

Pulling Down Petty Partitions

³² *They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians. - Genesis 43:32*

It has been noted by more than one observer that 11 a.m. on Sunday morning is the most segregated time in America. The point such comments reveal is that though we, as followers of Christ, are of one family lineage, all too often, we divide ourselves along lines of differences when unifying our community around our common faith would be more pleasing to God and more beneficial to us.

The Egyptians, among whom Joseph lived, practiced a form of separation and division as well. 10 of Joseph’s brothers were visiting him after having traveled considerable distance over no doubt difficult terrain. Yet Joseph, according to the Egyptian custom, separated himself from the family he’d not seen in a very long time simply because of an ethnic difference.

In many of our churches, we still practice the art of division today. We divide over race, culture, socioeconomic status, gender, age and even educational background. We divide over church position, social affiliation, geographic birth place, spiritual maturity and sexual orientation. But, division in the church is not all bad. Believe it or not, in some instances, division is actually the will of God for His people. For this reason, it behooves us to take a brief look at division, unity, and God’s perspective on both as they affect our experience in our churches today.

It important to note that neither division nor unity is beneficial or harmful, in and of itself. What makes one destructive and the other helpful in any given situation, are the circumstances involved and God’s intention for the thing affected. Therefore, there is both positive and negative division, just as there is both positive and negative unity, depending on the specific situation. Consider the chart below:

<u>What God wants to happen...</u>	<u>What I choose to do...</u>	<u>What this act represents...</u>
“Separate yourself from...”	I separate myself from...	Positive Division – <i>i.e. Lot and Abram</i>
“Join yourself to...”	I separate myself from...	Negative Division – <i>i.e. Joseph and Mary</i>
“Separate yourself from...”	I join myself to...	Negative Unity – <i>i.e. Solomon and his wives</i>
“Join yourself to...”	I join myself to...	Positive Unity – <i>i.e. Peter and Paul</i>

