

A divisive person; good or bad?

I have recently heard a lot of talk about being *divisive*. I wonder if that word is maybe over used or abused. Some think that it has only the negative connotation of causing trouble in the church as in Titus 3:11. But a quick look at a concordance gives us these alternatives:

Luke 12:51 Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

In today's English (as in Titus 3) who would call Jesus a *divisive* person? Certainly no Christian would! Yet He, Himself said He came to give division to the earth. If a division is caused by a person who is identifying those who are teaching/practicing unscriptural ideas, then that person is doing good, not evil, because he is following in the footsteps of Jesus! Paul also uses *division* in this sense when talking to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 11:18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.

Of course that does not mean that Paul was wrong when he wrote Titus 3:10-11. It only means he used the word in the, very valid, negative sense when He wrote to Titus. When he wrote to the Corinthians he used the word in the, very valid, positive sense of pointing out error, following the example of Jesus.

It is sometimes very difficult to know how to apply these definitions in a particular case. When someone differs with you, should we automatically accuse that person of being Titus-3-*divisive*?? If you care at all about acting like a Christian, making sound judgments, trying to solve the problem rather than aggravating it, you will be very thoughtful, slow and certain of our facts **before** we accuse a brother of being a Titus-3-divisive person.

Of course if our purpose is to shift the attention from our own weak position we can simply make the accusation, with the goal of making the one who differs with us to defend against the accusation instead of pointing out the error in our own weak position. Unfortunately, many times this device is successful, **BUT NOT TO CHRIST NOR THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO ARE BOTH PRESENT AT THE TIME!!**

Why is it that so often Christians act as though they are alone when they act in an unGodly way? When brothers are discussing a spiritual/scriptural matter they sometimes speak and act as if they don't know or don't care that the Holy Spirit is living in their bodies and Christ is present as they speak and act! All these unkind and unChristian like actions will reappear on judgment day as we are asked to give an account, 2 Corinthians 5:10

Before we can accuse a brother of being Titus-3-divisive we must know his motive. If his motive is to scripturally point out an error, then his motive is Christ like and not Titus-3-divisive. Since it is very difficult to know another person's motive, we must have very much and very clear evidence before we decide. Of course, it is possible to do or Paul, via the Holy Spirit, would not have told us how to deal with such a person. As we try to implement Paul's instructions to Titus we must remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1, *do not judge, or you to will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged.* On our judgment day we want Christ to judge us with love, kindness and fairness, therefore we, ourselves, must judge that way while here on earth! We must also consider His words in John 7:24, *Stop judging by mere appearances, and make right judgments.* This implies there are such things as wrong judgments, therefore we must be careful, very careful before we accuse a brother of being Tuts-3-divisive, because our judgment might be wrong!

Some people think that any judgment of theirs is right just because they made it! Of course, it is only the arrogant and/or self-righteous who would do such a thing, so we don't have to worry about that detail.

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How do we tell if a brother who differs with us is Titus-3-divisive? The most important thing to ask is how and why is he spreading his message?

How is his message being taught? Is he being secretive? Arriving at member's houses uninvited and trying to persuade those who are not interested? Having closed meetings with only those who approve his message? Refusing to answer certain questions about his message or intentions? If you can answer yes to any of these questions, there is certainly good reason to investigate further.

The second thing to consider is why is he doing this? Is he merely seeking the truth or is he just trying to get recognition or approval to serve his pride? Because even if his method of sharing his message is acceptable if his motive is selfish he could still be Titus-3-divisive.

These are subjective questions and therefore most difficult to analysis and therefore usually best decided by a small group of sincere mature Christians who are neutral as to the message being investigated.

If there is sufficient evidence that the person in question is either sharing his message in a concealed or too rapid or deceptive manner or for a selfish reason then the elders should investigate in detail as a precaution to possible trouble in the church due to a Titus-3-divisive person.

These are but a few suggestions. This question is very complex and therefore must be faced with great caution. Though these comments are few and certainly not exhaustive, each one is necessary for a fair and true evaluation.