. When we try to have the Lord’s Supper some have turned it into a competitive picnic. They won’t share their food with others even when those others are actually starving to death. Many do not believe that there is such a thing as a resurrection! Please, do something to help us!

I. Paul’s Response

A. Which problem would you address first? Paul first dealt with the problem of congregational division. He spends the first four chapters on that issue. [SLIDE THREE]

1. To Paul, the cross made division ridiculous. All human loyalties were to be left in the waters of baptism, at the foot of the cross.

2. The warnings are plain: the Holy Spirit lives in the church. Those who divide the church “him shall God destroy.”
- B.** A quick review of how God views division: [**SLIDE FOUR – THIRTEEN**]
1. Division is forbidden in the church. (1 Cor. 1:10)
 2. Condemned in the church. (1:11-13; 11:18)
 3. Improper in the church. (12:24,25)
 4. Contrary to the unity of Christ. (1:13; 12:13)
 5. Contrary to the prayer of Christ. (John 17:21-23)
 6. Contrary to the purpose of Christ. (John 10:16)
 7. Contrary to the spirit of God’s desire for the church. 1 Cor. 11:16)
 8. Divisions are proof of a sinful spirit. (3:3)
- C.** We are even forbidden to be friends with those who cause division. (Romans 16:17)
- D.** Those who choose division are not to be permitted to teach. (Titus 3:10,11)

II. Which Brings Us Here [SLIDE FOURTEEN**]**

- A.** Ephesians 6:10-18. The truth is – we are at war. Historians will argue about it until the end of time, but one leading theory on why the US has had a hard time winning wars in the media age is that our people have not had to sacrifice and, therefore, do not buy into the struggle.
- B.** Whether or not that is true, it is a fact that when churches are blessed and growing, they tend to then find problems with those around them. They argue about things that would not be important if the Huns were gathering in the parking lot. (flash back to the Kami illustration. Can you imagine us arguing when the bullets start flying?)
- C.** Paul wants to remind us that we are in a state of war. Peter warns us that a lion is just outside [**SLIDE FIFTEEN**] (not outside a physical church, but outside the inner fellowship of Christ, outside of His arms).
- D.** So it is important that we get into small groups. It is important that we read our Bibles. It is important that we pray. It is important that we lay aside anything other than the 7 Ones of Ephesians 4.

E. It is important that we join Paul who, knowing the attacks were coming in hot and heavy from both those who wanted to make and enforce laws in the name of Jesus and the Romans who wanted to destroy the faith, reduced the core of the faith and said: [SLIDE SIXTEEN] “When I came to you brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:1,2)