

# Threats to Unity

## Factions, Pride, Misplaced Loyalty

How to recognize and resist division?

**"I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to agree together, to end your divisions, and to be united by the same mind and purpose. For members of Chloe's household have made it clear to me, my brothers and sisters, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each of you is saying, "I am with Paul," or "I am with Apollos," or "I am with Cephas," or "I am with Christ." Is Christ divided? Paul wasn't crucified for you, was he? Or were you in fact baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name! (I also baptized the household of Stephanus. Otherwise, I do not remember whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel – and not with clever speech, so that the cross of Christ would not become useless." (1 Corinthians 1:10-17)**

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<https://tinyurl.com/Call2Unity>

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# From the Mind of Christ...

## What is True Religion?

***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”*** Matt. 22:37-39

***“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”***  
Matt. 28:18-20

Reflecting on the way that God operates... via Promises and Covenant Relationships...

1. Thru 1 man, Adam, sin entered the World.
2. Thru 1 man, Noah, God resolved to renew this World and promised to overcome the effects of sin in it.
3. Thru 1 man, Abraham, God reached a family and promised to bless all families.
4. Thru 1 man, Moses, God reached a nation and promised to bless all nations.
5. Thru 1 man, Jesus, God reached the world and promises to be with each of us to the end of the World

# Focusing on the King's Perspective

A mission from our King... (Matt. 22:37-40; 28:19-20)

1. Love the Lord with all your heart (Worship – Matt. 4:10).
2. Love your neighbor as yourself (Service - Eph. 4:12)
3. Go and make disciples (Evangelism – Acts 1:8).
4. Baptize them (Fellowship; Covenant Unity – Eph. 4:1-6)
5. Teach them to obey (Discipleship – Col. 1:28)

*"We proclaim Him by instructing and teaching all people with all wisdom so that we may present every person mature in Christ."*

*Colossians 1:28*

# How the Early Church Responded

A foundational pattern for every church. Acts 2:40-47

***“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (DISCIPLESHIP) and fellowship (FELLOWSHIP), in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (WORSHIP).” v. 42***

***“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need (SERVICE).” v. 44-45***

***“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it.” 1 Corinthians 3:9-10***

***We trust the Lord that you are putting into practice the things we taught you. 2 Thessalonians 3:4***

# The Heart of the Christian Gospel

Establish a covenant relationship with God (Hebrews 8)

**John 17:3** "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

*How to be Right with God...*

*"If anyone says 'I love God' and yet hates his fellow Christian, he is a liar because the one who does not love his fellow Christian whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And the commandment we have from Him is this: that the one who loves God should love his fellow Christian too. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been fathered by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves the child fathered by Him. By this we know that we love the children of God: whenever we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments. And His commandments do not weigh us down, because everyone who has been fathered by God overcomes the world."*

*1 John 4:20 – 5:4*

The Gospel centers on the restoration of relationship with God, accomplished through Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

- **John 17:3** : "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

- **Defines eternal life as knowing God personally and relationally.**

- **John 14:16-17** : "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

- **Speaks of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence, a vital part of the believer's union with God.**

- **2 Corinthians 5:17-18** : "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ."

- **Highlights the transformative power of the Gospel, reconciling believers to God.**

***"If anyone says 'I love God' and yet hates his fellow Christian, he is a liar because the one who does not love his fellow Christian whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And the commandment we have from Him is this: that the one who loves God should love his fellow Christian too. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been fathered by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves the child fathered by Him. By this we know that we love the children of God: whenever we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments. And His commandments do not weigh us down, because everyone who has been fathered by God overcomes the world."*** 1 John 4:20 – 5:4

# Division Example (1)

## The Arian Controversy, Council of Nicaea (235 AD)

Topic	Arian View	Nicene/Athanasius View
Nature of the Son	Created being, not eternal	Uncreated, co-eternal with the Father
Divinity of Christ	Divine in a subordinate, lesser sense	Fully divine, equal in essence to the Father
Essence (ousia)	Heteroousios – of different essence	Homoousios – of same essence
Soteriology	Christ reveals God but cannot fully save	Only God can save; Christ must be God
Scriptural Use	Emphasized Proverbs 8:22 (“created”)	Emphasized John 1:1 (“the Word was God”)

### Historical Context

**Timeframe:** Early 4th century AD

**Political Climate:** Christianity had recently moved from persecution under Roman emperors to protection and toleration under **Emperor Constantine I**, who issued the **Edict of Milan** in 313 AD.

**Church Landscape:** Rapid growth of Christianity brought doctrinal diversity, including divergent teachings about the nature of Christ.

### Primary Characters

#### 1. Arius (c. 256–336 AD)

**Role:** Elder (presbyter) of the church in Alexandria

**Belief:** Argued that **Jesus Christ was a created being**—not eternal, not equal to God the Father.

**Famous quote:** “There was a time when he [the Son] was not.”

**Theological position:**

Jesus is subordinate to the Father.

The Son is divine but **not of the same essence** (*homoousios*) as the Father.

Appealed to **monotheism** and sought to preserve the unique transcendence of the Father.

#### 2. Athanasius (c. 296–373 AD)

**Role:** Deacon under Bishop Alexander of Alexandria; later Bishop himself.

**Belief:** Argued that Jesus is **fully divine and eternal**, equal with the Father.

**Theological position:**

The Son is “**of the same essence**” (*homoousios*) as the Father.

Only if Christ is fully God can He offer **real salvation**.

Emphasized the unity of the Trinity: **One God in three co-equal Persons**.

#### 3. Emperor Constantine I

**Role:** Roman Emperor seeking political and religious unity across the empire.

**Motive:** Feared that Christian infighting would destabilize the empire.

**Action:** Convened the **First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea**, seeking to resolve the theological crisis.

### High-Level Sequence of Events

#### 1. Rise of Arianism (c. 318 AD)

Arius begins preaching in Alexandria.

Gains followers across Egypt, North Africa, and parts of the Eastern Empire.

Bishop Alexander of Alexandria excommunicates Arius.

#### 2. Widening Controversy (c. 319–324)

Arius travels and spreads his views; writes letters to influential bishops.

Political tensions rise as bishops across the empire take sides.

#### 3. Constantine Intervenes (c. 324)

Constantine becomes sole emperor.

Alarmed at the division within the Church, he attempts reconciliation through a letter and envoy (Hosius of Cordoba).

#### 4. Council of Nicaea Convened (325 AD)

Held in **Nicaea**, in modern-day Turkey.

Over **300 bishops** attend (mostly Eastern, some Western).

**Key Result:** The **Nicene Creed** is drafted, affirming that Christ is “*begotten, not made, of one essence (homoousios) with the Father.*”

**Arius is declared a heretic** and exiled; his writings burned.

#### 5. Aftermath and Legacy

Although Arius is condemned, **Arianism continues** to influence many, especially among Germanic tribes.

Athanasius faces repeated exile but remains a fierce defender of Nicene orthodoxy.

The Nicene Creed is reaffirmed and expanded at the **Council of Constantinople (381 AD)**.

# Division Example (2)

## The Purpose Driven Church Controversy (21<sup>st</sup> Century)

Aspect	Purpose Driven Model	New Testament Model
Leadership	Senior pastor-led, CEO model	Plurality of elders and deacons
Emphasis	Programs and growth metrics	Spiritual maturity and faithfulness
Audience Focus	Seeker-sensitive, felt needs	God-centered, edification of saints
Preaching Style	Topical, purpose-driven	Expository, doctrinal
Church Life	Programmatic, campaign-based	Relational, organic
Governance	Staff-led, goal-oriented teams	Congregational involvement and accountability

While *The Purpose Driven Church* has had substantial influence globally, especially in the Evangelical and megachurch movements, critics from traditional, Reformed, and Restorationist backgrounds frequently argue that its model diverges from the **simplicity, spiritual depth, and apostolic authority** of the New Testament church. These concerns are rooted not just in stylistic preferences but in **theological and ecclesiological convictions** about the nature of the church, its leadership, and its mission.

### 1. Pragmatism vs. Apostolic Pattern

#### Criticism:

The *Purpose Driven Church* is often seen as being built on **pragmatic, results-driven strategies**—targeting the felt needs of seekers, using business and marketing principles, and optimizing for numerical growth and member satisfaction.

#### Contrast with New Testament:

New Testament churches emphasized **doctrinal fidelity**, spiritual maturity, and **conformity to apostolic teaching**, regardless of numerical outcome (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim 3:15). Critics argue that early church organization focused on **spiritual disciplines, shepherding, and organic growth**, rather than mass appeal or structured programs.

### 2. Mission Shift: From God-Centered to Man-Centered

#### Criticism:

Warren's model is sometimes described as **man-centered**, focusing on fulfilling five human-centric “purposes” (worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism), often framed in terms of **personal fulfillment** or “discovering your purpose.”

#### Contrast with New Testament:

Critics argue that the New Testament church was **Christ-centered**, focused on **submission to Christ as Lord**, and on **edification of the body** rather than personal actualization (Eph 4:11-16; Col 1:28). The apostles called believers to deny themselves (Luke 9:23), not to pursue purpose-driven self-expression.

### 3. Role of Leadership and Church Governance

#### Criticism:

Warren's model often advocates for a **CEO-style leadership**, where the senior pastor functions as a visionary leader with centralized control, supported by staff and purpose-specific teams.

#### Contrast with New Testament:

The early church practiced **plurality of elders** (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), local accountability, and **congregational involvement** in decision-making (Acts 6:2-5). Critics claim the *Purpose Driven* structure can diminish **biblical oversight and mutual accountability**, favoring efficiency over scriptural order.

### 4. Seeker-Sensitive and Market-Oriented Philosophy

#### Criticism:

The *Purpose Driven* model is closely aligned with the “**seeker-sensitive**” movement, crafting worship services and ministries to appeal to the unchurched or culturally disengaged.

#### Contrast with New Testament:

New Testament worship was primarily **God-directed**, reverent, and centered on **the Word, prayer, and the Lord's Supper** (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 14). Critics argue that the NT church never shaped its gatherings around unbelievers' preferences, but prioritized the **spiritual nourishment and maturity of believers**.

### 5. De-emphasis on Doctrine and Expository Teaching

#### Criticism:

Many critics argue that the *Purpose Driven* approach often downplays **deep doctrinal teaching** in favor of **topical, life-application messages** that appeal to emotion or relevance.

#### Contrast with New Testament:

Paul repeatedly instructed elders to **teach sound doctrine** (Titus 2:1), **guard against false teaching** (Acts 20:28-30), and preach the Word “in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2). The NT church was catechetical and deeply theological.

### 6. Programmatic vs. Relational Church Life

#### Criticism:

Warren's model heavily relies on **structured programs and ministries**, with each member funneled into a system of classes, teams, and campaigns.

#### Contrast with New Testament:

Early church life was highly **relational**, marked by **house-to-house fellowship**, mutual edification, and shared life (Acts 2:44-47; Rom 12:4-13). Critics suggest that the NT pattern emphasizes **organic discipleship**, not systematized pipelines.