



Christians are easily confused about the concept of separation, who want to apply this doctrine to unbelievers whose sins shock them. Cult leaders use separation in order to isolate their members from family and former friends. Too often, separation is used in order to separate the Christian from everything that is non-Christian.

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

1. What separation is not:
 - a. First of all, we are not examining the doctrine of separation for Israel, which is expressed several times with the phrase “**You be holy** [= set apart, separate] **for I am holy**” (where God is speaking—Lev. 11:44–45 19:2 20:7, 25). This is a related but different topic.
 - b. Nor are we speaking of a function of self-righteousness, where you are, quite frankly, just too good to be hanging out with Charlie Brown.
 - c. Separation is not the means of taking a new believer and pulling him away from his family or friends. Although this is often a sign of a cult, some regular churches do this as well.
2. The concept of separation is based upon the fact that we are in this world, but not of this world. In John 17:15–17, Jesus prayed: “**I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray for You to take them out of the world, but for You to keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth. Your Word is truth.**” We are positionally separate from this world because we are in Christ, and He is separate from this world. *Being taken out of the world* is death or complete isolationism—Jesus prayed for this not to happen. Jesus prayed for us to be separated from evil (which is different than sin; evil is the thinking and philosophy of Satan, which can include human good).
3. Separation begins with a mental attitude that results in removing from our lives things and people that are either distractions, or may become distractions, in our own spiritual advance.
 - a. When Peter brings “**You be holy because I am holy**” into the New Testament (1Peter 1:16, taking this from Lev. 11:44), he is speaking of a mental attitude based upon Bible doctrine (**Therefore, getting your minds ready for action and being self-disciplined, place your confidence completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ—1Peter 1:13**).
 - b. So, although the passages in Leviticus speak of an actual separation between Israel and her heathen neighbors, the context of the passage in

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

- 1Peter says nothing about physical separation from believers or unbelievers. All that we are to think, according to Peter, is based upon understanding that **we were not ransomed from [our former] empty manner of life inherited from our forefathers with perishable things such as silver or gold, but we were purchased with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot** (1Peter 1:18–19).
- c. Separation, in the context of this passage where this phrase is brought into the New Testament, is based upon spiritual growth which is a result of thinking divine viewpoint which has its foundation in the revelation of Jesus Christ (i.e., learning Bible doctrine).
 - d. In other words, the separation that Peter speaks about is in your thinking, which is based upon Bible doctrine. You separate yourself by thinking divine viewpoint.
 - e. The believer becoming entangled in human viewpoint is involvement with evil, which Jesus prayed that we not fall into.
 - f. Let me remind you of Satan's 2 fundamental strategies: (1) keep the unbeliever from the gospel and (2) keep the believer thinking human viewpoint.
4. Separation, then, begins in the believer's personal life as he learns and applies doctrine. The Bible says that separation starts in relation to the sin nature. Romans 6:11 **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.** Remember that death is Scripture doesn't always mean *cessation of existence*, in Romans, it means *separation from*. Romans 8:13 **If you live according to flesh** [according to the sin nature], **you are going to die** [temporal spiritual death]. **But if you put to death, by means of the Spirit, the practices of the body, then you will live.**
- a. This is all about spiritually versus carnality.
 - b. Prior to salvation, we are all under spiritual death. We have no innate ability to make contact with God.
 - c. At the moment of salvation, we are both baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - d. However, after salvation, we fall into carnality, which means, we sin and lose the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 - e. This verse is talking about the fact that, if you are a believer and operating in carnality, then all of the blessings of the abundant Christian life are not yours. Even though you have eternal life you might as well be dead since you are no longer living the Christian life because you are living in carnality (carnal death).
 - f. After salvation, it is an *either-or* situation: we are either filled with the Holy Spirit and separated from sin or we are carnal and associated with sin. This is a status, not some emotional high of some sort.
 - g. **But if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, then you will live.** We are to put to death the deeds of the body, which represent sin. That is a calling for separation in the believer's life from sin.

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

- h. This separation is caused by naming one's sins to God (1John 1:9). That restores our fellowship with God and temporally separates us from sin.
- 5. Separation involves separation from human viewpoint thinking.
 - a. It is not just the sin nature that is influencing the life but also all that human viewpoint garbage that is floating around in the soul. All of the ideas we have grown up with need to be excised by the scalpel of the Word of God. We need to have that stuff flushed out of our system.
 - b. When you are saved by believing in Jesus Christ, this does not mean that your thinking has changed. The potential for a real change in thinking is there, but the actuality is not.
 - c. This is what Paul is talking about in Romans 12:1–2 **Therefore, I call upon you, [my] brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [as] a living sacrifice, holy [set apart, separated], pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world [cosmic thinking], but be transformed by the renovation of your thinking, in order to prove [demonstrate] by (means of) you what is that good and pleasing and perfect will of God.** This is what happens as we advance spiritually: we renovate our own thinking, learning Bible doctrine, and the Holy Spirit changes us from the inside out.
 - d. In this way, the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit, the character of Christ in our lives. Furthermore, this change of thinking demonstrates that the will of God is good and acceptable and perfect. We become a living, walking testimony of the grace of God in the angelic conflict.
 - e. Therefore, this calls for separation from human viewpoint thinking. So the first two categories of separation has to do with what is going on in the believer's soul and the believer's thinking. They don't have to do with what is going on necessarily in the world around him. In other words, the thinking of the believer is to be renovated so that the believer no longer thinks in human viewpoint. They *separate* their thinking from human viewpoint.
- 6. If the world around the believer is producing temptations where he easily succumbs to sin, then that means he has to make some choices about where he goes, whom he associates with, or the things he does. Therefore, the believer needs to recognize that if he is in an environment that easily leads him to sin then he needs to change this environment. That is, there are times for us to physically separate from certain people and situations.
- 7. We are commanded to separate from certain kinds of carnal believers, such as backslidden, reversionistic believers. This is because there are certain types of carnality that are contagious to certain believers.
 - a. However, as a corollary to this, we do not invade the privacy of various believers, to determine what evil things it is that they do, so that we separate from them.
 - b. If we separated from all believers who sin, that would mean that we would be separating from all believers on this planet.

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

- c. Bear in mind that self-righteousness can be very contagious.
- 8. We are to separate from believers who reject sound doctrine.
 - a. If there is anything that can destroy our own spiritual life, it is when we closely associate with people who do not hold to sound doctrine. They say, "Well you know, there are a lot of different views in evangelicalism. There are folks who believe this and there are folks who believe that, but we can all just get along and we don't have to draw these doctrinal distinctions." There is an embedded blasphemy there, and that is the idea that God does not communicate clearly enough for us to take strong positions on doctrine. Wishy-washy people don't really think God communicated things clearly, so you can think it means this and I can think it means that, and somebody else thinks it means something else, so we can all just put our arms together and emote on our common experience that Jesus loves us. Then we'll all go home and be happy that we went to church this morning!
 - b. This is not the biblical view. 2Thessalonians 3:6 **Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks disorderly, and not after the teaching which he received from us.** This isn't tradition for tradition's sake, this is the apostolic doctrine contained in the Scripture. This is a mandate. Vv. 14–15 **And if anyone does not obey our word by this letter, mark that one and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.** Notice that we are speaking of a believer who has clearly rejected legitimate authority (Paul's authority in the teaching of Bible doctrine).
 - c. The goal is restoration, not exclusion; but if there is no response then there is no option other than to go separate ways.
 - d. Let me give you an example: homosexuality, which is clearly identified as a sin in the Bible (Rom. 1:24–27 1Cor. 6:9 1Tim. 1:10). Certain believers may struggle with homosexuality as a sin and, at times, give in to this lust. It is not our business to follow such believers around to determine whether or not we ought to separate from them. However, when a believer touts his homosexuality as normal and acceptable, that calls for separation from such a one.
 - e. From time to time, a church has to remove a troublemaker (or a small group of troublemakers) who have rejected the authority of the pastor-teacher. Quite obviously, if you are in a church where you cannot accept the authority of your pastor, then you should quietly remove yourself—you do not owe anyone an explanation, nor should you stand out in the parking lot and tell everyone else why they should leave the church. You simply leave and find a pastor whose authority you can accept. More often than not, your inability to accept a pastor's authority is a problem in your soul, not in his.
 - f. By accepting the authority of a pastor, this does not mean this pastor

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

- follows you around and tells you what to do.
- g. As an aside, this is not a call to self-righteousness, nor is this a call to separate from family members simply because they do not think like you think.
 - h. Cults often twist the doctrine of separation into removing you from your friends and family *to your real family*. If you find yourself in a church, and they encourage you to cut off your friends and family, it is time to separate from that church.
 - i. Jesus said, **“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.”** (Matt. 10:34–36). There will be some natural separation which occurs, but not because the believer has initiated it. Throughout the ages, there have been some Jewish Christians who have been virtually disowned from their families because they believe in Jesus. We know just how much hate can exist between Arabs and Jews; there have been times in history that this has existed between Christians and Jews as well (even though, we ought to be natural political allies).
 - j. However, without going too far afield, the point here is, there are times when a believer will separate from his family—but that is a rare exception and not the rule. Jesus is not calling upon us to raise a sword against family members; nor is He requiring us to separate from family members because of different beliefs. Again, that is characteristic of a cult, but not of the Christian faith.
 - k. Although Wikipedia represents a bastion of human viewpoint, there is an article [here](#) on the [cult checklist](#). Although every list is not completely accurate, there are enough trends which these various lists point to in order to keep you out of a cult.
9. We are to separate from believers who make their own internal lust patterns the motivation for their lives. Romans 16:17–18 **And I summon you, brothers, to take note of those making divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For they who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but they serve their own belly [lust patterns]; and by good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the gullible.**
10. Separation from the immoral social scene where one's norms and standards are gradually eroded through peer pressure. 1Peter 4:4 **In these things they are surprised, that you are not running with them into the same excess of riot, blaspheming. Proverbs 1:10-19 My son, if sinners lure you, do not be willing. If they say, “Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, we will watch secretly for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole, as those who go down into the pit; we shall find all precious goods; we shall fill our houses with plunder; cast in your lot among us, and let us have one purse.” My son, do not walk in the way with them! Keep back your foot from their path, for**

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

their feet run to evil and make haste to shed blood. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird, and they lie in wait for their own blood; they watch secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who gains unjust gain; it takes away its owners' life. As an aside, communism and socialism are a national codification of this attitude.

11. 1Corinthians 15:33 **Do not be deceived; evil companionships corrupt good habits.** The idea here is, believers can be corrupted by certain other believers and unbelievers with regards to certain activities. This is an individual decision to be made relative to the strengths and weaknesses of the individual believer. As believers, we need to develop good positive habits in our spiritual lives. If we find certain associations compromising these habits, then that is an association which must be broken off or dialed back.
12. However, we simply do not separate from gross sin and gross immorality because we are offended. We should be able to witness to people of all different stripes of sinfulness. 1Cor. 5:9–11 **I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people--not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler--not even to eat with such a one.** Paul is talking about separation from a believer, at the end, who knows the truth, and yet is clearly and observably out of line with his actions.
13. We need to exercise a form of separation from unbelievers to avoid having our doctrine compromised. 2 Corinthians 6:14 **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship does righteousness have with lawlessness? And what partnership does light have with darkness?** This involves some types of business partnerships, not necessarily all. It involves marriage, dating, intimate social life. We are to separate from unbelievers where their influence can affect our own doctrine decisions. This is not a call for the believer to avoid unbelievers altogether or whenever possible.
14. We need to separate from believers who are enmeshed in religious modes of operation and apostasy. See 2Corinthians 6:14–17 2Timothy 3:2–6.

I should add that there is much more to the doctrine of separation than this. Although we began this New Testament doctrine above, there is a great deal of separation described in the New Testament which has absolutely nothing to do with the relative geography of you and anyone that you are to separate from (for example: John 5:24 8:12 2Cor. 6:17–18 1Thess. 4:7 1Peter 2:24). We will cover this at another time.

The basic points are taken from <http://phrasearch.com/Trans/DBM/setup/Genesis/Gen068.htm>, which is Lesson #68 of Robby Dean's study of Genesis. This study was extensively edited and appended