

## Doctrine of Separation

1. Separation is the technique of switching from personal love to impersonal love when dealing with friends or loved ones in the cosmic system.
2. It is a necessary application of doctrine by which one maintains the right priorities in life by disassociating himself with anyone who becomes a hindrance to his spiritual momentum.
3. It has nothing to do with your feelings about another person.
  - Some people fail to separate when they should because they allow their strong feelings about the other person to get in the way.
  - Others separate when they shouldn't because they allow their animosity towards a person influence their decision.
4. Separation is applied to both unbelievers and believers in the cosmic system who seek to influence the believer in a negative way. Therefore, there must be separation from reversionistic loved ones (but it does not have to be physical separation).

There are two categories of separation from people.

### Mental separation

1. In mental separation, there is one-way antagonism from those in the cosmic system toward you. Your application of unconditional love protects you from becoming antagonistic toward them..
2. In the context of **Mt 10:34-38**, certain loved ones or friends become involved in the cosmic system. You have the alternatives to allow your relationship with them take priority over your relationship with Lord, or you can take up your cross (mental separation) and follow the Lord.
3. Their influence can be so great on the believer that he is tempted by their love to join them in the cosmic system.
4. To avoid this negative influence, the believer must maintain the right priorities by mental separation, switching from personal love to unconditional love.
5. Mental separation emphasizes the integrity, honor and doctrinal application of the believer residing inside the divine domain.
6. Unconditional love is immune to those who are residing in the cosmic system, who are reversionistic and antagonistic to doctrine.
7. It functions on its own integrity and perpetuates its own objectivity from the intake of doctrine.

8. It emphasizes personal love for God while setting aside the functions of personal love for friends or loved ones.
9. Mental separation, in contrast to physical separation, is therefore a separation which avoids maligning, judging, hating, criticizing, seeking revenge, hurting those with whom you've been intimate in the past.
10. Mental separation avoids destruction of the spiritual life.

### **Physical separation**

1. There are some cases where switching from personal love to unconditional love is not enough. For example, getting false information in the local church. You must leave physically as well as under the principle of unconditional love. Another example, when a woman is used as a punching bag by her husband, she should leave.
2. When some form of tyranny says, "No you cannot go to church," then physical separation is demanded.
3. Physical separation means to avoid any personal contact with a person under nearly any circumstances. You regard that person as dead.
4. This means severance of all relation with that person of any kind.
5. Physical separation is sometimes needed to maintain one's priorities and to use one's volition to keep his spiritual momentum moving forward.

### **The Function of Separation**

1. You may avoid people or hate people due to mental attitude sins (MAS) but you are not practicing Biblical separation as taught by the Word of God.
2. True separation is impossible without the filling of the Holy Spirit, doctrine in the soul, and the consistent intake of Bible doctrine.
3. **2 Tim 3:5**, "They [believers and unbelievers in the cosmic system] hold to external forms of godliness, but have renounced the power of that same godliness; you also be turning yourself away from these men."
4. **2 Thes 3:6**, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you separate from every believer who leads an undisciplined life [wrong priorities], that is not according to the tradition you have received from us."

5. **2 Thes 3:14**, "If anyone does not obey our doctrinal teaching in this epistle, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame."
6. **Rom 16:17-18**, "Turn away from them" is physical separation from troublemakers.

### **Discernment in separation**

1. When to separate and when not to. **I Cor. 5: 9-13**
2. **Rom 12:1-3**. If you fail in the matter of separation, you will think about self in terms of arrogance.
3. Separation is thinking about yourself in relation to others apart from arrogance.
4. The first prerequisite for proper separation is a good sense of humor. By switching from personal love to unconditional love you must let go of your illusions about people you have loved.
5. Separation demands understanding permanent priorities **Jn 2:15-17**. Your permanent priority is your daily function inside the divine domain, while avoiding at all costs any prolonged stay in the cosmic system.
6. Separation from unbelievers inside the cosmic system Taught in **2 Cor.6:14:17**. Every time you hook up with something or someone in the cosmic system, you are in partnership with the cosmic system. This is why you are given the order: "Therefore come out from among them."
7. Separation is important in social life **Jer.15:16:17; 1 Pet.4:3-4, Eph.5: 6-12**
8. The believer is to separate from a superficial social life, the fun crowd. The party crowd always has a false scale of values. They emphasize the details of life and non-essentials as most important.
9. The believer is to separate from the "fast crowd." There comes a time when the believer grows spiritually, and his first function is to separate from the crowd that use to lead him in the wrong direction.
10. Separation from those who embrace false doctrines. **2 Jn.1: 7-10**
11. The believer is to separate from violence and criminal activity, **Prov.1:10-19**
  - Separation from carnal believers - **I Cor. 5:10-11**
  - Separation from believers who are indifferent to or reject Bible doctrine - **2 Thes. 3:6, 14 & 15**
  - Separation from believers who make their emotions the criterion for life - **Rom. 16:17-18**
  - Separation from the fast crowd - **I Peter 4:4, Prov. 1:10-19**
  - Separation from human viewpoint thinking - **Rom. 12:1-2**
  - Separation from unbelievers where doctrine is compromised **2 Cor. 6:14, Heb. 13:13**
  - Separation from religion and apostasy - **2 Cor. 6:17, 2 Tim. 3:5, 2 John 1:7-10**

## **PRACTICING BIBLICAL SEPARATION**

### **The General Mandate from God**

God instructs believers to "try the Spirits" (1 John 4:1-6). To try the spirits" is a matter of seeking to determine those who are in truth from those who are in error. The warning is to be on the lookout for false prophets.

Do not give false teacher hospitality (2 John 9-11). Of course they are angels...but fallen angels, so close your gate for them. Watch or be on guard for false teachers and regularly warn the congregation of them. (Act 20:26-32) Mark and avoid false teachers. (Rom. 16:17-19) The Lord Jesus warned us against embracing false teachers. (Matt. 7:13-23)

What then is the purpose of seeking to determine if someone is in doctrinal error or not? John does not say in the verses what to do, but points out clearly that those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ are anti-Christ. It is assumed that any child of God would not have fellowship or support those who God says are against Christ.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." Do not give false teacher hospitality. (2 John 9-11)

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11)

In these verses John tells us what to do with these who are identified as antichrists. John say in verse 11, to be separate from them and not even let them in your house, neither bid them God speed. He instructs us that those who wish these false teachers well are partakers of his evil deeds. The identity of these antichrists is clearly shown as being those who do not "abideth in the doctrine of Christ." The doctrine of Christ is His word....and He is the Word as John 1:1,14 plainly states. God's assemblies are to preach the whole or all the counsel of the word of God. (Acts 20:27) The word "partaker" means having "fellowship" with and further to share in their error and become a partner to their sin.

Watch or be on guard for false teachers and regularly warn the congregation of them. (Act 20:26-32)

“Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

Paul's calls these false teachers “grievous wolves” who do not spare the flock. The illustration presents false teachers in churches as ravenous wolves who destroy the lives of those in the churches. He said the wolves would come from outside and within the congregation (Verses 29-30) Paul says he for three years warned the church at Ephesus about this matter. Paul thought it important enough to regularly speak on the matter for three years. Jesus commended the Ephesians in Revelation 2:2, saying “I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” Clearly Jesus thought it was commendable for the Church as Ephesus to “not bear them which are evil. . .who found them to be liars.” This is talking those who were in these churches who professed to be serving the Lord and who false claimed they were apostles of the Lord. It is loving to embrace those who by their unbiblical teaching show themselves to be wolves bent on destroying God’s people?

Mark and avoid false teachers. (Rom. 16:17-19)

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.”

Paul uses the strong word "beseech" in commanding the congregation at Rome to mark and avoid false teachers. What was the basis of his instruction to separate from these false teachers? It was because they caused division and offenses contrary to doctrine. God is does not say what specific doctrine, but by the way the sentence is structured is means doctrine in general. Note to that in verse 18, He says these false teachers deceive by good works and fair speech

and deceive the simple. The word "simple" means "naive" or innocent simplicity. Paul commends them for separating from these false teachers and says, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning that which is evil" which means that believers should not mix with this evil.

The Lord Jesus warned us against embracing false teachers. (Matt. 7:13-23)

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:13-23).

Jesus sound warned us about accepting a professing Christian or church just because they claimed to speak in Christ's name. Note who these people are that Jesus said were "workers of iniquity" whom He never knew. They were unsaved men who were professing to be Christians who called Jesus Lord, preached in Jesus' name, they cast out demons and did miracles. Yet our Lord and Savior exposed these false teachers and said they were ravening wolves. He gave us further instructions to identify them saying that they would be disguised in sheep's clothing. That means they would be presenting themselves as brothers....as fellow sheep...when the truth was they were wolves.

Is it an act of love to put our arms around wolves posing as sheep and let them into our churches and among the true sheep giving them the opportunity to ravage them? It is sound to promote false teachers and thereby expose our churches to their error? Does such a policy help the cause of Christ or hinder it? A true shepherd and pastor of the Lord Jesus Christ would teach his congregation all God's truth and be ever vigilant in watching for the false teacher. No, no it is not an act of having a love of the sheep and to care for them by condoning lies presented as God's truth.

Let false teachers be accursed. (Gal. 1:6-11)

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble

you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

In the strongest words possible Paul twice says let false teachers be accursed. These men who “troubled” the Galatian church were not pagans or idol worshipers outside the assembly, but teachers who had entered into and have been received by the congregation. The word "accursed" means “anathema” or dedicated or given over to be destroyed. The same word "anathema" was used in pagan temples of the virgin who was to be sacrificed to the idol. She was considered “anathema” or dedicated to be destroyed. He says these false teachers preach a "another gospel, which is not another." This statement should clarify the matter for all that mix and pollute teach lies that is not "the" Gospel. In verse 10, Paul boldly proclaims in the face of obvious criticism that he will not compromise God’s word to please men, but rather message is clear, he will preach the truth and please God.

Here lies the heart of the matter. Those who criticize and preach ecumenicalism do so using worldly wisdom. They think it is loving and caring to overlook doctrinal error and sin and to not embarrass those who practice these things. They take great pride from their supposed superior position saying they preach love instead of hate. It is well said we are to love the sinner and hate his sin. But is it really an act of love to put the stamp of approval on doctrinal error and sin which will destroy the one who practicing it?

Peter under the inspiration of God addressed the matter pointedly saying:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Peter 2:1-3).

Note that Peter calls the teaching of these false prophets “damnable heresies.” Further he warns that many will follow them. This is the reason for the mandate of biblical separation, to keep these heretics out of God’s churches and to protect the flock from their damnable ways. The motive of these false teachers is also revealed in that they do so they can make merchandise of God’s children. They do it for personal gain.

Sadly, most of these “preachers” in who condone false teachings often gravitate to the pulpit seeking an audience and to be seen of men. Like Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence among the brethren these “hirelings” too love the praise of men. To maintain their position they are “man pleasers” (Gal. 1:10). Paul foretold of their coming saying, “ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

And yes, the other motive is money the “root of all evil.” (1 Tim. 6:10) These compromisers and false teachers receive ill gotten gain from their sorted work of making merchandise of God’s people. It is an act of love and pleasing to God to condone these false brethren?

Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

The principle of separation here is illustrated by comparing it to unequally yoked oxen. The analogy is very apparent. Unbelievers and believers are not equal and cannot work together. In other words truth and lies do not go together. A false teacher is surely an unbeliever and is referred to in this verse as being unrighteous and in darkness. Verse 15, says they are of "Belial" which is a name for Satan and calls them infidels. In verse 17, Paul here too uses strong language to say, "come out from among them and be separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing..." The last phrase of the passages says “be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” This means you cannot be in fellowship with the Lord and not be separated from sin.

Yet, those who criticize those who believe God and follow His instructions and practice biblical separation ignore this verse completely or seek to mislead through false interpretation. Who then is pleasing the Lord? The compromiser who embraces false teachers and false churches or the one who obeys God and makes a distinction between false doctrine and God’s truth, between error and lies?

Abstain from every appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22).



“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22)

This verse too is dealing with biblical separation from evil and sin in any form. It is the broadest of all the verses and plainly states to “abstain” from all appearance of evil. To “abstain” means to “hold one’s self off from” or to “refrain from.” It not false doctrine evil. God clearly throughout His word over and over again condemns sin and false and idolatrous teachers. Is standing beside them, and working with those in doctrinal error “refraining” evil? The answer is obviously no.

Obey not their word and have no company with them. (2 Thess. 3:13-15)

“But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:13-15)

It is no fun to be criticized for obeying the Lord and seeking to please Him. Yet, the biblical separation often finds himself the object of disdain from the ecumenical who with open arms accepts all who profess to be Christians with no effort to “try the spirits” or “examine their fruit.” But God says to separate from false teachers and sin. Verse 15 explains an important truth that the biblical separationist understands....the goal and purpose of biblical separation is not to treat a brother as an enemy but rather to rebuke his sin and error and turn him to the truth. As the Lord says in James, “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

False doctrine is not God’s word and thereby cannot save a soul nor give sound instruction to the believer. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” We are to worship God in “spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24) Only the word of God can save and mature a believer in Christ.

Thus the biblical separationist is seek biblical restoration with an erring brother and a position of receiving the benefits of believing and living by God’s truth. There is no pride in true biblical separation, only true “agape” love for one’s brother. As Paul stated in Galatians 4:16 “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?”

Withdraw from those who will not follow Paul's teaching. (2 Thess. 3:6)

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the

tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (2 Thess. 3:6).

The New Testament very matter of facts commands, not suggests or recommends, but commands Christians to withdraw from the brother who walks disorderly. The word "disorderly" refers to one who is out of ranks or deviates from the teachings of the Apostle Paul (traditions). This would include personal sin and Paul's doctrine. The Bible does not support the idea that we are to embrace everyone regardless of his sin or doctrinal error. Once again God says we are to stand for His word and to be separate.

How these religious people treat and look at them who hold the truth. (2 Tim. 3:10-14)

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"

(2 Timothy 3:10-14)

Paul warned us that evil men and seduces would wax worse and worse. Note that these evil men are called "seducers." It is plain their prey is Christians and their goal is to deceive for what ever their motives may be. The answer is not to condone false doctrine or compromise God's truth with mixing it with error. As the passage points out the answer is in preaching God's truth because it and it alone can make the "man of God...perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Conclusion (Eph. 5:11-18)

If you are one of those who have compromised God word and criticized the biblical separations not understanding the biblical doctrine of separation this was written for you. If you truly do love the brethren, do you not see that the Lord would be pleased by you obeying him and abandoning your ecumenical ideas and practices of condoning error and sin and coming to God's truth. Let God's word speak to your heart and direct your path. He says to you:

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that

sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:11-18).

Yes, we are to love the brethren even as God has loved us and we are to:

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (1 Cor. 16:13-14)

### **The basis of separation is found in the very nature and character of God Himself.**

The seraphim Isaiah saw in his vision were overawed by one attribute of the Lord: "**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**, is the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3). The Hebrew word for "holy" (**Kadesh**) and the Greek word for "holy" (**Hagios**) both have the same basic, root meaning--namely, "set apart, separated." The word "sanctify" is a translation of these same Hebrew and Greek words and carries the same root idea. Literally the angels said, "SEPARATED, SEPARATED, SEPARATED, is the LORD OF HOSTS."

God is absolutely separate from all that is earthly or created. This is a Holiness of **Divine Majesty**. **Study** Psalm 99:1-3 and Isaiah 57:15. Compare Isaiah 6:1-2.

God is absolutely separate from all that is morally unclean. This is a Holiness of **Moral Purity**. **Study** Psalm 99:4-9 and Psalm 24:3-4. Compare Isaiah 6:5.

Thus in studying the doctrine of separation we must begin with GOD Himself and we must ever keep before our minds the fact of His awesome holiness and His separateness: "Be ye holy: **for I AM HOLY**" (1 Peter 1:16).

### **All believers are separated positionally**

Each and every believer is a "saint," a person set apart and separated unto the living God. **Study**: Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Jude 1; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 3:1; 10:10,14,29; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 2:9.

Each and every believer, having been positionally separated unto God in Christ, is responsible to walk and conduct himself in a manner worthy of and consistent with such a position and standing. **Study**: 1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:21; Romans 6:19; Hebrews 12:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Titus 2:3.

## **The believer is to be separated, not isolated**

**Study:** John 17:11,14-18; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; Acts 1:8; Philippians 2:15-16; 2 Corinthians 5:20.

The believer is **in** the world but not **of** the world. The monastic philosophy which declares “to be holy you must live in a hole!” finds no basis in the Scriptures. Believers are pilgrims and strangers (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13) and citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20; John 14:1-3) who have the privilege of representing Christ on the earth (2 Corinthians 5:20; Isaiah 43:10-12) as He represents us in heaven (1 John 2:1-2). As we represent Christ **in the world** we are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27) because we are not **of the world!** The Lord Jesus was our perfect example of a man “separate from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26). Yet He strongly condemned pharisaical isolationism (Luke 5:27-32; 7:29-34; 7:36-50; 15:1-32; 18:9-14; 19:1-10). The believer in Christ has explicit responsibilities towards all men as he represents Christ in the world.

- He is to be a witness before all men (Acts 1:8).
- He is to be Christ’s ambassador to all men (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- He is to preach the gospel to all men (Mark 16:15).
- He is to shine as a light before all men (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15).
- He is to do good to all men (Galatians 6:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:15).
- He is to walk in wisdom towards all men (Colossians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 10:32)
- He is to pray for all men (1 Timothy 2:1).
- He is to provide things honest in the sight of all men (Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:12).
- He is to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14).
- He is to let his moderation be known unto all men (Philippians 4:5).
- He is to honor all men (1 Peter 2:17).
- He is to have a good report (testimony) before all men (1 Timothy 3:7; 2 John 12).

**Separation from all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices and associations is commanded of God. Study:** 1 John 2:15-17; James 1:27; 4:4; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:11; Titus 2:11-12; Romans 13:13-14; Galatians 5:16; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

In the area of questionable practices and associations the believer is bound by the law of love (1 Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14). That is, in deciding whether or not something should be done, it is not enough for the believer to act according to knowledge (1 Corinthians 8). It is not enough for the believer to ask such questions as these: “Is it right?” “Is it lawful?” “Is it permissible?” Rather he must make his decisions on the basis of the law of love which will result in the

consideration of such questions as these: “Is it profitable?” “Is it useful?” “Will it edify?” “Will it glorify God?” “Will it hinder my growth or the growth of others?” “Will it present a clear testimony before the lost?” The Scriptural basis for this latter group of questions can be seen by studying such verses as 1 Corinthians 8:9; 10:23; 10:31-32; Romans 14:21; etc.

**Separation from an immoral Christian brother is commanded of God.**

**Study:** 1 Corinthians chapter 5. In seeking to obey God in these matters such passages as Galatians 6:1; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11 and 2 Timothy 2:24-26 should also be kept in mind.

**Separation from all religious apostasy is commanded of God. Study:** 2

Corinthians 6:14-7:1 (compare Deuteronomy 22:9-11, God hates mixture!); Revelation 18:4.

When an ox and a donkey are yoked up together they are involved with the same work. They are “on the same team,” laboring together for common goals and objectives. Believers are not to work together in co-operation with unbelievers. See the example in Ezra 4:1-5. The Lord Jesus never enlisted unbelievers to carry out the work of God. The football player would never think of giving the ball to a member of the opposite team!

Other passages which demand separation from false teachers and from religious apostasy are as follows:

1. AVOID THEM (Romans 16:17).
2. REJECT (Titus 3:10).
3. RECEIVE HIM NOT (2 John 10).
4. FROM SUCH TURN AWAY (2 Timothy 3:5).[Compare 2 Timothy 3:5 with Romans 1:16 and 1 Corinthians 1:24. It involves a denial of the gospel.]
5. LET HIM BE ACCURSED (Gal. 1:8-9)

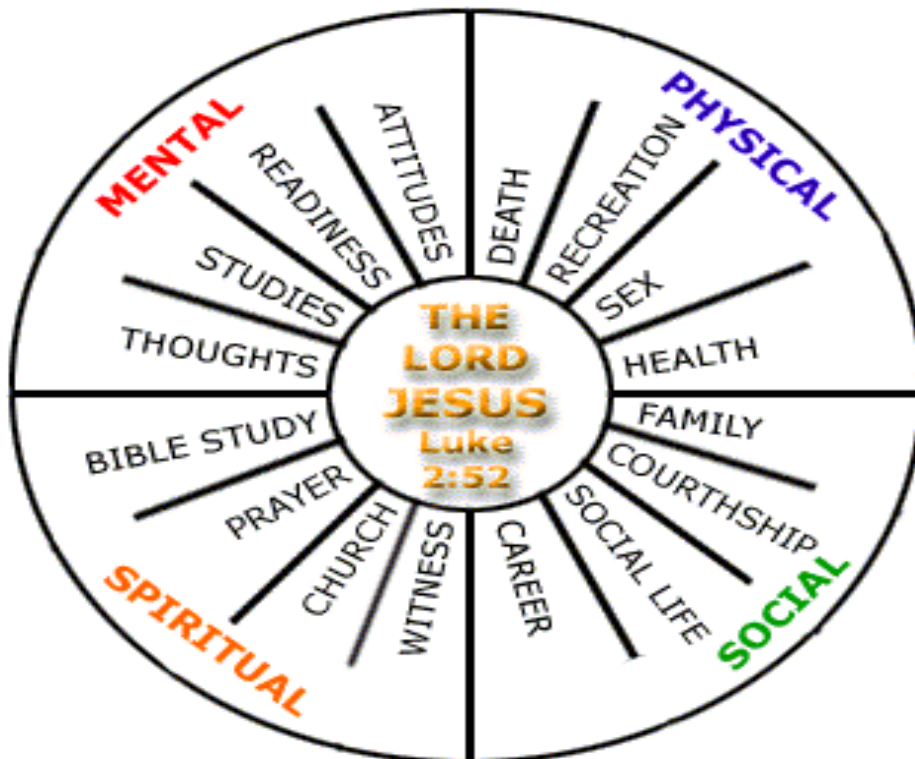
**The obedient believer must separate from every Christian brother who is consistently and willfully disobedient to the Word of God.** This would include separation from the believer who is disobedient to the commands as listed under PROPOSITION 9. **Study carefully:** 2 Thessalonians 2:15; **3:6,14-15**. Note carefully the five commands: 1) **Note** that man; 2) **withdraw** yourselves; 3) **have no company**; 4) **count him not** as an enemy; 5) **admonish** him as a brother.

Who are the disorderly? Carefully read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 and make a note of every time you read the word “disorderly” (it is the same word found in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, “unruly”). The Greek word means “not keeping order, out of line, out of place.” It was a military term used of soldiers who would march out of order (not keeping rank, breaking rank). It is used of a person who neglects his duty and evades his obligations. The word means the opposite of SUBMISSION

(Eph. 5:21). Thus the word describes a person who is not willing to bow before authority. He refuses to bow before God's Word and before God Himself. He refuses to bow before the authority of those that are "over him" (see 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14).

For help in understanding how to live a life set apart and separated unto the Lord, consider the following:

The doctrine of personal separation will be examined within the framework of the four aspects of life set forth in Luke 2:52—"And Jesus increased in **wisdom** (mental) and **stature** (physical), and **in favor with God** (spiritual) and **man** (social)." The following diagram may be helpful (taken from *The Four Aspects of Life* by Robert Ramey, "The Philosophy of Christ's Life," unpublished class notes, Grace Theological Seminary



## Separation in the Christian's Mental Life

### Thoughts

All practical godliness must begin with the thought life of the Christian, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Separation in the thought life is

particularly important because the Christian possesses two natures: two dispositions which are continually striving with each other for the control of the believer (Galatians 5:17). If the Christian is to “walk in the Spirit,” he must distinguish the desires of the Spirit. To make the differentiation easy, Paul has given the believer an objective criterion for distinguishing the desires of the flesh from the desires of the Spirit in the form of a list of examples (see Galatians 5:19-23). By meditating upon this list, the Christian will be able to readily discern between the desires of his old nature and those of the Holy Spirit and will, by obeying His desires, be controlled by the Spirit.

### **Reading and other activities**

The realization that the Christian still possesses his old nature, as a kind of caged-up wild beast looking for a way to get out, ought to make him careful of the kind of “food for thought” he allows to come in. The Christian must distinguish between that which feeds the flesh and that which nourishes his new nature in the things which he allows to enter through the eyes and ears. David failed to turn his head at the first glimpse of Bathsheba, and paid the consequences. Split-second discernment and reaction is becoming imperative for the Christian living in a world where modest women dress like the harlots of ten years ago.

### **Attitudes**

To be pleasing to the Lord, the right thing must be done in the right way. Israel had served the Lord, and yet He said:

Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies whom the LORD shall send against thee” (Deut. 28:47-48).

The Christian must be extremely discriminatory in the choice of attitudes which he manifests. He must be as set apart from wrong attitudes as he is from wrong actions. As the Apostle Paul stated:

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you (Eph. 4:31-32).

The true Christian, then, will be a fanatical separatist with regards to his own attitudes.

## **Separation in the Christian’s Physical Life**

## Dress

The Christian's outward appearance is a matter of concern to the Apostle Paul, particularly in the case of Christian women for whom he lays down some guidelines: "In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel (1 Timothy 2:9). Modesty in dress, especially today, requires careful discrimination. The Christian is not to be conformed to the world's sensuous standards, and must set aside the majority of the fashions of today. At the same time, the Christian ought to display good taste in the clothing he wears, and not draw attention to himself with extremism in either direction. Pastor George F. Parsons has set forth the following principle:

Whenever a new style or a new way of dressing or a new way of saying something is seen or heard by me, I will look to see if it pictures truth or error. I will see if it agrees or disagrees with God's Word and God's ways. I will see if it makes clear or confuses and clouds up God's Person and God's Word. I will see if it mixes truth and error. May nothing detract from the message I want to present: "I belong to the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

## Physical contact

The Christian is most certainly to be discriminatory to the extreme, however, in the matter of whom he touches. Absolute separation is axiomatic for unmarried Christians of opposite sex. This is particularly true for the Christian worker:

A minister, especially a young one, who puts his hands, however innocent-mindedly on the person of womankind, particularly young girls, is in the mildest language I can command, an unmitigated fool (Homer A. Kent, Sr., *The Pastor and His Work*, p. 57).

The Christian is thus to be set apart in this regard, too.

## Entertainment

While proper recreation and exercise are necessary for the Christian, the Christian must use discernment in the activities in which he engages in leisure time. The Christian is to be separate from "worldly amusements and unclean habits which defile mind and body." A chapel speaker recently gave a good rule of thumb for deciding about doubtful things:

Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult is wrong for me and as a Christian I must turn from it (Cited by Dr. David Nettleton, former President of Faith Baptist Bible College, in the Grace Seminary Chapel, November 27, 1973).



To “turn from” something is separation: we are beginning to see something of the scope of this subject!

## **Speech**

Discrimination is also the order in the use of the Christian’s tongue. Every thought which comes to mind is not to be broadcast by the child of God. Paul makes this clear:

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers (Ephesians 4:29).

The Christian is thus to be drastically selective in his choice of words. Not only is he to separate out all vulgarity from his speech, but positively, his words are to be a blessing to the hearers.

## **Separation in the Christian’s Social Life**

### **Friendships**

While the Christian is to exhibit genuine love for all of mankind, the Word of God makes it clear that a believer is to be discriminatory in the choice of his close companions (see Psalm 119:63). Solomon saw that, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). The Apostle Paul likewise noted, “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33). As Dr. John Whitcomb has observed, “All things being equal, bad apples make good apples go rotten, and the good apples do not make the rotten ones any better.” Thus, while the Christian is to be cordial towards all, especially towards those of like precious faith, he, nevertheless, is to be selective in his choice of close companionships. The best way to do this, of course, is to have the right interests, and to allow our interests to govern our close friendships.

### **Courtship**

If ever there were an area where neglect of separation has led to heartbreak, it must be in the realm of courtships. How often have we heard stories of a Christian dating a non-Christian for the sake of witnessing, with a resultant unscriptural (and usually disastrous) marriage. Yet the practice of Christians dating unbelievers continues. Since it is certainly not God’s will for a child of God to marry an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14, “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers”), one is hard pressed to defend any position other than total separation of Christians and non-Christians in the area of dating.

## Career

As Dr. C. F. Yoder (*God's Means of Grace*, p. 468) has stated, "In occupation the Christian should remember that God is his senior partner." The Christian should therefore beware of making partnerships with unbelievers. Moreover, the Christian businessman must be discriminative in his business methods. The dishonest practices which are a matter of course in many firms are to be put away from the Christian in the business world.

## Separation in the Christian's Spiritual Life

### The personal devotional life

In order for the Levitical priests to enter into the Holy of Holies, they themselves had to be holy. The Christian, then, ought to be discriminative in his own devotional activities. This would apply, for example, to the Bible version which he reads. Peter says, "Desire the sincere (pure) milk of the word . . . (1 Peter 2:2). A paraphrase may be good for occasional comparison, but it ought not to be the daily food for the Christian's soul. The prayer life, too, ought to be purged from all that is unfit for God's presence. The Christian, especially the young Christian, ought to make a distinction between talking to the Lord of Hosts and "shooting the breeze" with his dormitory roommate.

### Fellowship with other Christians

The Apostle John says, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). The joy of fellowship with other true believers is indeed a blessed assurance of the Christian's salvation. Nevertheless, the Word of God plainly teaches that there are times when the obedient believer must purposefully part company with disobedient fellow Christians. This is true in the case of a brother who is living in sin. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no, not to eat (1 Corinthians 5:11).

This is also true, however, in the case of a brother who teaches doctrinal error or who fails to obey the truth:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us . . . and if any man obey

not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed (2 Thessalonians 3:6,14).

This instruction seems like hard medicine to swallow, but as the Apostle points out, it is in order that the brother in the error may take stock of himself and turn from it.

## **The Church**

If a Christian is to be separated from individuals who hold to and teach doctrinal error, he most certainly is to be separated from entire assemblies with the same problem. Withdrawing from a much loved church which has fallen into error is not easy, but it may remedy the problem. In any event, it is unethical to remain in and teach a doctrinal position contrary to that held by the assembly. The Christian ought to withdraw in such a case, and pray that God will open the eyes of the congregation.

### **AXIOMS OF SEPARATION**

(Condensed from Pastor John E. Ashbrook's book by the same name)

1. Scripture forbids us to have fellowship with unbelief.
2. Scripture commands us to reprove apostasy.
3. Scripture teaches us that we must purge unbelief if we can.
4. Scripture teaches that believers and unbelievers cannot be yoked together in spiritual endeavor. (II Cor 6:14-18)
5. Scripture teaches us to separate from disobedient brethren.
6. God's work done God's way produces only good results. God's work done man's way produces good and bad results.
7. Do not affiliate your church with any church, mission, movement or evangelistic effort which does not fully believe the Word of God.
8. Do not affiliate your church with any church, mission, movement or evangelistic effort which does not practice biblical separation.
9. You cannot preserve a position without crusading for it.
10. When in doubt, don't join.
11. Separation is not the answer to every disagreement between brethren.

12. The spirit of God has never led one Christian contrary to one word of the Word of God.

13. At any given time of church history, God is most severe on those whom he is using at the moment.

## **Biblical Separation**

### **OUTLINE:**

Three Types of Separation

How Do We Practice Biblical Separation?

Wrong Separations

Why Practice Separation?

### **Separation:**

Bible separation is the practice of separating from sin and error unto truth and righteousness.

### **Three types of separation**

In the N.T. we find three basic areas of separation. The Christian is to practice Moral Separation--separation from sin and worldliness; Doctrinal Separation--separation from those whose teaching and practice is contrary to that of the apostles; and Practical Separation--separation from brethren who are committed to disobedient paths.

### **Moral Separation**

There are many, many passages of Scripture which teach that the Christian is to separate from sin. We are commanded to put sin out of our lives and to avoid fellowshiping with the evil things of the world. Of the many passages we could consider, let us use but one--Ephesians chapter five. Here God begins by telling His children to "walk in love." And how is this done? The rest of the chapter tells us, and we see that much of the chapter is devoted to instruction about separation from evil things. This is part of godly love! Consider with me some simple lessons from this chapter, lessons about moral separation, or separation from sin.

1. Moral separation is involved in true Christian love (Ep. 5:1-3).
2. Moral separation is a very careful, strict separation (Ep. 5:3-11). (See also 2 Co. 7:1; 1 Th. 5:22; 4:1-4).
3. The cause of moral separation: (1) We separate because we have a new position (Ep. 5:3,8), We don't separate in order to be saved, but because we have been saved! (2) We separate because we have a new Spirit (Ep. 5:9). (3) We separate because we have a new purpose (Ep. 5:10).

4. Moral separation involves rebuke of sin (Ep. 5:11). Separation from sin is active as well as passive. It is not only a personal matter, but something I am to require of others. God tells the Christian not to fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but the responsibility does not stop there. God even requires that the Christian "put his nose in other people's business" and "reprove them" for their sinful ways. This might very well be a major reason why so many refuse to practice biblical separation!

5. Moral separation means being different--not avoiding sinners, but avoiding sin (Ep. 5:11). The Christian is not told to avoid the sinner, but the sinner's works. See also Ep. 4:17-29; 1 Pe. 4:1-4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17.

6. There are two aspects of this moral separation--negative and positive. We are to SEPARATE FROM all evil (Ep. 5:3-8), and we are to SEPARATE UNTO all righteousness and truth (Ep. 5:9). We must be careful not to exercise only one part of this separation. It is important, in other words, to separate FROM sin, but it is equally important to separate UNTO holiness. See also 1 Ti. 6:11; 1 Th. 1:9; and Tit. 2:15.

7. Moral separation means doing the perfect will of God (Ep. 5:10,17).

8. Moral separation, while negative, is an important testimony to those who are lost (Ep. 5:13). Moral separation is light to those in darkness. This, of course, is exactly the opposite of what many are teaching. Many are saying that the way to win the world to Christ is to be more like the world. Hence we have strange things like "Christian" rock bands, and "Christian" movie stars who perform in wicked nightclubs, and "Christian" sports stars who frequently ignore the assembly and dedicate themselves to playing and practicing their sport when they should be in the house of God. God's Word says that His people are lights to the unbelievers by BEING DIFFERENT, by being separated from the appearance of evil, not by BEING WORLDLY!

9. Moral separation is necessary for spiritual growth and clarity of spiritual understanding (Ep. 5:14).

10. Moral separation is necessary for making one's Christian life count to the fullest for God (Ep. 5:16-17).

11. Moral separation can only be done in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ep. 5:18). God commands that His people separate from sin, but He does not tell us to do this in our own power. We are to conquer evil through the power of the blessed indwelling Holy Spirit, the very same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Here is the power to overcome every evil habit, to say no to the world's temptations and to the devil's enticements. Through this mighty Power we who are born again can say confidently with the Apostle Paul, "I can do ALL things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Ph. 4:13).

## Doctrinal Separation

The second kind of separation God requires of the Christian is doctrinal separation. Sound apostolic doctrine is to be preserved by the churches while false doctrine is to be avoided. Doctrinal separation can be further divided into two aspects: **First, we are to separate from those who teach false doctrine. And secondly, we are to separate from the entire apostate last-days Christianity.**

Let us consider these forms of separation in more detail.

We are to separate from those who teach false doctrines. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Ro. 16:17). See also 2 Jn. 8-11; Re. 2:2.

In this passage we are plainly commanded to mark and avoid those who teach false doctrine. A question arises here. Which doctrines are to be used as the basis for this separation? The answer is that any apostolic doctrine clearly presented in the Bible is a basis for fellowship and separation. To my knowledge, the N.T. never divides doctrine into "essential" and "non-essential," or into "fundamental" and "peripheral." Men do this today, but the Apostles did not. It is true that some doctrines are more important than others, but nowhere in Scripture do we read that portions of God's Word, rightly divided and properly understood, are of no significance and can therefore be put aside as peripheral. I realize this is contrary to popular thinking, but consider upon the following verses very carefully and I believe you will see that this is correct: Ph. 3:17; 4:9; 2 Th. 2:15; 2 Ti. 1:13. In these references Christians are not exhorted to follow only the major apostolic doctrines. All apostolic doctrine and example is to be obeyed (Ac. 2:42).

Some speak of the "fundamentals of the faith," and use four, five, or six doctrines as the basis for unity and separation. Others use as their basis for fellowship a man-made creed such as the Nicene Creed or the so-called Apostles Creed, while others use labels such as "evangelical," or "renewal." But nowhere in Scripture are we told that our basis for unity and separation is to be limited only to a few major doctrines and creedal statements, or to any man-made label--particularly labels which have become so watered-down and contaminated they have lost any scriptural meaning they once carried.

How do we know what is major, anyway! Who are we, that we can pick and choose among apostolic teachings, setting some teachings aside as non-essential and exalting others as "major"? Following are some examples of doctrines which are important enough to be a basis for separation:

**1. Doctrine regarding Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Salvation is to be a basis for separation** (2 Co. 11:3,4). Note that not only was Paul concerned that

the churches be right in regard to the Gospel and to Jesus Christ, but he fought to see that they were right about the Holy Spirit. If this attitude were maintained today, we would see more concern about the charismatic errors.

**2. Doctrine regarding prophecy and future things, such as the resurrection and death is to be a basis for separation** (2 Ti. 2:16-18). The Holy Spirit identified Hymenaeus and Philetus as false teachers. What was their error? Only one was mentioned, and that was their error of saying the resurrection had passed already. This is a matter of prophecy, of future events. Here, then, it is clear that the doctrines of prophetic matters are important to the Holy Spirit. They are essential, fundamental doctrine. How different this is to the many Christian leaders, even professedly fundamental men, who have placed eschatology in the realm of tertiary doctrine.

**3. Doctrine regarding the church is to be a basis for separation** (1 Tim. 3:15; 6:13-14; 6:20-21). Much of the N.T. pertains to church doctrine and practice. We find the Apostles giving a great deal of their attention to training the Christians and early church leaders in the government, discipline, organization, and function of the assembly. This is the purpose for the first epistle to Timothy; Paul was writing to instruct Timothy in church business (1 Ti. 3:15). He concluded the epistle with the exhortation that these church things are to be kept in detail until the coming of Christ.

This is what the Holy Spirit thinks of church doctrine. There are more than 100 references to the church in the Bible, and even in the epistles not directly written to local assemblies, the church remains in view (Tit. 1:5; He. 10:25; 13:7,17; Jam. 2:2; 5:14; 1 Pe. 5:1-4; 2 Jn. 9). The glorified Christ is standing in the midst of the churches (Re. 2-3), and seven times the phrase is used, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." I do not understand how men can look at such a staggering amount of teaching--more than is given on many other Bible doctrines--then put church doctrine in a non-essential category, a mere matter of personal preference.

**4. Doctrine regarding holy living is to be a basis for separation** (1 Ti. 6:3-5). The passage teaches plainly that Christians are to withdraw themselves from those who deny the doctrine according to godliness. What a tremendously accurate prophesy of our day! There are multitudes of Christian leaders in practically every sphere of Christendom who literally scoff at those who still preach against worldliness and maintain strict standards for Christian morality.

Divorce and adultery are rampant in many denominations. Homosexuality is widely accepted as an alternate lifestyle. Some denominations have ordained homosexual preachers. In fact, one entire denomination, the Metropolitan Community Churches, is composed of homosexuals. The world's vile theater, cinema, and music are reviewed in Christian publications, and brought into the churches, not to speak of the homes, lives, hearts, and minds of professing

Christians. Yes, many deny the doctrine of godliness. The Holy Spirit commanded "from such withdraw thyself." In light of these conditions, I don't find it odd that modern translations would handily delete this phrase!

Actually, though, the doctrine of godliness is an essential, a fundamental doctrine according to the teaching of the Word of God.

These references show that the true apostolic basis for separation is much broader than a few major doctrines. If you are a Christian worker, you surely know that it has become popular to select certain doctrines such as the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, Inspiration of Scripture, and Salvation by Grace and make these the only or primary basis for fellowship and separation. In other words, if a professing Christian claims to hold these doctrines, he is to be accepted as a true brother in good standing no matter what unbiblical thinking or practices he holds apart from these major doctrines.

Certainly this is the philosophy which holds together such the hodgepodge of doctrinal confusion that we find at many large ecumenical meetings. An illustration of this philosophy is found in a book on cults entitled *Whom Then Can We Believe?* by supposedly evangelical authors Maurice Burrell and J. Stafford Wright. The authors say, "We are not concerned about peripheral beliefs but with the fundamental issues of the nature of God and His movement to save fallen mankind.

OUR POSITION IS THAT WHICH ALL THE CHURCHES, CATHOLIC, ORTHODOX, AND PROTESTANT, INCLUDING THE DENOMINATIONAL CHURCHES, HAVE ALWAYS REGARDED AS TRUTH." To say that the only essential doctrines are those held in common by all Christian denominations, including the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches, might sound reasonable to many in this mixed-up hour, but this is utterly contrary to the type of separation taught and practiced by the Lord's Apostles.

Let us follow the apostles' exhortations and example, using their basis of separation, rather than that of Protestantism, evangelicalism, popular Christianity, or some man's systematic theology. The Psalmist said, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto ALL thy commandments" (Ps. 119:6). We are to separate from apostate last-days Christianity. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Ti. 3:5). See also He. 13:9-13; Re. 18:4.

The Apostles warned that conditions within professing Christendom would grow increasingly apostate as the time of Christ's return draws nearer. This, of course, is exactly what we observe in church history. This is what we see in the Christian world today. Most Christian groups do not follow the Word of God. What are we told to do to protest this apostasy (falling away from the Bible faith)? How are we



to protect ourselves and those for whom we are responsible--our families, our friends, our churches?

God's command is to separate. Come out! Mark and avoid all of the ecumenical, doctrinally corrupt world councils and national councils. Shun the denominations and organizations that glory in their so-called "unity in diversity." That is simply a fancy phrase for their rebellion to the Bible. Have nothing whatsoever to do with the local ecumenical clergy associations.

Touch not those Charismatic and Third-wave movements which are bringing together truth with error and which are intermingled with many unscriptural teachings. Will we follow the way of man, or will we hear and heed the cry of God from Heaven? "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

### **Practical Separation**

The Bible commands Christians to separate even from those who give evidence of having been born again, yet who refuse to follow the teachings of the Apostles in matters of practice and Christian living. Yes, there is a time when we are to separate even from our own brethren (1 Co. 5:11; 2 Th. 3:6; 1 Ti. 6:5; Mt. 18:15-18).

In all of these passages the writer is speaking of a separation from true brethren. This type of separation refers primarily to discipline within one particular local church, but the principle goes far beyond this. Not only are we bound to keep the letter of the Word of God, but also its spirit, its principles.

Take 2 Th. 3:6 for an example. Immediately after giving the command to separate from a disorderly brother, the Apostle Paul gives an illustration of such. He mentions some who were walking "disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (2 Th. 3:11-12). In v. 14, he repeats the command to separate from such. Is this command to be limited only to those who are disobedient in the matter of employment? It would not be reasonable to limit the passage in such a way.

The Holy Spirit is giving a principle regarding fellowship and separation. We are to separate from any brother who walks disorderly and who refuses to repent of his disobedience. The matter of employment is one example. The command would apply to our relationship with a brother who is persistently disobedient to any apostolic teaching. Would God tell us to separate from a brother who is disobedient in the matter of employment but not require that we separate from a brother who is disobedient in the matter of baptism, or in following the N.T. pattern for church government, or any number of other commands which are at least as important as whether or not one is employed? We believe these

commands to separate from unrepentant, disorderly brethren are principles which cover disobedience to all apostolic instruction.

The Bible makes a distinction between conscious, willful rebellion toward Scripture and the imperfection of striving to obey yet falling short because of the old Adamic nature. It is one thing for a Christian to fail, yet to be continually aiming for the mark of perfect obedience to all of God's commands. It is quite another matter for a Christian to set his heart against obeying some portion of God's Word. Herein lies the distinction we are to look for among Christians. The one who has set his heart in a conscious, willful way to ignore or disobey some plain teaching of the Scriptures is to be avoided, separated from.

This would apply to groups as well as to individual Christians. There are Christian denominations and organizations which have determined that they will not rebuke sin, that they will not separate from evil and false teaching, that they will not earnestly contend for the faith, that they will not be concerned for certain portions of apostolic instruction. God has told us what to do toward such rebellion. We are to separate from those involved in it. To fellowship with those who have determined not to obey God's Word in certain matters is to sin against God.

### **How do we practice biblical separation?**

**1. Be discerning** (I Th. 5:21). Biblical separation begins with spiritual and doctrinal discernment. I cannot separate from that which is false if I do not know truth from error! See also I Col. 1:9; 3:16; Ph. 1:9; He. 5:12-14. This is where separation begins. Each child of God is to study the Scriptures intently and prayerfully that he might know sound doctrine. He is to exercise CAREFUL discernment that he might know truth from error, good from evil, fidelity from compromise.

**2. Maintain an earnest proclamation and defense of the faith** (Jude 3).

Jude exhorts his readers to contend for the faith, not because he loved contention, but because it is necessary to preserve the faith from corruption. He indicates that he would rather write concerning the common salvation but it had become necessary to take up the sword. Here is a picture of the well-balanced Christian: he loves to proclaim the gospel, but when necessary he will take up the sword in defense of the gospel.

Jude did not say, as some say today who wish to avoid the reproach of a liberal ecclesiasticism, that all one has to do is to preach the gospel, or the Word of God is its own defense. The real Christian has to contend for the faith in these times. Jude would have had scant sympathy for that type of ministerial self-righteousness which often says, "I preach the Gospel and let these issues alone." This convinces some people that he is not a "wicked" separatist, but it also convinces a compromising ecclesiasticism that they have nothing to fear

from this ex-Gidionite, who has a number of reasons for not serving in Gideon's army.

The prophets contended for the faith within the structure of religious Israel, often to their own death. John the Baptist contended for the faith, incurred the enmity of the religious leadership and was beheaded for denouncing sin by name in high places. Jesus contended for the faith, that the Messianic hope and promise was fulfilled in Himself and was murdered. Stephen contended for the faith that Christianity was the fulfillment of the Old Testament faith and was stoned to death. The evangelical inclusivists of our day, though, seem to be alive and doing fairly well! [Inclusivist' refers to those who promote ecumenical union and disregard doctrinal and moral purity.]

The greatest weapon against theological corruption and the moral rot of society would be a vigorous, decisive contention for the faith by every evangelical. The indecisive contention for the faith so common with evangelical inclusivists, a contention which does not press for a real decision, is not an adequate substitution for separation. Real, vigorous, decisive contention for the faith within the liberal denominations has been reduced to a polite, pious murmur which they love to call 'witnessing.' THE NEW TESTAMENT NOT ONLY CALLS FOR WITNESSING TO THE FAITH, BUT CALLS FOR CONTENTION FOR THE FAITH"

**3. Mark those who err (Ro. 16:17).** Not only are we to know the truth and to be discerning, not only are we to aggressively contend for the truth, but we are to identify false teachers and apostate Christian groups by name. In this way we protect ourselves and others. This was Paul's custom. Consider the following examples: 1 Ti. 1:19-20; 2 Ti. 2:16-18; 4:14-15. In these passages the Apostle warned Timothy of several false teachers and disobedient men, and he identified these men by name. This was also the custom of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk. 20:45-47; 12:1; Re. 2:6, 15, 20). Following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His Apostles, we must identify and label those who are false, apostate, or disobedient. To fail to do so is rebellion to the Bible's command. It is also the mark of an unfaithful, careless shepherd. A good shepherd protects the sheep from danger.

**4. Avoid fellowship.** Once we have discerned false doctrine or practice, what then? God's command at this point is very clear--separation. The following expressions are used in the N.T. to describe separation: "Avoid" (Ro. 16:17). "Shun" (2 Ti. 2:16). "Turn away from" (2 Ti. 3:5). "Purge oneself from" (2 Ti. 2:21). "Come out from among" (2 Co. 6:17; Re. 18:4). "Have no fellowship or communion with" (2 Co. 6:14). "Receive them not into your house neither bid them Godspeed" (2 Jn. 10). One does not need a Ph.D. to understand the meaning of these exhortations. God is telling His people to stay away from those who teach or practice false things!

**5. Avoid yoking together in ministry, organization, etc. (2 Co. 6:14-18)** This command does not allow a Christian to be in the same denomination, Christian organization, fellowship, or church with those who are committed to unbelief.

**6. Avoid their doctrine (2 Ti. 2:14-18).** In this passage Christians are warned to avoid the Words of the false teachers. Let us not be deceived. False teachings have been very successful. Christendom is permeated with false doctrine. Wherein comes this success? The Bible reveals to us that there is a supernatural power behind false teaching. That power is Satan (2 Co. 11:13-15; 1 Ti. 4:1). It is for this reason that Christians are warned not to become involved in any way with false doctrine. Rather we are taught to "shun" it, for "they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker."

**This means the Christian is not to attend a church in which false doctrine is being proclaimed. We are not to attend Bible studies, or meetings, or prayer groups in which false doctrine is involved. When those involved with false doctrine ask permission to sit with us to "explain their beliefs more clearly," we must wisely refuse.** The only exception is an occasion in which we ourselves teach the one who is in bondage to the false belief. And this is only when that one is willing to listen with an open heart and not argue and resist the truth. See 2 Ti. 2:23-26. Apart from our own ministry to try to help the deceived, we must avoid all false instruction.

**7. Rebuke them openly, publicly, and plainly (Mt. 23:13-33; Ac. 13:8-10).** God's Word commands us to rebuke false teachers openly, publicly, and plainly, and the faithful servant of God will do just that. Christians who dislike biblical separation often protest that we cannot help the erring person if we separate. This is not true. One reason for separating is to help those who err see the seriousness of their error, to make a clear distinction between true and false doctrine. Many excuse their refusal to obey biblical separation by saying they are ministering to the false and disobedient. This is wrong. The Bible warns that a little evil leavens the whole body (1 Co. 5:6; Ga. 5:9). The ecumenist is confused. He apparently thinks a little good leavens the whole body!

**8. Try to convince them of the truth (2 Ti. 2:24-26). We are to try to help those who are involved in false doctrine, but we are to do this from a separated position.** It is our separation which shows them that we do indeed believe false doctrine to be evil. It impresses them that we take the Word of God seriously. And though we must refuse to have close fellowship with those involved in false doctrine, and though we must not allow them to be members in our churches and organizations, we are to try to teach them the truth if they will listen.

Notice in 2 Ti. 2:26 that the false teacher's root problem is revealed. They are in "the snare of the devil." False doctrine is not a problem of ignorance; it is a

spiritual problem. Only a great miracle can rescue a person out of the grasp of false doctrine once he has fallen prey to it.

**9. Maintain a spiritual demeanor (Jam. 3:13-18).** Last, but not least, we see that the ministry of discernment, judgment, contention for the truth, and separation from error are to be carried out in a spiritual manner.

### **Wrong separations**

One thing which has confused many people regarding the practice of separation is the fact that many divisions among Christians have no biblical basis. It is definitely not God's will that his people be divided over human traditions, or personality conflicts, or other man-made or sin-made barriers. Sad to say, though, this has often occurred. Speaking of those who are truly born again and who love and obey the Scriptures, God's Word says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). While we seek to obey God in the matter of separation for the purpose of maintaining doctrinal and moral purity, let us not be guilty of causing unnecessary divisions among God's people.

#### **1. Divisions based on personalities of men rather than truth** (1 Co. 1:12).

Many, many of the divisions within Christianity have been caused by the human tendency to exalt one man above another. The Word of God condemns such divisions.

**2. Divisions in matters of Christian liberty** (Ro. 14:1-5). If the N.T. gives no clear word on a particular matter, Christians have liberty to follow their own preference. Two examples given in Romans 14 are in the areas of diet and holy days. In such things God has given Christians freedom of individual preference. It has often been the case, though, that Christians have separated on the basis of personal preferences, refusing to allow liberty in such matters. There is no liberty to ignore or slight clear apostolic teaching, but beyond this we have no right to make our own personal preferences and ideas a basis of division. It has been well stated that the church has judicial powers, but it has no lawmaking powers. Let's be careful not to take away freedoms God has given.

**3. Divisions because of human conflicts** (Ph. 4:2). Countless divisions among Christians are caused not by concern for doctrinal fidelity, but by self-centered human squabbles and confusion. There have always been Euodias and Syntyches among the brethren, and it is not surprising, considering the fact that God's people still have the old Adamic nature which is self-centered and rebellious. There have always been leaders of churches, organizations, and movements divided from others simply because they cannot get along spiritually with some of God's people.

**4. Divisions based on man-made names and terminologies.** Another type of division among Christians which lacks a proper biblical basis is division based on

names and terminologies which have been devised by men. Often there is nothing wrong with the name or terminology itself. It is devised in an attempt to identify a certain teaching or trait. The problem lies in exalting that name to a place of dogma and infallibility and then making it a basis for separation. Manmade terms are not sufficient basis for separation. Bible terms can be defined in an absolute, dogmatic way, for the very fact that they are contained in the pages of the unchanging Word of God. Manmade terms, such as fundamental or evangelical, cannot be so defined. They can often be used with profit, but they cannot be made a permanent, absolute basis of fellowship.

### **Why practice separation?**

Contrary to popular opinion, the practice of biblical separation brings great blessing. It is not a practice motivated simply by a love for contention. It is not separation just for the sake of avoiding people we don't like, or fighting just for the sake of fighting. Let us consider the reasons given in the Bible for this practice:

**1. Separation is obedience to God** (Ro. 16:17; Jude 3; 2 Ti. 4:2). God does not ask His people to separate if they feel inclined toward such a practice. God simply **COMMANDS** separation! To be discerning of truth and error and to avoid all error is obedience.

**2. Separation is spiritual.** "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:128). In this verse we see the attitude of the godly Psalmist toward the Word of God and toward every false doctrine and practice. This is the attitude of all truly spiritual people.

**3. Separation is fidelity to truth and God.** "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Ti. 6:20). See also 1 Ti. 6:14-15; 2 Ti. 1:13; 2:2; 2 Pe. 3:1-2. Paul exhorted Timothy that sound apostolic doctrine was a solemn trust from God, which he was to be faithful to and which he was to contend for and separate over. This is the solemn trust every Christian has received from God, and especially Christian leaders such as Timothy was. A trust is something placed into a person's hands for safekeeping.

The dictionary tells us that one who betrays a trust is a "traitor." A traitor commits what is called "treason." The definition of this frightening word is "betrayal of allegiance or of obedience toward one's sovereign." Those who fail to contend earnestly for the whole counsel of God and who fail to mark, avoid, and rebuke those who are disobedient to this counsel are traitors to the God and truth they profess to serve. They have betrayed His trust. They are treasonous men. Is God not our Sovereign? Have we not vowed allegiance to Him and to His Word? How sobering this should be to those who have adopted the new-evangelical philosophy with its careless "live and let live" attitude toward Bible doctrine.

**4. Separation is honoring to Christ** (He. 13:12,13). This passage teaches that since the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified outside of the apostate religion of that day, and since He remains apart from such, we are to honor Him by doing the same.

**5. Separation is love for Christ** (Jn. 14:23,24).

**6. Separation is pleasing to Jesus Christ** (Re. 2:2,6,14-16).

Here we see Christ's attitude toward those who practice discernment and separation and toward those who do not. He commended the church at Ephesus for practicing this ministry; He rebuked the church at Pergamos for not doing so.

**7. Separation is the way of protection** (2 Ti. 2:16). First, separation protects me (1 Co. 15:33). Second, separation protects the weaker ones who are with me (Ro. 16:17,18). We must separate from those who do not obey the Word of God for the benefit of those under our watchcare who are less mature and discerning than we are. Third, separation protects a church or group from complete leavening (Ga. 5:9; 1 Co. 5:6,7).

Yes, some acknowledge, "I realize there are those who teach and practice false things, but let us remain in fellowship with them so we can help them see the truth. If we abandon this organization [or denomination, or church], what will become of it? It is better to associate than separate." How common this thinking is! Yet Paul's wisdom totally disproves this philosophy. A little false teaching, or a little unrepentant sin, becomes a leaven to permeate the entire church, organization, or denomination. History proves the truth of this, as if the Word of God had to be proven! Church after church, group after group, denomination after denomination, organization after organization have weakened, then been entirely destroyed by the leaven of error and sin.

**8. Separation is a qualification for Christian ministry**, and one way to be fully prepared for such ministry. "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). See also 1 Ti. 4:1,6; 2 Ti. 2:21,22. In these passages we learn that contention for the faith and separation from error is not only a good thing, but it is actually a divine qualification for the ministry. It is also the means whereby the man of God prepares himself for God's service (2 Ti. 2:21-22). How contrary this is to popular thinking in Christendom today! According to popular thinking, the man who is dogmatic over doctrinal matters, who fights for doctrinal purity, and who separates from those who refuse to obey the truth--is a carnal trouble-maker. Contrariwise, according to 1 Ti. 4:6, such practice is a mark of a good minister of Jesus Christ!

**9. Separation is essential for full reward** (2 Jn. 8-11). Here we find a close connection between separation from apostasy and rewards for service. It is possible to lose the full reward God desires to give His servants, and one way to do so, according to this passage, is to fail to avoid those who teach false things.

**10. Separation is love for men** (Col. 1:28). Paul's love for men moved him to preach to them the whole counsel of God and to attempt to prepare them to be whole and entire, lacking nothing, ready for Christ's return.

**11. Separation goes hand in hand with the message of salvation** (Jude 3). Many say they will concern themselves with preaching the Gospel and not be concerned for doctrinal matters, separation, and such things. This idea does not come from the Bible! Jude tells us that the ministry of earnestly contending for the faith is closely connected with the ministry of preaching salvation. The two cannot be separated.

**12. Separation is the way of blessing and fruitfulness** (Ps. 1:1-3). Separation is put forth in the very first Psalm as the way of blessing and fruitfulness. The teaching of separation is woven into the very fiber of the Scriptures from beginning to end. It is simply inexcusable for a Christian leader to fail to know, understand, and practice separation.

**13. Separation is wisdom** (Pr. 14:15; 22:3). To exercise doctrinal discernment, and to avoid error is a mark of wisdom. The prudent Christian tests everything by the Word of God. He considers the principles and direction of Christian movements and hides himself from those which are headed toward an unbiblical direction. Only a fool boards a ship which is sailing toward destruction, even if the ship itself is seaworthy. Wise Christians who see the sad end of the ecumenical and charismatic movements, for example, refuse to set foot on board ship from the beginning!

**14. Separation is the way of delight** (Pr. 24:24,25). Don't fear man and his threats; don't follow popular philosophy. Obey God's Word, Christian. Fight apostasy, error, and compromise. Separate from those involved in these things. God promises to bless you for it just as he did Phinehas of old (Num. 25:5-13).