



2018 Q4 Oneness in Christ - Lesson 2 Causes of Disunity

by Linda Ojala

The Bible describes only two groups: Good vs bad, sheep vs goats, righteous vs wicked, God's followers vs Satan's followers, the saved vs the lost, those on the right hand of God vs those on the left, those who love others so much that they care for them without a second thought vs those who make a show of doing good things without a real relationship with God.

How we differ:

- Men, women, children, tall or short, slim or heavy, coordinated or not, married or not, educated or not, cultures, languages, jobs, country or city dwellers, views on god/religion, views that there is no god, politics, “glass half full” vs “glass half empty outlook”, etc.
- We even have disunity within ourselves, the struggle between our heart and head, for example
- This is the first time in history when there are four generations in the work force at the same time, each with different views of where work should fit into your life, how work should be conducted.
- Will we ever think alike? We are told it's best not to bring up Politics or Religion over dinner or at the hair salon. People will defend their beliefs with fervor.
- How can we possibly think that we would all think alike about what we read in the Bible, what an experience with God it like, what we should believe. It is likely that everyone in this room and those watching online has some beliefs that vary at least slightly from the others.

In Adventist Home, page 427 by Ellen White, I found this insightful piece of information:

“It is in the order of God that persons of varied temperament should associate together. When this is the case, each member of the household should sacredly regard the feelings and respect the rights of the others. By this means mutual consideration and forbearance will be cultivated, prejudices will be softened, and rough points of character smoothed. Harmony may be secured, and the blending of the varied temperaments may be a benefit to each.”

When I married my husband, I was thrilled that he came home, put his arm around me, listened to my day, told me about his, watched TV with me, ate dinner with me.....however, my teenaged girls' judgment was that he was “lazy”.

- Their experience was that a man comes home, works around the house until bedtime. They were too young to realize how important it is to a relationship to spend time communicating with each other and enjoying each others company.

Differences that bring about unity:

- Fruit salad, the human body, Military

Is there a difference between differing beliefs and disunity?



- Disunity is caused by many things, such as judging each other, jealousy, anger, hate, competition, greed, pride, fear, inflexibility, error, misunderstanding, misinterpretation, misrepresentation, challenges to the status quo.
- I have a dear friend who is a real seeker after God. She doesn't eat what I do, or believe what I do, but we feel like such kindred spirits because we both LOVE GOD and are seeking after Him.
- We are able to discuss what our different outlooks are, without pressuring the other to conform to the way we see things. It is delightful! It is like we are both looking from the outside at a large, beautiful house, through different windows and describing what we see. If we are able to share and love without judgment, we are in unity in our love and desire to know God better.

Does unity smother freedom of thought, being open to new perspectives, seeking of truth or new light?

- In Christ's day, the church leaders wanted unity under what they believed, but when their cherished beliefs were threatened by Jesus, they plotted and killed the very Holy One that came to save them.
- Could this also be the spirit manifested today?
- John 16:12-15: Jesus told his disciples, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. This is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

Christ's Object Lessons, pg 130.4 by Ellen G. White says that old truths will be presented, but in a new light.

That is the way I feel about Come and Reason. We read the same Bible we always have, with the same fundamental beliefs, but we see new perspectives. A few examples, what I'd like to call my, "I could have had a V-8" moments:

- Jesus pleading with the father – Jesus pleading to us alongside the Father to help us understand, trust and love Him and love others; not Jesus the good cop pleading with the Father, the bad cop, not to destroy us. Early Writings, Pt 49.3, Ellen G White
- God the Father has left all judgment to Jesus (John 5:22). Jesus said he doesn't judge us (John 8:15), but has come to heal us and save us (John 12:47). The words Jesus has said will condemn people at the last day (John 12:48), Do not judge, or you will be judged. By the way we judge will we be judged (Matthew 7:2)
- Our God is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29)...who can dwell with the consuming fire, the everlasting burning? The righteous, but not the wicked..(Isaiah 33:14-17).
- The wrath of God is letting people go, who will not come to Him for life (Romans 1) and cleansing wickedness from the people who will come to Him for life (Isaiah 1:24-28). Wickedness burns like a fire...they will not spare one another (Isaiah 9:18, 19)



- The 10 commandments are like an MRI – they show where the problems are, so you will come to Jesus for healing, but they can't save you. Only Jesus can save you!
 - No one has truly died yet, all are asleep, so to God no one is dead (Matthew 22:29-32, Luke 20:34-38; Daniel 12:2, 13; John 11:1-15), as no one has yet received the final result of their choices. After the resurrection of the righteous, then the resurrection of the wicked, the final death will occur for Satan, his angels and the wicked. They will be no more. (Malachi 4:1-3; Revelation 20:6-9)
 - Other examples from the audience?
 - God's law is not at all like human law, which can be arbitrarily made up to be whatever we want, then changed whenever we want...like speed limits. God's law is woven into the very fabric of our existence and can never be changed.....like the law of worship – we become like what we worship, the law of exertion – as we use a power or a thought, it becomes stronger....like the law of unselfish love – by love given is love received, etc.
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Consider Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people (Acts 5: 34-40)

- After Jesus' death and resurrection, the Apostles were spreading the news and their testimony.
 - The Sanhedrin wanted to put them to death.
 - Gamaliel advised them to consider carefully what they intended to do to these men.. He brought up two cases, Theudas and Judas the Galilean, and noted that they both came to nothing.
 - He advised to let these men alone, for if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail.
 - But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men: you will only find yourselves fighting against God.
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Consider the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7) by the top church leaders, lawyers, teachers of the law:

- He was telling the church leaders that they had betrayed and murdered the Righteous One, they had received the law but not obeyed it
 - The Sanhedrin were furious, covered their ears, yelled at the top of their voices, rushed at him, dragged him out of the city, stoned him.
 - Stephen prayed, “Receive my spirit and don't hold this thing against them, then he “Fell asleep.”
 - Saul was watching, agreeing with what was being done. After his conversion, he recalled this event as one of the things that made him not worthy of being called an apostle (1 Corinthians 15: 9)
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Consider Hezekiah:

- The bronze serpent made by Moses to hold up so that the people who had been bitten by poisonous snakes would be healed (Numbers 21:4-9), a symbol of Christ being lifted up to heal those who looked at Him and believed.
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- It became known as Nehushtan, later people were burning incense to it, so Hezekiah dealt with this disunity by breaking it into pieces so they couldn't worship it.(2 Kings 18:1-4)
- People tend to want something concrete. Spiritual doesn't seem concrete. That is probably why there isn't anything left of the sanctuary and articles in it. We would likely revere then idolize them.

Consider Moses' sister Marian:

- She questioned the leadership of Moses and was given leprosy, perhaps to teach her the death producing results of undermining the God-ordained leadership.
 - Then the leprosy was removed following prayer.
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Consider the Israelite group at the base of Mt. Sanai:

- They believed God was leading them, but while Moses was taking so long up on the mountain, they thought they needed new leadership and a more concrete, less fear-producing god
 - So they had Moses' brother Aaron create the golden calf and then worshiped it.
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Consider Korah, Dathan and Abiram:

- They created a rebellion against leadership by saying that the whole congregation was holy, and Moses was just trying to control the power of leadership.
- God had to deal decisively, as they had already convinced 250 of the leaders to join them.
- This is the only time the Bible mentions that the ground opened up and swallowed the 3 masterminds and their families and possessions, and then fire from God came out and killed the 250 men.
- This may sound harsh, but their accusations sound suspiciously like what Lucifer said in heaven, which lead to 1/3 of the angels joining the rebellion:
- Darkness Before Dawn, pg 2, 3, "Little by little, Lucifer came to indulge a desire for self-exaltation. 'Thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God.' 'Thou hast said,...I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation....I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.' Isaiah 14: 13,14. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of His affections and allegiance of His creatures, it was Lucifer's endeavor to win their service and homage to himself. And coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield."
- All heaven had rejoiced to reflect the Creator's glory and to show forth His praise. And while God was thus honored, all had been peace and gladness. But a note of discord now marred the celestial harmonies. The service and exaltation of self, contrary to the Creator's plan, awakened forebodings of evil in minds to whom God's glory was supreme. The heavenly councils pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. God Himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker, and bring ruin upon himself. But the warning, given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a



spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed jealousy of Christ to prevail, and he became the more determined....”

- “To the very close of the controversy in heaven the great usurper continued to justify himself. When it was announced that with all his sympathizers he must be expelled from the abodes of bliss, then the rebel leader boldly avowed his contempt for the Creator's law. He reiterated his claim that angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right. He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence.”

SABBATH

Memory Text - “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”, Proverbs 9:10

First Paragraph: Old testament prophets repeatedly called upon the people of Israel to obey God's instructions. Disobedience and carelessness would lead to apostasy and disunity. Obedience to God's laws was intended as a means to preserve the people from the natural consequences of sin and to sanctify them.

First paragraph: God's intention was for His people to be holy and to be a witness to the nations around them.

Second paragraph: “...be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' Deuteronomy. 4:5, 6

Consider the shepherds of “the flock” of believers?

- Ezekiel 34 – “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves!..... You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.....I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths.....For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.....I will shepherd the flock with justice....I will save my flock....' ”
- Jeremiah 3: 14, 15, “Return, faithless people,” declares the Lord, “for I am your husband....I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.”
- People, the sheep, don't really listen.
- It is said that people generally retain only about 10 percent of what they hear in a presentation.



- Then consider that we all see and comprehend things through our particular filters – 10 witnesses to an accident will report 10 different versions of the accident.
- I have had experiences where people will have come to this class, or part of it, or only heard from someone else that this class teaches something entirely different than what it teaches. Good people who haven't taken the time to find out the truth.
- Example of errors people have of what we are teaching:
- False: We believe that people who are resurrected in the resurrection of the wicked have a chance to change the status of their salvation.
- Truth: We believe that when the wicked are resurrected in the resurrection of the wicked, they then demonstrate why they were resurrected at that time, as a witness to the universe that it was by their own choice. They build weapons and plan to attack the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. (Revelation 20:4-9). Even with the gates of Jerusalem open, they do not come in, as Jesus orders the gates to be closed just as the wicked are about to attack the New Jerusalem. (The Great Controversy, Chapter 42 – The Controversy Ended, by Ellen G. White)
- Consider Nicodemus, a top lawyer, teacher and leader in the synagogue during Jesus' time. (John 3:1-21). He heard varying reports and decided to check it out for himself. Even when Jesus was explaining truths to him, he had a very hard time “Hearing it”, understanding it. Nevertheless, he took the time, at night. Later, he stood up for Jesus with the Pharisees (John 7:50-52) he and a rich man Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, asked Pilate for the body of Jesus and buried Jesus in Joseph's own new tomb (John 19:38-42).

SUNDAY

Return, O Backsliding Children

First paragraph: Each time God's people consciously followed His will, they were blessed with peace and life. Each time they disobeyed and followed their own ways, their lives became miserable, filled with wars and conflicts. Deuteronomy. 28:1-14 Blessings of obedience.

Second paragraph: God constantly is inviting His people to return to Him and to repent from their wayward actions.

Third paragraph: “Return, backsliding Israel,” says the Lord: “I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,” says the Lord; “I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,” says the Lord. Jeremiah 3:12, 13

Forth paragraph: God had a better future in mind for them, and He longed to bring them back to prosperity, unity, and health. But this could come only if they would live by faith and all that true faith entails.

MONDAY

Right in His Own Eyes



READ: Judges 17:6 and Judges 21:25

- Basically says that they had no king and that everyone did as he saw fit,
- That doesn't mean they necessarily did bad things, but they weren't united.
- The enemy of my enemy is my friend

Second paragraph: We are all fallen beings, and if left to our own devices, if left to follow the inclinations of our hearts, we'll surely wander from the path that God calls us to walk.

What do the following passages tell us about the spiritual and social conditions of Israel during the time of the judges:

- Judges 2:11-13: They didn't remember history or what God had done, so they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtoreth.
- Judges 3:5-7: They intermarried with the groups around them, which were primarily descendents of Ham – Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, etc.

Third paragraph: Prophets and Kings, pages 20, 21, by Ellen G. White: “...By refusing to keep His covenant, they would cut themselves off from the life of God and His blessing could not come upon them.....Their covetousness and greed caused them to be despised even by the heathen. Thus the Gentile world was given occasion to misinterpret the character of God and the laws of His kingdom.”

TUESDAY

The Division of the Hebrew Nation

READ: the story of Solomon's son King Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12: 1-16 –

- Jeroboam, son of Nebat, one of Solomon's officials, rebelled against Solomon.
- The prophet Ahijah told him that God was going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's son's hand and give Jeroboam 10 tribes, because of Solomon's worship of Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Molech.
- Jeroboam ran to Egypt to escape being killed by Solomon, but came back from Egypt after Solomon died.
- The people asked for fewer demands from King Rehoboam than Solomon had required.
- Rehoboam got advice from elders, who advised him to do as the people requested.
- He got advise from young men, who advised that he should tell the people he would be even more demanding than Solomon had been. He followed the young men's advise, so 10 of the 12 tribes left to become a separate kingdom of Israel, and took Jeroboam as their king.
- But Jeroboam didn't want the people to go to Jerusalem to worship, because he was afraid they would leave him and stay with Rehoboam.
- He told the people it was too much for them to go up to Jerusalem. So, he set up two golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan, for the people to use in worship, and appointed as a priest anyone who wanted to become a priest. This became sin.
- So he actually helped to lead those 10 tribes astray.



Second paragraph: Prophets and Kings, p 90, by Ellen G. White, “Had Rehoboam and his inexperienced counselors understood the divine will concerning Israel, they would have listened to the request of the people. But.....they failed to reason from cause to effect, and this forever weakened their influence over a large number of the people.....In this unwise and unfeeling attempt to exercise power, the king and his chosen counselors revealed the pride of position and authority.”

Mutiny on the Bounty:

- 1787 Royal Navy Vessel H.M.S. Bounty, sent to search for breadfruit. Captain William Bligh vs Fletcher Christian.
- Christian felt he just couldn't go on under Captain Bligh, seeing him as being cruel, so he and quite a number of the crew mutinied and set adrift Captain Bligh and 18 loyalists.
- Ultimately, most of the rebels killed each other or died
- Despite being in a small vessel, Captain Bligh was able to make it 3,500 miles back to England and brought to justice some of the remaining rebels, who were hanged.
- Leadership that is dictatorial and harsh can create a backlash of rebellion, and no one benefits.

What do the following say about the importance of wisdom in making right decisions:

- Proverbs 4:1-9: Wisdom will protect you
- Proverbs 9: 10: Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
- Proverbs 24:3,4: By wisdom a house is built, through understanding it is established, through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.
- James 1:5: Ask God to give you wisdom and He will.

Third paragraph: The leadership style recommended to Rehoboam was ruthless and cruel. In the end, he showed himself to be a bully and undeserving of his people's allegiance and faithfulness. Hence, a division occurred among God's people that never should have been there, and that was never God's plan for His people.

So, what about 1 Kings 12: 15 that says, “So the king did not listen to the people, for **this turn of events was from the Lord, to fulfill the word the Lord had spoken** to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah...”

WEDNESDAY

Schism in Corinth

Second paragraph: the first four chapters of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians was an appeal for unity.

Third paragraph: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 notes that they were divided about who they followed, Apollos, Cephas or Christ. Paul urged them to have no divisions, they they were to have the same mind and judgment.



Forth paragraph: Paul reminds the Corinthians that Christians are called to follow Christ, not a human being – however talented or gifted or called that person may be.

- When people look at Come and Reason, do they say that we follow Tim Jennings, and think that we don't follow Christ?

Fifth paragraph: Christian unity finds its source in the truth as it is found in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and in no one else, no matter how “worthy” a mentor or preacher or leader that person might be. Our baptism is into Jesus who alone can cleanse us from sin.

Sixth paragraph: As Seventh-day Adventists, we cannot take for granted our unity of faith and mission. Divisions and quarrels can undermine the unity of our church today unless the love and lordship of Christ unites us to Him.

How did Jesus handle disunity?

- Christ pointed out the inconsistency between belief and behavior of the church leaders, their lack of understanding of the temple, the Sabbath, their view of women, of the sick, of the poor, etc.
- Christ pointed out that they didn't have a correct understanding of the law.
- They thought that they had a correct understanding of all this and were obeying all the law.
- Not just obedience to the Word of God is the antidote to false teaching, but correctly understanding it.
- People can share a truth, but be hateful, merciless, cruel.
- Who is the greatest (Luke 9:46-50; Luke 22:24-27; Mark 9:33-40; Matthew 18:1-5; Matthew 20:20-28) The disciples had a real problem with this! He educated them about true greatness in God's eyes: Servant of others, childlike in belief, the difficulty of being a leader.
- It still seems to be popular to do anything to keep high level jobs in the church, and to do whatever it takes to move up in the ranks.
- Judas Iscariot: (John 6:70,71) Jesus knew from the beginning Judas would betray him, but sent him out with the other disciples to perform miracles, washed his feet the very night of His betrayal, but despite that, Judas never benefited from the example and teaching Jesus did every day.
- Matthew 10:34, Jesus said, “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”
- Christ stirred up dissension, cognitive dissonance, like choosing Sabbath to do many of his miracles, eating with gluttons and drunkards...sinners, telling people that they needed to eat his flesh and drink his blood.
- Luke 12:49-51 – I have come to bring fire. I have a baptism to undergo. I did not come to bring peace, but division – even to the families.
- John 8:31, 32 – Jesus said if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.



THURSDAY

Wolves Will Come

Read Acts 20:25-31: Paul warned the Ephesian elders that they should keep watch over themselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit made them overseers. Be shepherds of the church of the Lord, which he bought with his own blood.. He warned that wolves would come in, even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

Third paragraph: In his Second Epistle to Timothy, Paul wants Timothy, who is responsible for the church at Ephesus, against error in the church and godlessness in the last days.

2 Timothy 2:14-28 and 3:12-17 Paul advises him to:

- Know his Bible, and correctly handle the word of truth.
- Watch out for those who have a form of godliness but deny the power, and those who were saying the resurrection had already taken place.
- He should gently and kindly instruct them, that they might come to their senses.
- Realize that everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
- The scriptures are able to make you wise. They are God breathed, to teach, correct, train in righteousness, and so be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Forth paragraph: What about these statements:

- “Truth alone leads to godliness and harmony among believers.”
- “In the end, obedience to the Word of God is the antidote to false teaching that could threaten the unity of the church.”

The Lava view of religions:

- Start hot with new idea, correcting an old idea, get a following, then get cool and stay there. Luther, etc.
- Another person comes up with another new idea, then gets a following and they cool down and stay there. Etc. to the point of having many thousands of religions based on Christ... Wesley, etc
- Could a misunderstanding of a part of the Bible or what Jesus was teaching happen today? Do we think we understand everything?

FRIDAY

Further Thought

First paragraph: Gospel Workers, page 483, by Ellen G. White, “The Lord desires His chosen servants to learn how to unite in harmonious effort. It may seem to some the the contrast between their



gifts and the gifts of a fellow laborer is too great to allow them to unite in harmonious effort; but when they remember that there are varied minds to be reached, and that some will reject the truth as it is presented by one laborer, only to open their ears to God's truth as it is presented in a different manner by another laborer, they will hopefully endeavor to labor together in unity. Their talents, however diverse, may all be under the control of the same Spirit. In every word and act, kindness and love will be revealed; and as each worker fills his appointed place faithfully, the prayer of Christ for the unity of His followers will be answered, and the world will know that these are His disciples.”

Discussion Questions:

- What can church leaders and members do to help prevent strife and cliques in a local church?
- In the world church?

Second paragraph:

- 'A proper understanding of God's Word and the sanctified effort to obey it are the best protection against disunity and schism among us.'
- What about a close personal relationship with God and love for Him?

Philippians 4:8,9:

- Think about these things: Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy.
- Instead of digging up dirt, find the gold!
- Matthew 22:37-40: Jesus said that all the law and prophets hang on these: love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.
- Think of what this looks like...who do you know that you could say actually exhibits this behavior?