

Show of Hands for the NCL

Interview Brian Gottshall

[Pictures of Emberlyn Joy Coffin](#), born June 8, 6 lbs 4 oz, still in NICU at UMC – improving everyday

PRAY

The Parables

#24: A House Divided

Mark 3:23-26, Part 2

Let's review and remind about this 3-part mini-series surrounding this passage:

This is a 3-part mini-series to finish up the parables.

1. Part 1 (May 29): "Are you Hungry?"

- Focus on the attitudes and assumptions that led to these words from Jesus (Mark 3:6-22; 28-30)
- I challenged you regarding where you fit in:
 - a. With the Pharisees who were extremely uncomfortable with healing and casting out demons
 - b. With Jesus' family, who were embarrassed by him – even suggesting he was mentally unstable
 - c. Or with the HUNGRY multitudes being healed and liberated, saying "You ARE the Son of God!"

2. Part 2 (Today): "A House Divided" (3:23-26)

- I will challenge you to know the heart of God regarding division and unity, and live accordingly

3. Part 3 (Next Sunday): "Binding the Strongman" (3:27)

- Being like Jesus in taking down Satan and Evil where it exists today.

All 3 groups played a part in the question that came from the Scribes:

- The crowd in a frenzy
- The family embarrassed
- The Jewish leaders want to stop Him
- The family comes out and says, "He must be feeling ill"
- And the Scribes pick up on the fact the family won't be defending Him, and they pounce:
 - a. "You are binding Satan by the power of... Satan!" (3:22)

Mar 3:23 And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

Mar 3:24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

Mar 3:25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

Mar 3:26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.

How many of you live with a perfectly unified family?

- Show of hands?
- I'd like to yield the floor and have you come preach this message!

How many believe Neighborhood Church to be a perfectly unified church?

- If you do, give it time.
- We sinners saved by grace are sure to cure you of that delusion right soon.
 - That is not an excuse, by any means.
 - Because of sin, there is no perfectly unified church or family
- ***The lesson is not to attempt to attain a sinless culture.***
 - Jesus will do that when He comes again!
- **The lesson today is two-fold:**
 - **Identify and Engage: (say it)**
 - **Identify the causes of division**
 - **Engage in the battle to defeat division**

Division in the scriptures is an interesting study.

- Because of what Jesus says in **Mark 10...**
 - **(Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household...)**
- ... teaching on “a house divided” needs to be introduced with the proper context.

In the scriptures,

- **God commands division in one sense.**
- **And commands unity in another.**
 - IOW, God calls for believers to be “set apart” from the world.
 - But He simultaneously commands believers to be in UNITY with Him and one another.
 - Add the element of evangelism – and sometimes the “set apart” command can get a little muddy.
 - So as always, context is key.
- The context of Mark 10:
 - Belief in Messiah – God’s Son.
 - Eternal Life.
 - Heaven and Hell.
 - One’s eternal residence depending on whom each and every individual answers the greatest question ever uttered: “Who do you believe Jesus to be?”
 - **Let’s read aloud some scriptures together:**
 - **Jesus said:**
 - **Mat 7:14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.**
 - **Joh 14:6 I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**
 - **Mat 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats..."**
 - Because God desires purity and holiness in the church, **he calls out and sets apart** those who receive Him from those who reject Him.
 - THAT is the context of Mark 10.

- Jesus came indeed to divide – in that sense.
- But WITHIN the body of Christ, Jesus commands UNITY.
 - **Again, reading aloud together:**
 - **To the church, the Bible says:**
 - **Phi 2:2 Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.**
 - **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.**
 - **Eph 4:1-3 I therefore... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

So when Jesus says “A house divided cannot stand,” he means to apply that in various ways.

- But when it comes to HIS House – HIS Church – God HATES division.
- **And that is our “tether” today:**
 - **God’s House, and His purpose for UNITY within it.**
- God builds His church, and the gates of hell cannot come against it.
 - **And yet, one of the Christian Church’s biggest hindrances to effectively bring genuine change to their community is the broken relationship within the body itself.**
 - Unbelievers already have dysfunctional families – they don’t need another!

This message is not being given because people are leaving NC.

- Sure, some of you might be considering a new church home.
 - You’d obviously be misguided, but... you know... ☺
- But truly, while this message will certainly challenge you to be forthcoming, prayerful, patience, and communicate well, **this message is largely for you to communicate to other believers.**
 - Friends who might be having trouble in their home church.
 - YOU are equipped – and will be more so today – to bring a Biblical perspective to those who might be considering dividing themselves from any Christian gathering.

Now, I’m not going to address the fact the Christian church is made up of **somewhere between 2000 and 43,000** (depending on how you count them) “protestant” denominations in the world today.

- That’s another sermon for another time.

Today, the tether – the main topic from which our ball of communication will rotate – is the individual gatherings that make up “God’s house” – and God’s call for unity within them.

- **My hope today is that God will challenge you regarding division and unity – and your personal responsibility toward both.**

Identify, and... Engage!

1) Identify the Causes of Division:

- First, let me address some of the REASONS people divide themselves from families/churches:
 - **Doctrinal differences**
 - **Preaching style/ability**

- **Ministry emphasis** (or lack of) in particular areas (i.e. too much evangelism, not enough discipleship)
- **Worship styles**
- **Emphasis (or lack of) on children's ministry**
- **Building uses (or lack of)**
- **Debt/Money issues**
 - Not an exhaustive list, but enough to get us started...
- With each of the above, we at NC have a way of dealing with such possible division:
 - IF we are given the opportunity to talk through issues with folks on the verge of leaving... (that's not always the case, unfortunately)
 - First, we ask, ***"Can I buy you some coffee so we can understand one another?"***
 - Some people just say no. Really a bummer.
 - But if they agree...
 - Second, in that coffee meeting, we tend to ask, ***"How can YOU help remedy the issue?"***
 - So now you know the EASIEST way to leave NC is to just leave without saying anything.
 - *Better to be a total coward than to actually be challenged to communicate, right?*
 - We have found this to be very healthy, IF the person is willing to accept the challenge to be part of the solution:
 - *And of course, we **have** seen people **look at us cross-eyed**, like we're asking the impossible of them.*
 - *"What do you mean, 'help'?"*
- Now, let's put that aside.
- Today, **I am NOT asking you to identify divisive people.**
 - **I'm asking you to identify the divisive tendencies that reside in YOU.**
 - Part of the problem in our humanness is how easy it is to spot divisive people.
 - Pointing the finger at others comes NATURALLY.
 - But today, I appeal to the SUPERNATURAL Christ who lives in you to root out divisive tendencies in your own heart/mind.
 - It's not easy to spot these tendencies in oneself.
 - **Division has its roots in**
 - **Selfishness**
 - **Consumerism** (ask not what your church can do for you, but what you can do for your church)
 - **Stubbornness/Pride** (right over relationship)
 - **Routine/Comfort level**
 - **Personal experience** (being challenged on doctrine or purposes)
 - **Poor communication** (letters of discontent that are nearly impossible to return from after writing)
 - **Lack of perspective** (not thinking of the whole)
 - **Lack of empathy**
 - **Lack of love**
 - Again, it is quite easy to spot such things in others.
 - But it takes courage and humility to recognize such things in myself.

How many of you married **your high school sweetheart**?

- For the rest of you, think back to your first break up.
- Did anyone ever break up with you by saying, **“It’s not you, it’s me.”**?
 - Now, for a high school break up, whatever. It’s a great excuse not to tell your girlfriend how you really feel. It’s usually not a serious relationship yet, so whatever.
 - But for marriages, families, and even leaving churches, “It’s not you, it’s me” is cowardice.
 - **(next)** It should never be accepted. Why?
 - **Because if the problem really is YOU, then work it out!**
 - Identify those attitudes/behaviors/assumptions that exist in your own heart/mind – that is job #1.
- THIS IS YOUR FAMILY
 - ***A biblical view of how Christ views the church (based on Him calling us out – dividing believers from unbelievers – and on the strong bonds that existed in gatherings of believers from the early days of the church – suggest our DNA is stronger in Christ’s blood than in biological blood.***
 - Leaving a church fellowship ought to be one of the most heart-wrenching things one ever does in this life.
 - It should be THAT difficult a decision.
- Before you ever even THINK about leaving a church, exercise great PATIENCE and root out the divisive nature that exists within you.

Identify, and... Engage!

Engage in the Battle to Defeat Division:

I’m coming up on 10 years (September 20) as the lead pastor of this beautiful church.

- And it’s been the best 7 years of my ministry life. 😊
 - **Story about looking elsewhere...**
- I don’t believe God’s permanency with me is all that uncommon.
 - I believe God does that a lot.
 - Whether people listen or not... that’s another sermon.
 - Most of my mentors in my life are pastors that stayed in one place for 30+ years.
 - The impact they had on their communities was phenomenal.
 - And such impact would never have happened if they hadn’t stayed and worked through difficult things in order to stay.
 - A 5 year hop here and there from church to church – whether you’re a full time pastor or volunteer member of the body – while incredibly common, is incredibly unhealthy.
- In that experience, I was deeply challenged to humbly admit my faults.
 - I asked forgiveness of some, and granted forgiveness to others.
 - We in leadership admitted our shortcomings to one another.
 - And the elder team placed PRAYER and COMMUNICATION much higher on the priority list in our meetings as overseers of the flock.
 - “Being on the same page” is a common phrase still today among NC leaders.
 - That page has the large boundary of “Love God, one another, and our neighbors”
 - And a tighter boundary defined by the phrase “Go and be the church.”
- With vulnerability I mention all this because I want you to know I’ve been there.
 - Each time, God clearly said to me, **“Check yourself.”**

- There are indeed some good reasons to leave a church body.
 - But most of the time, even when that's the case, God wants to use YOU to help address the issues – not just leave.
 - Pray, identify any tendencies for division in yourself, then communicate, forgive, exercise humility and patience.

Identify, and... Engage!

Galatians 5:22-23: "... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

- Division in the body of Christ is a spiritual battle.
 - Jesus said houses, nations, and kingdoms divided against themselves cannot stand.
 - And houses, nations, and kingdoms The LORD has put in place are designed to stand!
 - Therefore, anything that threatens to divide what God has put together has its roots in sin and the enemy of God – who seeks to destroy all that God binds together.
 - Sin on both sides – church oversight and church family members
- Some of you are spiritually gifted to resolve conflict.
 - Gifts of exhortation, encouragement, leadership, teaching, mercy...
 - If you test high in these gifts, one of God's purposes is giving you such gifts is to aid in maintaining the bond of peace in the body of Christ.
 - It is hard work.
 - It is kingdom work.
 - And any excuse not to engage in peace making if you have these gifts is straight up disobedience to God your Father.
- That said, ALL of you are commanded – no matter your giftings – to be vessels that produce the fruit of the Spirit!
 - The context of Galatians 5:22-23 – the entire letter to this church – deals with conflict within the members of the body, specifically Jews and Gentiles.
 - You think the American church has relational problems???
- ALL of us are commanded to be healers, menders, reconcilers.

A house divided cannot stand.

- I hope I have given you a Biblical framework today regarding God's position on division in the body.
- Yes, there are some things you can't control.
- Yes, there are misguided, prideful leadership teams.
- ***And yes, if after one has identified any sinful approaches in him/her regarding divisiveness, and yet major issues still remain... if after prayer, good communication, and patience... if after humbly engaging in ministry, trying to be part of the solution... if after all that, one has done all he can to STAY in a given church family and the leadership still proves immovable, THEN and only then, might it be time to ask God if making a move to a new church home is permissible.***
 - If people would do all of the above, church hopping will become non-existent.

Identify, and... Engage!

(next) PRAY

Reminder: Stuart and Tim will be up front for prayer!

Jesse close with final announcements.