

Separation

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The Bible teaches the doctrine of “separation” throughout. God requires His people to recognize that they distinctly belong to Him and to behave accordingly. God gave Israel His Law through Moses to keep them distinct from the other nations until the promised seed should come (Gal. 3:19). As the “people of his own possession” they were a “holy people,” distinct from all other nations (Deu. 7:6).

The New Testament makes it very clear that those who belong to Christ must live in a way to indicate their distinctiveness from the world. In His prayer, Jesus described the apostles as being **in** the world, but not **of** the world (John 17:15–16). He further prayed that they might be kept separated (sanctified) from the world through the Truth of God’s Word (v. 17). The whole idea of being a saint, sanctified, and holy (all three terms deriving from a single Greek root word) in the New Testament is that Christ’s servants are separated **from** the world and its practices **to** a life lived **for** God’s purpose (Rom. 8:28), “...not fashioned according to this world...” (Rom. 12:2, ASV).

However, separation does not mean isolation or withdrawal from the world. It means to live among the people of the world in such a way that one’s life is in contrast with the lives of worldlings. It means that we do not become entangled with unbelievers so as to be hindered in our service to God (2 Cor. 6:14). Rather, concerning the “unclean” things of the world, we have Paul’s instruction: “**Come ye out** from among them, and **be separate...**” (v. 17, *emph. DM*). It means we must live sober, righteous, and godly lives in a drunken, wicked, and ungodly world (Tit. 2:12). It means that we will refuse to let our lives be controlled by those who know not God, but that we will be different from the world, changed by the Gospel.

The heart of so many of the problems in the church today is the desire to be like those in the world in both religious and moral doctrine and practice. This desire is the basis of the innovations many brethren are trying to force upon us concerning the worship and organization of the church and even the way we view and handle the

Word of God. It also includes our speech, recreation, and dress, the places we go, the way we spend our money, and especially our moral standards.

There is little, if any, difference in the standards of many in the church when compared with people of the world. It is amazing that some Christians profess to see nothing incompatible in their drinking, dancing, immodest dressing, gambling, secularism, and such like with the blameless and pure life to which the Gospel calls us. Even those in the world know that such things are incongruous and are quick to cry (and justifiably), "Hypocrite," when they observe them. The world cannot be attracted to Christ by people who are no better than or different from it. God expects us to be **separate** and that means **different**. The Christian who refuses to break with the world does not belong to God, regardless of his claims.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, November 21, 2010, of which I was editor.]

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