

Basic Truth for Young Believers

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The Believer's Separation

*Know ye that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself (Psalm 4:3).
God... did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name (Acts 15:14).*

I. Concept of Separation:

- a. Separation by definition has negative aspect – it involves separating from something. In Scripture, separation is primarily a positive truth – emphasizes separating unto God.
 - *“Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God” (Rom 6:11)*
 - *“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:18).*
 - *“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and acceptable for the master’s use and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim 2:21).*

Illustration of the Olympic athlete - gives up both the harmful and legitimate to focus on games.

- b. Language of Separation
Positive: devote, dedicate, sanctify, present, consecrate
Negative: shun, avoid, put off, remove, come out, cleanse
- c. Related Concepts
Sanctification - to be set apart to God for a specific purpose – righteousness, service (2 Tim 2:21).
Holiness – state of being set apart for God. (“Be ye holy” 1 Pet 1:15)
Consecration – idea of devotion to God.
- d. Separation should be based on Biblical truths and principles:
“Sanctify them [set them apart] through thy truth, thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

II. Historic Principles of Separation from the O.T.

- a. God divided the light from the darkness (Gen 1:4)
- b. God required his people (Israel) to be separated from world (Lev 20:22-26; Num 23:9).
 - Israel set apart by circumcision (Gen 17) - sign of God’s covenant with them.
 - Israel set apart by their diet (Lev 11, 20:25).
 - Israel set apart by their manner of life (Law) (Lev 20:22-23).
 - Israel set apart by their system of worship (Deut 12:1-6).

III. Separation is not Isolation.

- a. The Bible does not support idea of withdrawal from society (John 17:15) – no basis for monastic societies. God expects believers to live for God in the society and culture in which they are found.
- b. Christians are to witness to the unsaved around them (1 Pet 3:15).
- c. Believers have an obligation to help others and to meet the needs (physical, financial, emotional) of the unsaved (Gal 6:10).
- d. Lord Jesus was “separate (morally) from sinners” (Heb 7:26) yet he was known as “the friend of publicans and sinners” (Matt 11:19).

IV. God's requirements for New Testament Believers.

A. Separation from Sin and the World (Eph 4:17-24).

The Christian is to be morally different than the unconverted sinner. God expects a distinction between our pre-conversion and post-conversion lives. Believers who have received eternal life will manifest that new life within them by turning from the sins which once characterized them to give evidence of the fruit of the Spirit who lives within them. The Scriptures exhort us to turn away (separate ourselves) from moral evil and be devoted to God.

- “Ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk” (Eph 4:17).
- “Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness [NIV] (Eph 4:22-24).
- “Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified ...” (1 Cor 6:11)

1. Separation from Sin – The Pursuit of Righteousness.

The Christian is called to devote himself to godly living. To seek after righteousness requires us to forsake our sin. We must actively pursue righteousness and separate ourselves from sin.

- “Flee youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace ...” (2 Tim 2:22)
- “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:12).
- “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1).

Separation is both positive and negative:

<u>Separation From</u>	<u>Separation To</u>	<u>Reference</u>
Youthful lusts	Righteousness	2 Tim 2:22
Ungodliness	Soberness, godliness	Titus 2:12
Worldly lusts	Righteousness	Titus 2:12
All filthiness	Holiness	2 Cor 7:1
Immorality	Pleasing God	1 Thes 4:4
Love of the World	Will of God	1 John 2:15-17

We can not attain to righteousness/godliness without separating ourselves from the negatives. This truth affects all areas of our lives: our goals, entertainment, music, reading. What we watch, read and listen to will either promote righteousness or encourage worldliness.

Principles for decision making:

- Will this activity promote godliness? Or righteousness?
- Will this activity be pleasing to God?
- Is this activity prompted by love for the world?

2. Separation from Evildoers

The Christian is to separate himself from the sin of others.

- “be not ye therefore partakers with them” (Eph 5:7).
- “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph 5:11).
- “you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat” [NIV] (1 Cor 5:11).

The Christian should never associate himself with those who do evil. Who we choose for friends will have an impact on our own lives. Strive for spiritual friends.

Principles for decision making:

- Do the activities of my friends encourage me to holiness or lead me into sin?

- Is the conversation of my friends and associates spiritually uplifting?

B. Separation from Wrong Relationships.

1. Christians are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. (2 Cor 6: 14-18)

- God's Concern - Unequal yoke – metaphor from Deut 22:10 where Israel forbidden to plow with ox and ass together - Two animals with different natures.
Unequal yoke between believers and unbelievers (vs 14-16).
* Righteousness and unrighteousness have no fellowship—nothing in common
* Light and darkness have no communion – no common enjoyment—mutually exclusive.
* Christ and Belial have no concord – idea of musical harmony.
* Believer and unbeliever have no part – nothing in common – no common goals.
- God's Purpose
God wants us to enjoy an unhindered relationship with Him (vs 18). (Heb 12:14)
Wrong associations prevent us from full devotion and relationship with God.
- God's Command
The Christian is commanded to be separate from unbeliever. “be ye separate” (vs 17).
Affects all spheres of human relationships – business, marriage, social groups.

2. Unequal Yoke in Business Relationships.

- Joint businesses/partnerships with unsaved constitute an unequal yoke.
- Business issues that impact our devotion/commitment to God:
 - * Necessity of separating ourselves from unethical business practices – covetousness.
 - * Choice of careers – some careers could bring us into wrong associations.
 - * Time commitments – Does God get the highest priority? (Matt 6:33)
 - * Issue of trade associations and unions – Can they control/tarnish my reputation?
- Stock and mutual fund investing

3. Unequal Yoke in Social Relationships.

- Implications of joining teams, organizations, associations - What/who am I linked to?
- School events (dances, parties) - Will these promote godliness or unrighteousness?
- The Christian is not to marry an unsaved partner (1 Cor 7:39).

4. Unequal Yoke in Political Associations

The Scriptures do not encourage us to work for improvements in society rather we are to spread the gospel. Joining a political party or a political cause would unite us with unsaved people and bring us into an unequal yoke.

C. Separation from the Religious World.

Bible envisions that a believer will be gathered into a local assembly, which operates according to the pattern of New Testament churches and on the basis of the principles set forth in the Epistles.

1. Distinction of the New Testament Church:

The assembly is a fellowship based on the apostles' doctrine and has certain features, which insure that it is separate from all other denominations/sects.

- An assembly is gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 18:20).
- It is a fellowship based on the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).
- Elders are responsible for preventing the teaching of false doctrine (2 Tim 2:23).
- An Assembly is required to maintain moral cleanness (1 Cor 5).
- Assembly has distinct boundaries – within and without; letters of commend. (Rom 16:1)

While there is a unity between all true Christians who are members of the Body of Christ, which allows us to enjoy a “kinship” with all such believers, this unity is not the basis for assembly fellowship. Those who are members in the assembly have entered into a fellowship based on the apostles' doctrine. If the assembly believer participates in other religious organizations and denominations that do not hold to the apostles' doctrine we are denying the distinctiveness of the assembly.

2. Responsibility of the Christian to be separated from all false religions:

- a. Responsibility to maintain allegiance to the person to whom we gather.

Separation to: The name and person of Jesus Christ
Separation from: False religious systems

- “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach (Heb 13:12-13). [Refers to Judaism but applicable to all systems that retain some truth].
- “Come out of her [Babylon – false religious system], my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins” (Rev 18:4)

- b. Responsibility to be devoted to the truth based on the apostle’s doctrine.

Separation to: The fellowship based on the apostle’s doctrine
Separation from: False Teaching

- “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls and they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, ...” (Acts 2:41-42).
- Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them” (Rom 16:17).
- “Study to show thyself approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings for they will increase unto more ungodliness (2 Tim 2:15-16).
- See also (1 Tim 4:7; 2 Tim, 2:23; and 2 John 10)

3. Principles to Govern our Actions:

- Is the message I am going to hear based on the Apostles’ doctrine?
- Is the gospel I am exposing my children to the same message that the New Testament evangelists presented? [A danger of Christian schools, Christian camps]
- Does the teaching uphold the positive pattern of the New Testament assembly? [Beware of teaching which promotes ecumenical movements]
- Does the teacher believe or promote false doctrines? [Person of Christ, Authority of Scripture, Assembly Truths]
- Will I be identifying myself with something other than the name of Jesus Christ?

V. Separation’s Highest Calling

Christ demands the very highest devotion that we are able to give.

1. Call to self-denial “Let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt 16:24).
2. Call to self-sacrifice “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy ... to God” (Rom 12:1).
3. Call to single-mindedness “no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him ...” (2 Tim 2:4)

VI. Scriptural Examples

A. Negative Examples

1. Lot (Gen 13-19) Example of a man who tried to blend in with his culture. He had to be rescued by Abraham and ultimately lost everything (his home, wife, family) except his soul.
2. Samson (Jud 13-16) A Nazarite by birth. He is an example of a man who lost his power for God when he lost the symbols of his separateness.

B. Positive Examples

1. Abraham (Gen 13-14) Unlike Lot, Abraham remained separate from the nations. It was Abraham who had the power to rescue Lot both from his capture and from coming judgement.
2. Nazarite (Num 6) A person whose devotion caused him to take a special vow to God. His

dedication to God affected his diet (no wine), his appearance (uncut hair) and his associations (no contact w/ dead bodies).