

Overcoming Some Of Life's Problems # 7

The Problem Of Division

Introduction:

1. It ought to be that those in the family of God get along without serious problems, strife and division.
 - a. Gen. 13:8 - Abraham said there should be no strife since we are brethren. Yet, there was strife.
 - b. 1 Cor. 3:3-4 - church in the first century battled with division.
2. Churches today having problems and division is not uncommon.
 - a. Members who are upset at one another - even bitter.
 - b. Parties form and fight against each other.
 - c. Behavior is sometimes childish: get mad, pout, are stubborn and threaten to “walk out”.
 - d. Split and either go elsewhere or start a new group.
 - e. At times the division is even worse when they stay together.
3. When brethren are divided, it is a problem! What a contrast to the Lord's ideal of unity (John 17:20-21).
 - a. With division there is: heartache, stress, tension, strife, fussing, and distrust.
 - b. With unity there is:
 - i. A good a pleasant relationship (Psa. 133:1).
 - ii. Freedom from tension, strife, hard feelings, hurt feelings and apprehension.
4. Our focus is division within a local church.

I. The Nature Of Division

- A. *God hates it* (Prov. 6:16-19).
- B. *Bad and unpleasant* (Psa. 133:1).
- C. *Sinful* (1 Cor. 1:10).
- D. *Carnal* (1 Cor. 3:4).
- E. *Work of the flesh* (Gal. 5:20).
- F. *Of the wisdom from below* (Jas. 3:13-18).

II. The Causes Of Division (A study of Jas. 3:13-18.)

A. *Bitterness* (v. 14).

1. Bitterness is kin to “hatred”.
2. Evidence of bitterness:
 - a. Being resentful or harsh toward others.
 - b. Strong animosity.
 - c. Judging a brother (Jas. 4:11-12) from an unfavorable opinion that is prompted by envy.
 - d. Refuses to be reconciled (Barclay). Refuses to let go of the past.
3. Heb. 12:15; Eph. 4:31.

B. *Envy* (v. 14).

1. Word for zeal and jealousy.
2. “Jealousy desires to have the same or the same sort of thing for itself” (Vines, II, p. 37).
3. Can be jealous of another’s position, influence, ability, how they are received, what they can or have accomplished.

C. *Self-seeking* (v. 14).

1. NKJV footnote: “selfish ambition”
2. ASV - “Faction” (idea of divisive).
3. Etymology of (Gk: ERITHIA):
 - a. One spinning wool for hire.
 - b. Anything done for pay.
 - c. Any work done solely for the purpose of what you can get out of it.
 - d. Political - selfish ambition.
 - e. Ready to plot and use any means to get what one wants.
4. “Denotes ambition, self-seeking, rivalry, self-will being an underlying idea in the word; hence it denotes party-making” (Vines, II, p. 68).
5. “It is difficult to conceive of a more grievous sin than that which results from the deliberate efforts of a man or group of men who, for the sake of selfish ambition and personal gains, will cause division among the people of God” (Guy N. Woods).
6. Involves stubbornness, unwilling to yield or give the benefit of the doubt.

D. *Boasting* (v. 14).

1. One who is proud, arrogant and self-righteous.
2. Prov. 13:10 - pride produces contention.
3. Psa. 10:4 - pride produces rebellion

- E. *Lying against the truth* (v. 14).
1. Three ideas possible:
 - a. Telling a lie (a falsehood). One with selfish ambition may be willing to lie for his own gain.
 - b. Deny the truth about your bitterness, etc. (cf.. NIV).
 - c. Opposed to the truth (cf.. Luke 6:46).
 2. Division comes when men set lives in opposition to the truth.
 - a. Division comes when teaching is contrary to the truth.
 - b. Division comes when practice is contrary to the truth.
 - c. Division comes when attitude is contrary to the truth.
 - d. Division comes when God's people develop two mind-sets.

III. *The Effect Of Division*

- A. *Confusion* (Jas. 3:16).
1. Disorder (NASV). A. T. Robertson, "A state of disorder" (*Word Pictures*).
 2. Same word 1:8 - "unstable"; 3:8 - "unruly".
 3. Young's Literal Translation: "there is insurrection". Insurrection is "An act or instance of open revolt against civil authority or a constituted government" (AHD, p. 667).
 4. No oneness. No operating together.
 5. Disruption of fellowship. Disruption of good being doing.
 6. Wars and fighting (Jas. 4:1-2).
- B. *Every Evil Thing* (Jas. 3:16).
1. "Every evil practice" (NIV).
 2. The same heart that is self-seeking and created division, would also participate in other sins (Prov. 4:23).
 3. Division destroys our spirituality. When our spirituality is weakened, our resistance to sin is also weakened (Psa. 1:1-3).
- C. *Hinders The Gospel* (John 17:20-21).
1. Unity has an impact on the furtherance of the gospel.
 2. If the unity has a positive impact, then it follows that division will have a negative impact.
 - a. People are turned off by the bickering, fussing and battles. "If this is the way Christians are, I don't want to be one" (cf.. Rom. 2:24).
 - b. Time is consumed putting out "brush fires" that we have little or not time

- to focus on reaching the lost.
- c. Members who tire of the problems, leave and worship elsewhere.

IV. *The Prevention / Cure For Division*

A. *Attitudes & manner of life essential to unity*

1. **Purity** (Jas. 3:17).
 - a. Life is unmixed with evil.
 - b. Causes one to do what is pure and upright.
 - c. The kind of person whose goal is to live a pure life (Jas. 1:27), is one who promotes harmony and unity.
2. **Peacemaking** (Jas. 3:17).
 - a. Seeks to avoid strife and friction (cf.. Rom. 12:18).
 - b. Follows the course for peace (Rom. 14:19).
 - c. There are those whose words and actions promote harmony and peace; and also those whose words and actions pull, irritate and promote hard feelings.
3. **Gentle** (Jas. 3:17).
 - a. “Considerate” (NIV).
 - b. “Reasonable, fair” (A.T.Robertson, *Word Pictures*).
 - c. Eph. 4:1-2.
 - d. Not sharp or bitter, but kind.
4. **Willing to yield** (Jas. 3:17).
 - a. “Easy to be entreated....compliant...approachable” (Robertson).
 - b. “Easy to be entreated” (ASV).
 - c. Open to reason - willing to yield where can without compromise of truth.
 - d. Tolerant - longsuffering & forbearing (Eph. 4:1-2).
5. **Mercy** (Jas. 3:17).
 - a. Shows compassion for others. Opposite of self-seeking.
 - b. Words and actions don’t leave others wondering if he cares.
 - c. YLT: “full of kindness and good fruits”.

6. **Without partiality** (Jas. 3:17).
 - a. Translations:
 - (1) ASV - “without variance”.
 - (2) Darby - “ unquestioning”.
 - (3) YLT - “uncontentious”.
 - (4) NASV - “unwavering”.
 - b. Means to be unwavering - not hesitant.
 - (1) Does not doubt.
 - (2) Is not divided by opinions.
 - (3) Firm in conviction. Chooses a course and stays with it.
 - (4) One who vacillating, never firm, talking in agreement to all who are at odds - does not help to unite.
7. **Without Hypocrisy** (Jas. 3:17).
 - a. “Sincere” (NIV & Robertson).
 - b. Honest and can be trusted.
 - c. One who is self-seeking cannot let that motive be known. Thus he is a hypocrite. He is dishonest.

B. *Identify and deal with the factious.*

1. **Mark** the factious (Rom. 16:17-18).
2. **Reject** the factious (Tit. 3:10).
3. **Withdraw** from the disorderly (2 Thess. 3:6).

Conclusion:

1. Division is a problem we bring on ourselves because someone is not willing to follow the word of God.
2. It is a problem that can be overcome.

- Outline by: *Donnie V. Rader*