

## Seven Steps to Schism by [John T Polk II](#)

All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.

### **What Is Schism?**

When churches split, many wonder how it happened, and most feel helpless that it could not have been avoided. The resolution, of course, is found in Scripture, notably **Galatians 5:20**: "hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies." Every Bible word was placed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (**I Corinthians 2:12-13**), and even word order can convey a message. When evident "works of the flesh" are listed (**Galatians 5:19-21**), one grouping indicates a progression of wrong attitudes that culminate in "heresy." "Schism" is mentioned elsewhere and not in **Galatians 5:20**, but the procedure for how one is produced is here clearly revealed.

A "schism" is a cleft or tear and may be translated "division." The Jews were divided over Jesus (**John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19**), just as people are today, not by what He claimed but whether they accepted the evidence for His claims. Christians, however, should not be divided (**I Corinthians 1:10; 11:18; 12:25**). *Divisions between brothers and sisters in Christ occur every time this 7-Step Plan is followed.* All of this "unholy 7" are actions of a human will to sin (**James 1:13-15**) and can only be stopped by repentance, which is an action of human will to serve God (**Acts 17:30**).

Marking the progression and demanding repentance of every individual involved, at whatever point they may be identified, is bound upon all the spiritually-minded in a congregation (**Matthew 18:15-20; Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 6:1-2**). Like potholes in a road, repairing the damage as it progresses is easier than replacing a whole section, so "pothole damage" to a church will be repaired more easily than replacing the members who divide and leave. "Closed for repairs" is better than "closed forever."

### **7-Steps Outlined**

1. "**Hatred**" is showing hostility and opposition toward other members, thus making one an "enemy." This opposition certainly describes Satan's posture toward God (**Matthew 13:28, 39**), and may be a sinner's general attitude toward God (**Romans 5:10**) and His word (**Galatians 4:16**), but it places Jesus in opposition to sinners (**James 4:4; I Corinthians 15:25-26**), which is eternal.
2. "**Variance**" is the strife, wrangling, and contention that ensue from hatred. Contention is proof of sinful carnality among brethren (**I Corinthians 1:11-13; 3:3; I Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 3:9**). Unfortunately this "strife" is passed off as "sound preaching" (**Philippians 1:15**) but it manifests "selfish ambition" and not

sincerity (**Philippians 1:16**). Though "Christ is preached," it is "in pretense" and not out of love (**Philippians 1:17-18**). Those who train preachers of the Gospel should repent of melding a wrong attitude with the right doctrine.

3. **"Emulations"** is zeal or fervor in defending anything. This is *approved* when one is passionate with Bible truth (**John 2:13-17**; **2 Corinthians 7:9-11**; **Colossians 4:12-13**), *awful* when aimed at the church (**Philippians 3:6**; "envy," **Acts 13:45**), and *arrogant* when directed away from oneself ("bitter envy," **James 3:14-16**). It seems that at this point, the troublemaker's heart has no room for self-evaluation or self-effacement, but only self-justification for all that follows.
4. **"Wrath"** is explosive anger which quickly subsides, accompanied with violent breathing or panting. This attitude illustrates, in human terms, how strongly God will react to sinners (**Romans 2:8**). In humans, it becomes volatile intolerance and unlawful violence ("road rage," "spouse/ child abuse," and other ungodly actions are a result). "Business meetings" which end on this note are shameful. This aggressiveness was expressed toward Jesus (**Luke 4:22-30**), Paul (**Acts 19:26-28**), and ruins many Christians (**Ephesians 4:31**; **Colossians 3:8**; **2 Corinthians 12:20**). The actual damage will remain long after those guilty may cry, "What have I done?"
5. **"Strife"** is the electioneering, courting distinction, and partisanship that campaigns for votes. American politics is based upon this, and a divided country is the result. Once this starts in a church, someone's "side" will not be represented adequately, and choices are forced. Whether men's business meetings, or elder-, deacon-, or preacher-selection is involved, majority should not be the rule by which the faith is practiced. Politicking only offers people "sides" from which to choose, and what God says is forgotten. No Church of Christ should ever stoop to this level. Personal interests should be minimized in preaching (**Philippians 1:15-18**) or obeying Christ (**Philippians 2:3**). No "good work" done by Christians should ever be promoted with this attitude. It is at this point an actual division is forced and manifested.
6. **"Seditious"** are the two parties or churches created by the previous work, causing members to stand apart from each other. It is at this point a division can be recognizable. With every split or denomination of the Church of Christ, the Devil has won a victory, but those who side with the truth remain with the Lord (**I John 2:18-21**; **I Corinthians 15:57**).
7. **"Heresies"** are the finished product of members choosing some particular tenet to cling to above all other considerations, thus justifying themselves to themselves. When "false prophets," "false teachers," and "deceptive words" are used to bring in "destructive heresies," why should anyone be surprised that "the way of truth will be blasphemed," and they should be condemned for following such doctrines (**2 Peter 2:1-3**)? Schism is the result of "faction" (heresy), and it destroys the purpose for worshiping together (**I Corinthians 11:17-20**).

***In every division, Someone is without truth***

There are not "two sides" involved in truthful obedience (**I Corinthians 1:10**; **Romans 16:17-19**). Truth is truth, and because it comes from God, it does not have

another side that is less true or not true (**James 1:17**; **I John 1:5**). *Truth is never spoken of in the Bible in the plural. The Bible claim for truth is that:*

- (1) it is all of God's commandments (**Psalm 119:151**);
- (2) it is frequently linked with mercy (**Psalm 85:10**; **Proverbs 14:22**; **16:6**; **Hosea 4:1**);
- (3) when written, it is certain and should be taught (**Proverbs 22:20-21**);
- (4) it is worth its price (**Proverbs 23:23**);
- (5) it fails only when ignored, like throwing it into the street and not requesting it (**Isaiah 59:14-15**; **Jeremiah 7:28**);
- (6) it alone, makes one free (**John 8:32**);
- (7) everything else comes from the Devil (**John 8:44-45**).

Seditions are created by wrong attitude with the truth, or by falsehood spread with proper attitude, but Churches of Christ are to have proper "spirit and truth" (**John 4:23**). Seditions are not justifiable because they cannot both be right and based upon truth!

### ***"Is Christ Divided?"***

All heresies, denominations, sects, and false Christians will be damned if there is no repentance. These who refuse to repent have crucified "again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame" (**Hebrews 6:4-6**). Is the greater sin: driving nails into Jesus on the cross? piercing His side with a spear? or tearing apart His spiritual body, the church of Christ? The world is divided by the Cross into those who have obeyed the Gospel and those who have not (**Mark 16:15-16**), and the Church of Christ is divided by the Word into those who are faithful to Christ and those who are fallen from Christ (**I Timothy 4:1-6**; **6:2-5**; **2 Timothy 4:1-5**; **Titus 3:8-11**). Whose "side" are you on?

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