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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

3 John 9-15
Lesson #31
Conflict without Combat
08/7/2022

What should a healthy church provide?

Vital relational experiences

Vital learning experiences

Vital worship experiences

Vital ministry experiences

1

3 John *Christian hospitality*

Gaius positive example	Diotrephes negative example
1-8	9-14

We are salt and light in the way we:

- respond to circumstances and***
- in the way we treat each other.***

2

3 John

“9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. 10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church. 11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. 12 Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we also bear witness, and you know that our witness is true.

13 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.”

3

3 John (interpretive paraphrase)

“9 My teaching to the church has been contested by Diotrephes. 10 I remind you that he seeks to “Lord it over” the church, falsely represents apostolic teaching, and refuses to grant hospitality to all who have believed our message. 11 Be careful to evaluate others based on how they honor the Body of Christ and respect the “Word and Way of the Cross”. 12 Demetrius, for example, has a solid testimony with everyone, including myself, and you know we are both consistent with Jesus’ Word and Way of the Cross. I have much more to say when I see you face to face. I send my greeting and peace to the brethren.”

Welcome the Gospel & the church.

4

Principles that we can take from this text.

- 1. Community** is a part of God’s design and calls for input from all of us.
- 2. Diversity** is vital to the Body of Christ.
- 3. Conflict** is unavoidable & necessary.
- 4. Leadership** plays an important role in conflict management.
- 5. Listening** to Scripture, our critics, and our heart is necessary.

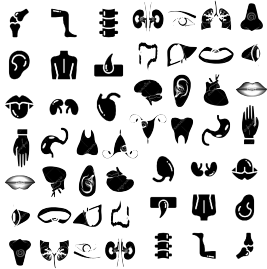
Fear & Anger will hinder our listening.

5

1. Community is a part of God's design and calls for input from all of us.

The church is NOT the **Body Parts of Christ**.

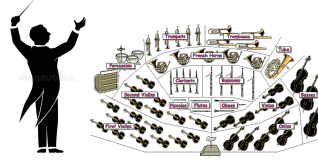
The church is the Body of Christ **but only when the pieces function as attached to one another and the head.**



The body is greater than the **sum of its parts.**

2. Diversity is vital to the Body of Christ.

The key to community is not forced uniformity but **wise orchestration of our differences.**



1 Corinthians 12

“18 But now **God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.** 19 . . . 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;”

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

“Now there are varieties of **gifts**, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of **ministries**, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of **effects**, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”

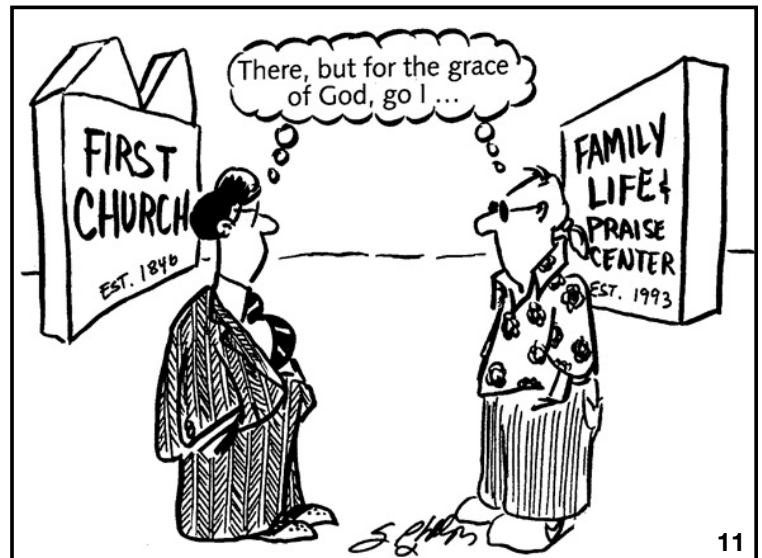
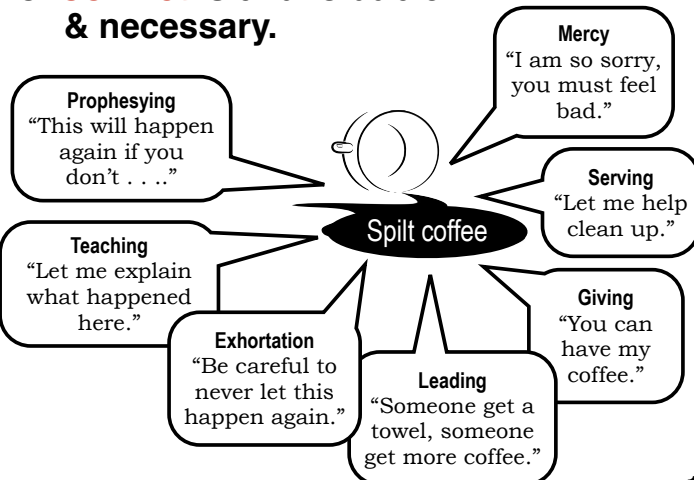
Motivations “gifts”	Ministries “ministries”	Manifestation “effects”
Strength (perspective)	Domain (position)	Result (product)
Rom.12	Eph.4	1 Cor.12

Lists of spiritual gifts in the N.T.

Rom. 12:6-8	1 Cor. 12:8-10	1 Cor. 12:28	Eph. 4:11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophecy • Serving • Teaching • Exhortation • Giving • Leadership • Mercy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word of wisdom • Word of knowledge • Faith • Gifts of healings • Miracles • Prophecy • Distinguishing spirits • Tongues • Interpretation of tongues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apostle • Prophet • Teacher • Miracles • Kinds of healings • Helps • Administration • Tongues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apostle • Prophet • Evangelist • Pastor • Teacher

- The lists are not meant to be technical or exclusive.
- The point is **DIVERSITY** functioning in **HARMONY**.

3. Conflict is unavoidable & necessary.



1 Corinthians 11:19
 “For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.”

Celebrate Encourage Tolerate Criticize Condemn

There is a continuum between what we celebrate and what we condemn.

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Three kinds of conflict in the church

necessary		unnecessary
Loving Discipline	Healthy Debate	Destructive Combat
Respecting God-given boundaries	Respecting corporate discernment	Disrespecting God-given diversity
1 Cor.5	Acts 15	1 Cor.12

13

4. Leadership plays an important role in conflict management.

Leaders need to cultivate God's diverse design?

- Prophecy: "Being sensitive to the Spirit's lead"
- Teaching: "Proclaiming the written Word"
- Exhortation: "Keeping people straight"
- Leading: "Setting and reaching goals"
- Giving: "Sacrificial support"
- Serving: "Social action"
- Mercy: "Grace, and peace"

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5. Listening to Scripture, our critics, and our heart is necessary.

- Prophecy: "Character that backs up words"
- Teaching: "Getting the message right"
- Exhortation: "Making sure people stay on track"
- Leading: "Having a vision and carrying it out"
- Giving: "Lack of generosity"
- Serving: "Meeting practical needs"
- Mercy: "Sensitivity to the feelings of others"

15

Learning from our critics does not mean that we share all their beliefs. They often see things that we are afraid to look at or recognize for what they are.

We become wise by developing antenna, not horns.

We have met the enemy, and they are **PARTLY RIGHT**

Anthony Campolo

16

How many of our theological affirmations are punctuated with:

(!) (.) (,) (?)

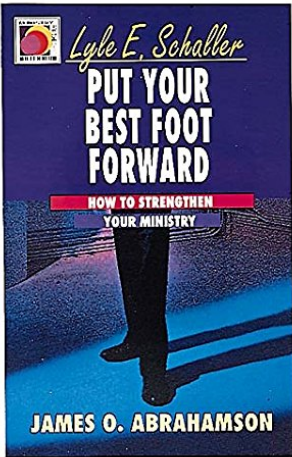
"MY MIND IS CLOSED." "I have some settled beliefs." "I have tentative insights." "I only have questions."

We see things, not as they are, so much as the way we are.

1 Corinthians 13:12

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known."

17



Put Your Best Foot Forward
without losing your balance or kicking your neighbor.

18

6. Fear & Anger too often motivate spiritual decisions.

Power
"We are being secularized."

Teaching
"We are being led astray."

Evangelism
"We are not reaching the lost."

Leading
"We are out of control."

Mercy
"This place lacks empathy and grace"

Serving
"This place is all talk and no action"

Giving
"This place is too selfish."



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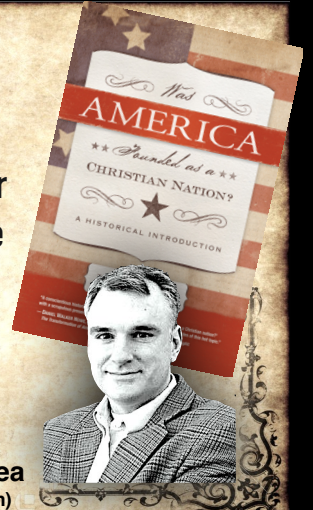
Fear

is perhaps the most powerful negative emotion in affecting spiritual decisions.

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"Despite the biblical passages exhorting followers of Christ to "fear not," it is possible to write an entire history of American evangelicalism as the story of Christians who have failed to overcome fear."

John Fea
(historian)



21

"Many Christians have embraced the worst aspects of our culture and our politics. When the Christian faith is politicized, churches become repositories not of grace but of grievances, places where tribal identities are reinforced, where fears are nurtured, and where aggression and nastiness are sacralized. The result is not only wounding the nation; it's having a devastating impact on the Christian faith."

Peter Wehner

(contributing editor of *The Atlantic*)

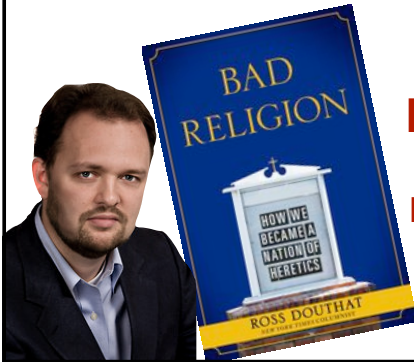
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"More than most other Christians, conservative evangelicals insist that they are rejecting cultural influences, when in fact their faith is profoundly shaped by cultural and political values, by their racial identity and their Christian nationalism."

Kristin Kobes Du Mez
(*Jesus and John Wayne - How white evangelicals corrupted a faith and fractured a nation*)

23

As Messiah, Jesus was expected to stand against the evil of the Roman Empire. What he did was go after the religious community for its hypocrisy.



Paul does the same thing in Romans 2 and is passive in resisting civic injustice in ch.13.

24

The world of the Roman Empire in Peter's day

Economic injustice.

Institutional slavery.

Disease and famine.

Political disfunction.

Religious persecution.

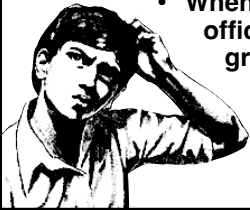


Nero

25

As a Berean, stop and consider.

- How often did Jesus (and the Apostles) **address** the injustice of the Roman empire?
- How often did they talk about **reforming** it?
- Is the **anointing of the Holy Spirit** on circumstances, or on us, in response to them?
- Is **spiritual warfare** against our outer circumstances or our inner struggles in responding to them?
- When Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire it grew in numbers and comfort, **but did it grow in spiritual power and authenticity?**



26

When fear and hatred rule:

- we conflate new & old covenant life in our reading of Scripture.
- we conflate church and state domains in our political views.
- we see God's kingdom as "of this world", before its time, with a warrior king, ruled through a political "strongman".
- we seek and tolerate civil servants who are neither civil nor servants but they make us feel safe from our enemies.

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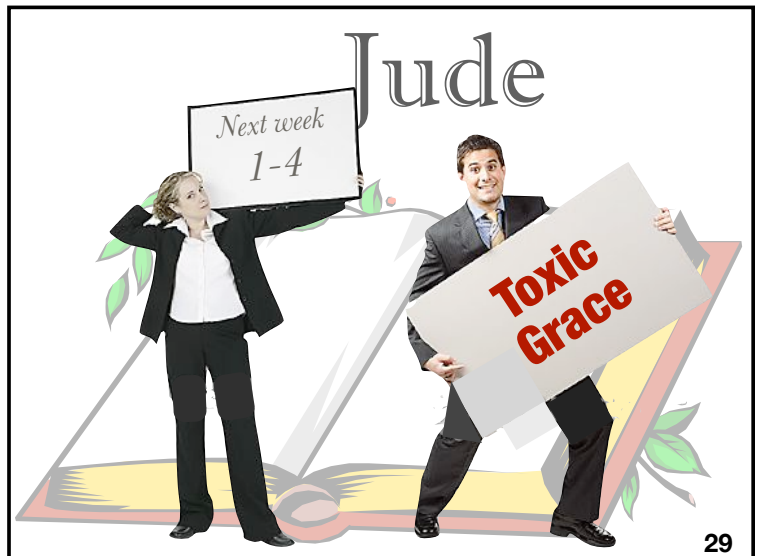
Three unlikely doorways to a healthy community:

Conflicts that lead to **insight**, not combat

Fears that lead to **patience**, not control

Bitterness that lead to **grace**, not condemnation

28



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