

In our services here, for the past few weeks we have also been embarking on this series called 'Black or White'. Basically we're looking at the grey areas of Christian living. There are many 'Black or White' issues in Christian life, er... you should not steal, you should not commit adultery, should not kill, you should love God - all these are the 'Black and White' issues. But then there are also a lot that are not explicitly or specifically spoken of - the grey areas, so we have been on this series 'Black or White'. If you are new with us, here's a video for you. If you have watched this for three times already, this is the 4th time you're watching it, but er... we're only going to show it once-in-our-lifetime, so here's the video.

(Video Shown)

Yup, this is the 'Michael Jackson' drink. They call it in the drinks stall today. It's a mixture of soya bean and er... 'Chin Chow', you call this 'Michael Jackson'. Now, in Christian life, there are a lot of things that are not really black or white. It's grey, in a sense that God did not say it is better for you to do this or better for you not to do this. God did not say it's better to eat the Black 'Chai Tao Kway' (Hokkien dialect words meaning carrot cake), God did not say it's better to eat the white 'Chai Tao Kway'. These are realms of freedom that Christians can operate within. And in our church, we've been looking at these grey areas - areas that the Scripture does not really explicitly forbid or command. So we look at things like tattoos. Socially tattoos come with a stigma, but scripturally there is that realm of freedom. This is a grey area you can exercise within. If you want to find out more, go back to the first sermon, 'Black or White' series, sermon number 1. 0:02:30.4

We also looked at dressing and what kind of dress code should we have when we come to church. Can women wear pants? We also looked at alcohol and the Bible, a very sensitive one and I am er...actually I discovered there're many Christians here who actually take some alcohol. Er... in a kind... to my surprise, but I realised it's... it's... it's the kind of thing that you don't really say or announced, but it is a reality in many, many people's lives. Then we looked at cigarettes and we looked at games. Can we play computer games like World of Warcraft? What about movies - can I watch movies like 'Twilight' and... and listen to songs from 'Oppa Gangnam Style'? Um... can I go to the KTV and can I play mah-jong? Should I involve myself with poker cards and all these areas, require wisdom to make good choices. So what do you

mean by wisdom? Wisdom, I think is based on the principles of God's Word and we looked at it 2 weeks ago. When it comes to grey areas, you need to have a certain structure or framework or perspective and I called it a lens. 0:03:50.8

You need to have a kind of a...you need to have a kind of a lens, a clear lens by which you can look at the matters that are mentioned above, the grey areas. I hope you remember what 'CLEAR' lens stand for? Wah... this one not very clear (referring to screen). Er... I hope you recognize what 'CLEAR' lens stand for, alright? Let's try it.

- C stands for? Conscience, very good! We should never do anything against our conscience.
- L? Love. In other words, we must consider the benefits, the building up of others and not to destroy their faith. We should build up their faith.
- What about E? Alright, edification and the meaning of edification is... (pause for respond) to build up. Very good, alright? So whatever we do must be building up our spiritual life and not to destroy our spiritual life, not to indulge in fleshly lusts that can war against the soul.
- A? Addiction. So whatever we're doing should not lead us to the state of addiction.
- R? Reverence. Whatever we do must be done to the glory of God.

So with that lens, you are able then to look at the various issues of life. Whether it be tattoos, it's not clearly, explicitly forbidden, but does it pass the 'CLEAR' test for you? Does this pass the 'CLEAR' test for you? Does alcohol pass the 'CLEAR' test for you? Then what about issues church-wide like Bible versions and musical instruments and music style? As we gather this morning to worship, we use certain instruments, we employ a certain style. They pass maybe the 'CLEAR' test for some, but not the others. The reality is, when you come to matters of opinion, even if you use the 'CLEAR' lens, we are all going to come up with different conclusions and this is the struggle we have. Now, when it comes to "Thou shall not commit adultery", there's no question asked. Everybody agrees to that. "Thou shall not kill", everybody agrees to that. But when it comes to things like Bible versions, alcohol, forms of entertainment, then in a church like this, in a group like this, I will not be surprised if we have all different kinds of opinions. What happens? What happens if we all have different opinions? Some say we can use guitar, some say we cannot use guitar. What happens when a church has different opinions? Now this is particularly difficult, especially when you've thought through the matter. 0:06:46.6

Paul says in Romans 40, "Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind." So let's say you've thought this through. Thought the issues through and you are persuaded

about a certain position but you realised everyone else does not seem to follow your position. We all have different positions, what happens? The subject today is how...what...how do we deal with these disagreements. What do you do? What do you do if you realise in your care group, some people believe this, some people believe that and you don't quite follow any of it? What happens is, in a church like ours, we have different musical tastes and convictions. Maybe you come from another church and you come and you realise: Eh? How come our people are using all different Bible versions? How do you deal with it?

Now, let me say this, I think, in principle, there are 3 ways by which people deal with disagreements. 3 ways, in concept. The first way is this: some people divide. So if I don't agree with you, I will fight with you and eventually I'll split from you. This is one way people deal with disagreements. I cannot agree with you, therefore, I will separate from you. I read about this pastor. His name is Ray Stedman. The man who has gone on to be with the Lord and Ray Stedman shared about how there was a struggle within the church over a Christmas tree. They were wondering whether they could bring the Christmas tree for Christmas program one day. So there were some Christians in the church who says, "Yes we can have the Christmas tree. It's Christmas after all." So they wanted to do it, but there was another group that says, "No, the Christmas tree is of pagan origin." In other words, it's an ungodly origin. The beginnings, the how it all started, it's all ungodly, so don't bring it to the church. But the group who wants to bring it in, brought it in anyway on Christmas Day. They brought it in and the group that didn't want it then took the tree out and put it outside but the group that wanted it, went out and brought it in again. And they brought it out again and so they were arguing and eventually it broke out into a fist fight, amongst Christians in the church for Christmas, over a Christmas tree. And this got out to the news because they sue each other in court. Now if you thought that was ridiculous, let me tell you also another story by Chuck Swindoll in his book, 'The Grace Awakening'. He mentioned that there was a pair of missionaries in the mission field and they had no peanut butter and they wanted peanut butter. So they asked someone in their home country to send peanut butter over, but right where they are serving, there was an elderly couple missionary who said, "No. You should not have peanut butter. You should show your commitment to the mission field by denying yourself the peanut butter." But they wanted peanut butter. No, you cannot have peanut butter and the...and the disallowance was so strong and vehement that they fought and they argued and eventually the couple who wanted peanut butter left the mission field and left the church altogether. You say over what? Peanut butter.

0:10:19.2

You see, that's how people can deal with disagreements. When I don't agree with you, I fight you and because you have your choice, I have my choice, eventually, there's an unhappy division. Some people divide. And we forget the thousand and one things we are united around, and we choose to pick on the few things that we differ. You've heard this story right? We've said it many times. It's about a man who wrote this story that while I was at the bridge one day and I saw a man wanting to jump off the bridge and I said to him: "Don't jump!"

He says, "Why? Nobody loves me!"

"No, God loves you. Do you believe in God?"

"Yes I do."

"Are you a Jew or a Christian?"

"I'm a Christian."

"Oh, very good, so am I! Are you a Protestant or a Catholic?"

"I'm a Protestant."

"Very good, so am I! Are you a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist or what?"

"I'm a Baptist. Oh, very good, so am I! Are you a Northern Baptist or a Southern Baptist?"

"I'm...I'm a Northern Baptist."

"Very good, so am I! Then are you the Northern conservative Baptist or are you the Northern Liberal Baptist?"

"Oh, I'm the Northern Conservative Baptist."

"Very good, so am I! Are you the Northern Conservative Baptist of the Great Lakes region or are you Northern Conservative Baptist of the Eastern region?"

"Oh, I'm the Northern Conservative Baptist of the Great Lakes region."

"Very good, so am I! Are you the Northern Conservative Baptist of the Great Lakes region of the Council 1879 or Council 1912?"

"I'm of the Council 1879."

"Then you go and die, you heretic!" (Laughter in the congregation) 0:12:18.4

You know, we all laugh at something like this because we can be so focus about one single detail and neglect the unity we have in many other areas. I suspect there are many of you who have come from different churches here in GLCC. This is not your first church and you have personally experienced how people deal with disagreements. Now, I'm not suggesting that we can unite with everybody in this world. The unity we have must be in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is what we must have in order to enjoy that unity. But you might have come from other churches that have disagreed over the minute details that are not the core teachings of Scripture,

that are not the fundamental, that are not what we call the essentials. And it's very sad when this is the way we deal with disagreements, we divide.

That's not the way Scripture has it for us. You see, when Paul wrote Romans 14 and 15, he did not say, "Alright, I realise some of you feel that you can eat meat, some of you feel that you cannot eat the meat that is sold in the markets because they may be offered to idols, they may be unclean, so you go and split your church." No, he did not say that. He did not say that because there are some who wants to be vegetarians and some who wanted to be carnivores, that the Roman church will now be split into the Roman Church of the Vegetarians and the Roman Church of the Carnivores. No, division is not the way the apostle instructed the church to deal with disagreements. But you know we have cowardly I say, actually I think division is a cowardly... is a cowardly action because you don't want to face it, you don't want to deal with it, in love, in a biblical way, you just take the easy way out. You quit! Can I say that also for husbands and wives? Husbands and wives married for a long time and then over some disagreements, you say I quit lah. I don't want to be with you anymore lah. It's a cowardly thing to do and it's a cowardly thing to do also in the church of Jesus Christ. Paul did not say when we disagree, let's divide. 0:14:56.8

Now, there is a second way people deal with disagreements and it is this: some make everyone look alike. So one area is to make the difference the ultimate issue, therefore you divide. The other way you deal with it is to try to eliminate differences. You know what it means right? So I've a church and I realise you have different opinions, different ideas, so the leadership wants you to eliminate all differences. Everybody should think the same way, dress the same way, talk the same way, live life the same way. And I do know there are some of you who come from churches that are dictatorial in that sense. You've come from churches where the leader actually tells you what to dress, how to dress, how you raise your kids, how many children you should have, what course of studies your children should go for and what jobs they should take. It is... it is totally controlled. Why, because they don't want to have differences. Because when you have differences and when people can think for themselves, they cannot handle the diversity. So when in disagreement, they make everyone look and think alike. You know what that happens? When that happens, you restrict the intention God has for each and every individual. You don't allow them to express their individuality in Jesus Christ. The uniqueness by which God has made each one of us and this church would really be more of a cult than a church. You know what's a cult? I... I searched out some of the characteristics of cult and I... I just show you some of them.

Number 1, the group – a cult is focused on the living leader to whom members seem to display excessively zealous, unquestioning commitment.

Number 2, questioning doubt and dissent are discouraged, or even punished.

Number 3, mind numbing techniques such as meditation, chanting, denunciation sessions, debilitating work routines are used to suppress doubts about a group and its leaders.

Number 4, the leadership dictates sometimes in great detail how member should think, act and feel. For example, members must get permission from leaders to date, change jobs, get married. Leaders may prescribe what types of clothes to wear, where to live, how to discipline children and so forth.

So how do they deal with differences? They eliminate them. They make everyone think in a uniform way so the people have become a homogenised uniform people. Again, this second way is not the way Paul tells the church to employ. He says in Romans, “One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables...” (Romans 14:2-3, ESV) So he’s saying, in this church, first of all, don’t split! People like to split, don’t do it! Number 2, don't try to make everyone the same. There are some who would be convinced they can eat all kinds and there will be some who are convinced they can only eat some kinds. It's okay. It's alright to be different. He goes on to say, “...each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” (Romans 14:5, ESV) The Christian faith doesn't eliminate our individuality. It doesn't! So this is what we have seen, there are 3 ways to deal with disagreements.

1. Some people divide. That's not the right way.

2. Some make everyone look alike. This is also not the right way.

But Christians must unite, this is the only biblical way. This is the superior way. This is where the Gospel is so amazing and powerful that when we have disagreements and when we do not lose our individuality, yet there is a beautiful harmony and community that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can bring. What this means is the Gospel allows us not to live a life of animosity or uniformity but to be right there in unity. Or if I put it in another way, you don't resign yourself to differences and just quit.

Neither do you remove the differences and want everyone to be the same, but you rise above differences. The Gospel of Jesus Christ allows us to rise above the differences we may have. and be united as a people. See, that is the whole essence of Paul's writing in Romans 14 and 15. I come right to the chase in verse 6, when he says, “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus...” (Romans 15:5-6, ESV) So

he's saying the way to go, is not to divide nor to make everyone look alike but to unite in such harmony. You know, unity is not uniformity. Uniformity is where everybody is the same. Unity is when we are all not the same but one people. o:20:43.8

It's not a difficult concept. If you just think about a country like Singapore. Er... what's our pledge? We, the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one united people. Who...who...who claims this pledge? (Response from the congregation) Rajar...no...no...no...not... (laughter in the congregation) what I mean is who should pledge this pledge? (Response from congregation) Singaporeans. Does it say Chinese Singaporeans? Does it say Malay Singaporeans? Does it say Indian Singaporeans? No. Does it say smart or rich or poor Singaporeans? No, all Singaporeans. We, the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one united... huh...you say what? How can it be one? We are all very different! Yes, we come from different race, language, religion, but we are one united people because we have a common purpose and goal. Unity is where we are able to rise above our differences and unite around a common person, purpose and goal. And who is this person? Paul says, "...with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus..." It means that we, who are believers and followers of Jesus Christ, view him as supreme. He's the ultimate. He's glorious and therefore we are willing and able to lay aside our differences. You may like to do this, I may not like to do this, but we're willing to lay those aside if they are not the core essential issues of the faith and be willing to unite in Him. And when the church does that, it makes God looked glorious. It makes Jesus look glorious because He is worth our putting aside differences. And by the way, let me just show you a series of verses, because I think they're so important, that unity is very close to the heart of God.

We live in an age where we value individualism. In other words, every one for his own. We are very concerned when we speak about things about yourself but we forget that the Gospel is not just about yourself. The Gospel is about us. Remember the... how Jesus taught the disciples to pray? The very first word He said is "Our". First word at least in our English Language. Our Father, it's not my father, that communal, community is very much in the heart of God. "Our Father". Unity is very much in the heart of our Father. It's at the heart of Jesus Christ. On the last night before He was to be crucified, this is what He prayed. He prayed for several things but one thing He prayed for, is this: "...that they may be one." (John 17:20-21, ESV) He prayed for what? He prayed for our unity, our oneness. The apostle Paul took that and he labels this point in many of his epistles. For example, in Galatians, he says this: "...neither Jew nor Greek, ...neither slave nor free, ...no male and female, but we are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28, ESV) This is what Paul is saying. It doesn't matter your background, it doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, Jew or

Gentile, in Christ, we are united. He goes on to say, Jesus is our peace. He's the one who has broken down in His flesh, this dividing wall of hostility. Now, this may not mean a lot to us, Singaporeans living in this age. But if you were a Jew living around the time of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is an amazing statement to make. How can a Jew like me be able to live with the Gentiles? Do you know to them, it is impossible? Unless they become Jews. But Jesus did it. By His death, by His sacrifice, He broke down that wall of division between the Jew and a Gentile. And those who are united with Jesus, are united one with another. 0:25:15.2

And Paul says in Ephesians, to his church in Ephesus, please, I urge you, walk in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel. In what way? When you are eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3, ESV). In other words, a Gospel-transform person is very concerned about unity in the body of Christ. He's not just thinking about himself, his own wishes, his wants. He's concerned about 'we', as a people. We should be united, we together should offer ourselves a living sacrifice. Unity is vital to the heart of God. He says in Philippians again. What does it mean to live a Gospel-centered life? A life that is worthy of the Gospel when we stand firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side-by-side for the faith of the Gospel. (Philippians 1:27, ESV) So this is what we are united for. You're Jew, that's fine. You're Gentile, that's fine. Don't lose your Jewishness, don't lose your... your unique identity, but rise above it. 0:26:29.3

Now, let me just clarify, if there is any division or disagreement with regards to the core issues of the faith, you ought to separate. If someone says, "I do not believe in Jesus as the Saviour." There is no fellowship. But when it's a non-core issues, the Scriptures does call us to unity. In Colossians, he says, "Above all these put on love," that you may be living together in perfect harmony called into this one body (Colossians 3:14-15, ESV). Unity is hard to achieve, because it requires love. You know why quitting is easy? It doesn't need love; doesn't need to bother with the other person. You just do what you like. It's easy. You know why it's easy to divorce? Doesn't need love. You know why is it so difficult to work through a marriage? Requires love. But the unity of the church is, is vital to God than love is required. Love given by God on high. Peter likewise also says this: "Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, tender heart, and a humble mind." (1 Peter 3:8, ESV)

So when you scan the Scriptures, unity is vital to the heart of God. And so when it comes to grey areas, it is not surprising that Paul did not give them any way out, such as division, or cult-like uniformity but to say work through your differences, rise



above it, strive for harmony and unity in the love of Jesus Christ. It's what he means. So, some people divide. Some make everyone look alike but Christians must unite. And you say why? Well, let me just clarify that a bit. This is a statement by Ghandi. Ghandi was writing a letter to his er...friend, and Ghandi said, "I see that we cannot agree as to facts and where we agree, we view them from different angles of vision. Therefore, we must for the time being agreed to differ. We shall know each other better when the mists have rolled away. I know that our friendship can easily bear the strain of our differences." Well, I thought these statements could be used for us, as Christians. Certainly in a church like ours, where we have different people from different backgrounds, different church understandings, we cannot agree and see everything from the same angle of vision all the time, at least in the grey areas. Therefore, we must for the time being, be able to agree to differ and when Jesus comes, it will all be clear, but till then, I know that our unity, our Gospel relationship can easily bear the strain of our differences. We choose not to let our differences make us divide. 0:29:40.6

Division, by the way is not saying you ignore your differences alright? There's a man who is very popular. He's always having lots of friends and he is er...really really cool and popular guy. So one of his friends asked him, "Eh... what is your secret to being so popular? Why is it that everybody likes you?" He says, "My secret is this: I never disagree with anyone." The friend then says, "But how can it be? That is impossible! You cannot be agreeable to everyone all the time!" And then he says, "Yes. I also agree with you." (Laughter in the congregation) Now, this kind of people you better not er...be too close. No principles! Christians must have your own principles. You must be a person of conviction, that's the teaching of Scripture. Let everyone be fully persuaded in your own minds. Unity is not ignoring your differences, but it is to rise above it. Recognizing we are different, but we're able to say, I know that our fellowship can easily bear the strain of our differences; I know that the love of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ can easily bear the strain of our differences. Therefore, we shall not be quitters in dividing. Therefore, we shall not try to make everyone like me but we will celebrate this diversity, stand side-by-side, shoulder to shoulder, striving together for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Why? Again in verse 6 of Romans 15, he says, when you live in such harmony in accord with Christ Jesus, together you may be with one voice, glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Unity brings glory. When we are a united people, it pleases God. It glorifies Him. It's beautiful. Suppose you have an orchestra, the whole beauty of an orchestra is that it is orchestrated. It is organised and you have the viola, the violin, you have the... I don't know what you have... what else... I'm not

a musician but you have many, many instruments, I can see one lah. You've all kinds of instruments working together with one voice. It's beautiful! That diversity in the orchestra is beautiful, when they are united. Of course when a diversity is not united, it is painful. Eee-gor-ah-ee-or... it is very painful. But when it's united, it's glorious. It's the same as a choir, you don't just have all soprano. You have soprano, tenor, bass, alto and together with one voice, it's beautiful. 0:32:39.7

You know, one thing I celebrate about in GLCC is that we are a very diverse people. You may not realise it, but if you just look around yourself. There're lots of people coming from all kinds of church background. We are super diverse. Really! Very diverse and we come in all kinds of age groups, all kinds of professions and that is what I rejoice greatly here in GLCC. My dream is that in this diversity, we glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Not just in one age band or in one social strata group but across. That when the world looks at this church, they say, "Wow! You guys are very different but somehow, you are very united. You all love one another." And Jesus words will come true, by this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you have love one for another. It's amazing how Peter, Judas, Simon, er... you've all kinds of people, they've different personalities but together they are the band of 12.

Can I close with a few concluding thoughts? And I want to make some applications for us. If unity is so important, if differences are not the ultimate thing, it impacts us in a few ways. Number one, there are some of you who have been looking for a church to settle in. And you've been looking for the past 10 years. You've gone to 20, 30, 40, 50 churches. Er... we are one of the stops you have had. I think there's a balance to it. Sure, please be prayerful, diligent about seeking a good church that I feel should be Gospel- centered, honouring Christ, biblical, that...that serves the community and...and has a heart of the great commission. You should always look for churches like this and there is a reasonable kind of a stretch by which you should go around searching. What I'm cautioning against is: some of us who may have the idea we must 'shop'. I use the word 'shop' alright? We must 'shop' for the perfect church that fits me hundred percent. So if I just go to a church and there is a little bit of things that don't fit me, I will say, "I go to the next 'shop'." I'll go to the next church. I want to caution you against that, because what it does, is that it makes you a critic of a church rather than a contributor in the body of Christ. And let me say this, you will never find a church that fits you hundred percent. I say this again, you will never find a church that fits you hundred percent all the time. You can't even find a person who fits you hundred percent of the time. In fact, you cannot be even comfortable with yourself hundred percent of the time. So how do you find a church that fits you hundred percent all the time? It's a... it's mission impossible. And even if

the church fits you hundred percent of the time, the moment you join it, it doesn't. (Laughter in the congregation) It doesn't. But there is that concept, there's that...there's that... I think because Singapore is so saturated with churches. I mean we do have lots of churches, you can just park yourself up, look for another one within just 5 minutes drive. Safari, can visit lots of churches and go round and round and round and your whole Christian life is like the... the Israel in the wilderness lah. 40...40 years in the wilderness, because you never really said, Lord, instead of asking for a church that fits me hundred percent, is there a church you want me to go where I can serve and contribute and where I can practice the Gospel life in loving one another and rising above those differences? 0:36:45.9

You may be familiar with this man called CS Lewis right? He's famous for writing 'Chronicles of Narnia'. Another book that he wrote is 'Screwtape Letters'. 'Screwtape Letters' is about CS Lewis, imagining himself as a senior devil. His name is Screwtape. So CS Lewis imagines himself as a senior devil who is writing to a junior devil, his name is Wormwood. Screwtape is writing to Wormwood, to teach him and to advise him - how better to be a good devil, in deceiving and seducing this man called Patient. So that Patient will not serve the enemy called God. Alright? So God is the enemy of Screwtape and Wormwood, alright? So let me say this again. 'Screwtape Letters' is about Screwtape, a senior devil writing to a junior devil called Wormwood, to teach him how to deceive Patient so that Patient will not serve God, the enemy. And he wrote many, many chapters and one of his advices, okay? One of Screwtape's advices to Wormwood is this: surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, churchgoing is a disease to him lah, alright? To...to Screwtape, of course. "Surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighbourhood, looking for the church that 'suits' him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches. In the first place, the parochial organisation... (parochial means church, alright?) in the first place, the church should always be attacked because being a unity of place and not of likings, it brings people of different classes and psychology together in the kind of unity the Enemy desires." The unity of the church is what God desires. Therefore, it is what the devil hates. Therefore, it is where the devil attacks.

The unity of this church is where the devil is constantly seeking to destroy. I am sure about that and it can be over very minute things, such as peanut butter or Christmas trees. It can be that. The devil knows it and by the way the church today is always being undermined by the devil. You don't have to go to church, Christians, you can live your Christianity alone. Stay at home, watch video clips. No, anyone... this is the law of life alright? Law of the Christian life. If anyone is outside of the church body

life, ministry, you're just subjecting yourself to the temptations of the evil one. It will not be long before you slide further and further and further away from the Lord. But the devil would want you to believe the church is irrelevant, the church is unimportant. In fact, there's a whole movement called 'The Emerging Church Movement' that tells you, you don't really need the church. But the Gospel-centered person says, we need one another. It's about our Father in heaven. Alright? So this is what Screwtape says and then he goes on to say, "In the second place, the search for a 'suitable' church makes the man a critic where the Enemy wants him to be a pupil." You learn best with others, and you learn best with others who are different from you.

What good is it, if everyone agrees with me? You know what? I'll never be able to rise above differences and... and... and need to run to the cross for that love, that conquers differences. If everybody is agreeable, where is the need for love? But in the church where we recognise that there is diversity, there will be disagreements, this is where I learn. This is where I can grow. This is where I'm forced to flee to the cross and then he goes on to say, "So pray bestir yourself and send this fool the round of the neighbouring churches as soon as possible. Your record up to date has not given us much satisfaction." Wormwood has not been a very good devil. Question is, have we been the fool? Or are you intending to be a fool? Gospel Light Christian Church may not be the church God wants you to stay in. That's fine. Question is, are you shopping around to be a taster or connoisseur or critic or do you want to learn to grow, to practice Gospel living, loving one another in spite of differences? Or do you want a church that just suits you? That's the question and may God help all of us, to know our calling and place. There is...again, let me just clarify, I'm not saying you should... because you're now here, you should all stay here. No, but I think you should really seek the Lord with the right spirit, right motivations, right heart. Don't be a quitter, dividing over differences, don't expect everyone to be like you. But to rise above, in harmony, in accord with Jesus Christ. 0:42:37.3

Can I also say this? There may be people that you are offended with. Or people you have already offended. Maybe a few weeks ago, you talk about tattoos in your care group, or you talked about alcohol with your friends and wah... you all talk, talk, talk, talk... very heated argument. And it was so passionate that... that people thought you are about... almost going to fight. Now, I think it is good to be passionate about truth, about your conviction but maybe after that passionate discussion, it's... it's... it's good for us to...to be still and to remember that we should value that relationship more than being right, in my own personal opinion. Because to God, that's important. He

doesn't want an orchestra that is out of tune and out of sorts and out of timing. He wants a united Church to glorify him.

Can we be different in our positions? Yes. I think so. It is said so. But let our posture be right, a senior man has been telling me position and posture are 2 different things. Your positions may be different, but let your posture not be one of antagonism, of aggression but one of grace and love. Value the relationship above your right opinions and maybe today you have never had such run-ins with people, I want to ask you to pray for the unity of the church. You know, it doesn't really feature a lot in our prayer life, maybe because we're always think about me, myself and I. But pray for the unity of the body of Christ. Why? Because this is important to God and the unity glorifies Him. At the end of the day, this is what it means to be living the Gospel. Living the Gospel is to present ourselves a living sacrifice because of what Jesus has first done for us. He sacrificed for us. So, in response to His love, we love Him by presenting ourselves a living sacrifice and we love Him, we show ourselves a living sacrifice by willingly putting aside our differences at the cross and uniting with one another. This glorifies God.

I want to pray for all of us in a moment's time, but I hope that you will take this message to your heart. It's not my message, it's God's Word. There's only one way. Some people divide, some people make everyone look alike, but Christians must unite. This is the Gospel way, this is the superior way. This is the only way that glorifies Him. Let's bow for a word of prayer. 0:45:30.1

Take this time, my brothers and sisters in Christ, to reflect on the need of the message for your life. How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. For there the Lord commands His blessings forevermore. God is pleased and there are tremendous blessings when we work together, shoulder to shoulder, striving for the Gospel. But when some are broken out of line, it grieves our Father's heart. In your family, you've children, you've kids, regardless of how they turn out, regardless of their intellectual abilities, their looks, you are one family. Nothing changes that. But how painful it is, when one chooses to be antagonistic towards another, over another, over small issues that are not critical or essential. Our Father is grieved when the church goes through divisions and divisions and divisions and divisions and we allow carnality to slip in and cost churches within churches, just various factions and sex and groups. I want to pray for you if you're searching for a church today, I think it's a great prayer, but I pray that you will also search with the right spirit and heart. I want to pray for you if you have had an unpleasant run in with someone and you've never had the chance to make it right, I want to pray for

you if you are hurt today. Maybe the other person would never come back to you, but would you be willing to bring that hurt to the cross and rise above even that pain? You know why? Because Jesus suffered reproach of men for you. Today it's all about Christ and what He has done. Would your life be lived in response to what He has done? Is He worth it? Is He worth it in your estimation? Would you?

Father, we thank you this morning that we can gather and to hear your Word. It's a simple message but I pray you will make it meaningful and even life-changing for all our hearts. And I pray today for all those who are looking for a church, we asked you to lead them to the local body of believers you want them to be in. Not just to be served but to serve, to contribute, to learn, to grow, to mature. I want to pray for those who have had run-ins and difficulties and disagreements, that God you will allow us to resolve differences in the biblical, loving, God-honouring way. We thank you for Paul and Your Spirit using him to write these words, and we pray we'll not be just hearers today, but to be doers too.

I pray today also for our friends, once again who are here. We thank you for them. We pray that they will know the motivation of the Christian life is not that we need to earn our salvation, but that we want to honour You because You have first given us everything. May they see Jesus as a supreme giver of everything, life and eternal hope. May they also come to Jesus, who gave Himself for them. So bless each one. We thank you we can come back to the cross, where it all begins. We asked and pray all this now in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless.