



## SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND HATE

Unity  
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## SUNDAY MESSAGE QUESTIONS

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### OPENING

Over the past few weeks as we've been challenged within our walk with Christ to model and live out civility, dignity and humility in our conversations and interactions with each other. We have been forced to ask some hard questions about our level of civility and giving others the dignity that they deserve. This week we shine that light even brighter on ourselves and the role of unity in demonstrating all of these. The goal for this series is to teach us to **disagree politically and love unconditionally**. Let's listen, learn and love together.

### SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>

**John 17:11** I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me - so that they may be one as we are one.

**John 17:20-23** My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one. Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

### OBSERVATION

Jesus is telling His disciples that their time together is coming to an end and He prays over them. The purpose of this prayer is to ask His Father for their protection and for unity as they take on Jesus' work on earth. So, it seems that He places a high value on unity. There are dangers ahead for them, but together they can persevere and run the race to the end for His glory - and soon they will have the Holy Spirit's power to help them succeed. In the Book of Acts, we find that disunity begins its ugly efforts to undermine God's plan for His new church. The Jewish Christians believed the Gentiles must first become Jews, with all of the regulations and rituals entailed with that decision, before they could become Christians. Leaders of the church in Jerusalem were asked for their counsel in this dispute and a letter written by Jesus' brother, James, explains how unity was restored: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality."<sup>2</sup> What? No other laws and no circumcision? Nope, Nope, Nope! Just restored unity.

<sup>1</sup> All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

<sup>2</sup> Acts 15:24-29

**Question:** When have you experienced disunity in a group environment? What did you do about it?

### APPLICATION

All of us have, at some time, been involved in school rivalries or we've been crazed sports fans so we have an idea of what disunity looks like. Fans of Kansas City and San Francisco football teams were at odds with each other -- you might say they were annoyed, but Kansas City fans were vindicated with a Super Bowl victory and life goes on – except for the continuing dislike. Of course, this isn't just going on among sports fans - today we see it among people with different political opinions. What makes it worse is that we tend to attribute people's behavior to their character. This is called Attribution Error<sup>3</sup>. It is cognitive bias that causes us to blame political behavior on fundamental flaws in our rivals' character. Potentially, what we've experienced, how we were raised, what we saw in our parents or people saying and doing things as we grew up have caused irrational thinking today. As a result, we assumed a person's actions reflected what kind of person they really were – rather than the social and environmental factors around them.

**Question:** When have you made an assumption about someone based on exterior signs and found out you had totally misjudged that person? How did you feel about that?

**Question:** What negative adjectives have you assigned to people who have different political views from yours? This is how we create division. A Republican becomes a Red-Neck, gun loving Evangelical. A Democrat becomes an arrogant, tax-loving, socialist. An Independent is seen as a vegan hippy who avoids conflict. Because of this we are heading toward a culture of contempt or scorn. Social scientists define contempt as anger mixed with disgust. "When somebody treats you with contempt, you never quite forget the experience so if we want to solve the problem of polarization in our culture today, we have to solve the contempt problem." The authors of Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box<sup>4</sup> write that when we feel we've been betrayed or threatened or feel contempt for another person we put ourselves in a box. 1) We view others as objects – a threat – an obstacle; 2) Our needs and wants become greater than those of others; 3) We consciously resist others and so whatever we do is ineffective. The Pharisees lived in boxes of control and power and missed Jesus.

**Question:** Tell us about a recent time when you felt contempt for someone else. Was it justified?

We can easily put ourselves in a box toward those contemptible others. Now we have a distorted view of them – our emotional, mental and spiritual attitudes are unhealthy toward them, ourselves and the people around us. But, at The Crossing, we have enough emotional intelligence to not be those people. We have a choice to make: Live in the box or live outside of it. To be outside means 1) we view others as people with dreams, hopes and wants; 2) we see others' needs as legitimate as ours are; 3) people sense our intentions and respond positively. These choices bring reconciliation and unity.

**Question:** When will you be willing to follow Jesus when He creates space between you and your party, your party's platform and your party's candidate?

**Hebrews 4:14** says, "Therefore, we have a great High Priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." Our scripture this week tells about the High Priestly Prayer prayed by Jesus as He is about to leave His followers and go to His Father. He asks protection for them and that they would be united just as the Trinity is united – and not just the disciples of Jesus' day, but us as well. This is Mission Critical: that all believers and churches stay together as one. This is unity despite the social, economic, cultural and racial backgrounds of the people with whom we fellowship. We can't sacrifice our unity for anyone or anything!

**Question:** What constitutes unity in your marriage, your family, your friendships?

**Question:** If you post comments on social media, when do you first ask yourself if it will disrupt unity?

If we can live outside of our boxes, what divides us diminishes and what unites us increases.

### PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we love You, we love our church and we love our families. Help us to be always aware of the little foxes that diminish the unity within those relationships and do everything possible to reconcile and come together with joy to bow before You in gratitude. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> Andy Stanley

<sup>4</sup> The Arbinger Institute

