



"And now I am no more in the world,
but these are in the world..." (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance
of this week's lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®
or Standard Lesson Quarterly®.

DIVISION APPEARS IMMINENT

Last week the 221st General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) voted to recognize same-sex marriage and to allow the denomination's ministers to conduct such weddings in states where it is legal. Last month a group of 80 ministers of the United Methodist Church predicted an "imminent split" within that body of believers regarding this same issue. Both denominations have lost numerous congregations over the last few years because of dissension over the direction that leaders are taking. In both cases, rejection of a historic understanding of biblical teachings is at the heart of the division.

DIVISION WAS EVIDENT

Christians have long struggled with issues that threaten their unity. Paul had to deal with the problem very early in the church's life. The letter we call 1 Corinthians reveals, as a whole, a church that was fragmenting over allegiances to human leaders and acceptance of unbiblical teaching. These same tendencies continue to work against unity today. It is a sadly repeating pattern.

1. Does Paul's call for unity require us to stay in a church that we believe to be going astray? Why, or why not?
2. Under what circumstances, if any, would "agree to disagree" be a biblical model for handling a problem within a church? Why?
3. How would you know if the problems Paul addresses in today's lesson were becoming problems in your church?
4. Considering Acts 15:36-40, is disunity always a bad thing? Why, or why not? Or does that passage even apply to the issue of church unity?
5. What does Paul tell us about the importance of faithful leaders in maintaining church unity?
6. Following question 5, how can we ensure the church has such leaders?

—Charles R. Boatman

<http://www.standardlesson.com/downloads>

Copyright © 2014 by Standard Publishing, Cincinnati, OH. All rights reserved.
Each download is for the use of one church only.