

“And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people’s faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them.” Romans 16:17 NLT

## lectio // Romans 16:17-20

Whoa! What people, Paul? And, what teachings? We absolutely know about DIVISIONS. And, sadly we probably have a short list of names of the people who cause divisions (plural). Wouldn’t you like to know some of these characters a little more? What were they like? What was their family and religious background? When, or if, they came to faith in Jesus? What is their story? And then, what in the world was so controversial, so magnetic, yet so divisive in their teachings? Is it the same old Judiazar issues, those who would add to the gospel, believe if that it is Jesus + something else? Or was it gnosticism, and the belief that we are spiritual and physical, but it doesn’t matter what we do with our bodies because they are not important? There were people then, there are people now who’s lives and beliefs cause schisms! How do we spot them? Heck, how do we love them? Or, as Paul suggests, IGNORE them or even kick them out of church because they just won’t quit? Read that - they just won’t quit!

## oratio

Dad,

It feels like we (the church) are caught in a perpetual catch-22, a rock and a hard place, no win situation. I know this is purely because we are human, frail, broken and sometimes as mean as snakes, but still it is such a emotional bind to be in. One one hand, the church, the community of believers is supposed to be kind and loving, not breaking the bruised reed kind of place. The other is a constant battle of wit and weariness between healthy and hurtful individuals, protecting most, goading the rest! Healing the broken and breaking the instigators of division. Help us Lord with our own sin and give extra grace and mercy to those suffering.

## contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root