

A division in the family is usually so stressful we try to ignore it. It's surprising to hear Jesus say his purpose is to bring division. We know him so well as the one who said, "Love one another," that we tend to dismiss today's Gospel as some kind of biblical glitch--Jesus couldn't possibly have meant what he said. But it's there, and it's so alarming that he very well did say it. As much as we'd like to ignore division, Jesus actually stands up in its favor.

In the movie *The Right Stuff* many of us learned that as an aircraft approaches the speed of sound it endures so much stress that it feels like it's going to break up. But, interestingly, once it breaks through the sound barrier, it's smooth sailing again. That instant before it breaks the sound barrier is "the moment of truth" for that plane.

This happens with people too. When you feel a tremendous amount of stress, individually or as a family or community, you stand at the threshold of some truth in your life. The clearest example is in the grieving process. Usually the most difficult time for a person who has lost a loved one is not the first few months following the death, but about six months after when the truth that the loved one is gone finally surfaces. Prior to that time people bury this truth. When it surfaces it causes a crisis or a division within a person.

A crisis in you or your family is often a sign that some truth is surfacing. A family may deny for years that one of its members is an alcoholic, but eventually the pain becomes so great that the truth finally surfaces and the family accepts that someone they love is an alcoholic and needs to be healed.

Facing the truth is often painful, so rather than cause division, people bury it and don't look at it. In the first reading Jeremiah warned that his people were in imminent danger. Instead of facing his words of truth, they threw him into a cistern and put the lid on him. Jesus says he has come not to bring peace, but division. He has come to bring divided families. If our families are a source of stress, we tend to throw a lid on this Gospel, for we'd rather not hear it. Jesus is the truth, and to face the truth causes stress and division, like a plane breaking the sound barrier.

You have all seen those yellow signs on cars, "Baby on Board," "mother-in-law in trunk," "ex-spouse in trunk." Often if someone aggravates us or hurts us we throw them in the trunk, as the people threw Jeremiah in the cistern. My point is that we will never fly freely until we face the people and situations in our trunk. Maybe they've been there for years. It will cause stress to look at them, but once we set them free, we too will be free.

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