

SEPARATION

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The Bible teaches the doctrine of “separation” almost incessantly. God requires His people to recognize that they distinctly belong to Him and to behave accordingly. God gave Israel the Law of Moses to keep them a separated people until the Christ should come. The reason they were to maintain this separation from other nations was that they were a “holy people” (**Deuteronomy 7:6**). The law was to keep them set apart from the other nations until the promised seed should come (**Galatians 3:19**).

The New Testament makes it very clear that those who belong to Christ must live in a way to indicate their distinction from the world. In His prayer, Jesus observed that, as He was, so the apostles were in the world, but not of the world (**John 17:15-16**). He further prayed that His Father would keep them separated (sanctified) from the world through the Truth of His Word (**v. 17**). The 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 have been separated from the world and if practices and dedicated to a life lived for God’s purpose (**Romans 8:28**).

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 Corinthians 6:14-18**). It means we must live sober, righteous, and godly lives in a world dominated by ungodliness and the fulfillment of worldly lusts (**Titus 2:12**). It means that we will refuse to let those who know not God control our lives, but that we will be different from the world, changed by the Gospel (**Romans 12:2**).

The heart of so many of the problems in the church today is the lust to be like those in the world in both 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, immodesty, gambling, adultery, materialism, secularism, and such like with the blameless and pure life which the Gospel calls us. Even those in the world know that such things are congruous and are quick to cry (justifiably so), “Hypocrite,” when they observe them. The world cannot be attracted to Christ by people who are no better than different from it. God expects us to be **separate**, and that means that we be **different**. The Christian who refuses to break with the world does not belong to God, regardless of his claims.