



"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®.

DIVIDED

As a new year begins, the news media offers a retrospective of the old year's events and trends. This year, *Time* magazine's Person of the Year was "The Silence Breakers," the women who forced us to look at the divide between men and women in culturally tolerated behavior. Donald Trump's inauguration, the subsequent political battles over a Supreme Court nomination, and tax and health care reform all pointed out America's political divide. Mass murders by terrorists in London, Las Vegas, and in a Texas church reminded us of another divide—the one between violent attempts to change society and more civilized means.

UNITED

The Christian answer to bridging these divides is stated in today's text. The call for us to practice unity is not based on human schemes, political or otherwise. We are to practice unity because it is the nature of the God who created us in his image. Enabled by the Holy Spirit, we gain Christian maturity to the point at which unity becomes a reality in our relationship with God and others. No wonder the world is divided! It rejects how unity can be found.

1. What good is end-of-year retrospection when, each year, the bad news seems to be most prominent?
2. From your perspective, what was the most important news in 2017? Why? How does that news show our world's need for Jesus?
3. What are some specific things Christians can do to work for unity in church and society?
4. What can we learn from today's lesson about human divisiveness and the Spirit's role in creating unity?
5. Describe one positive step you plan to take in 2018 to bring unity to your small part of the world.

—Charles R. Boatman

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