

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR BIBLICAL SEPARATION?

THE BIBLICAL PATTERN FOR SEPARATION

IN GENESIS

LIGHT

SEPARATED FROM

DARKNESS



IN REVELATION

SPIRITUAL LIGHT

SEPARATED FROM

SPIRITUAL DARKNESS

NEW JERUSALEM

LAKE OF FIRE



SEPARATION: *A Fundamentalist Folly or Divine Duty?*

1A. THE PATTERN OF SCRIPTURAL SEPARATION:

The Bible represents God as a God of light in whom is no darkness (1 John 1:5). Light cannot coexist with darkness. The Bible presents God as separating light from darkness through the Word. The system of separation spans the Scriptures.

--The Bible commences with God separating physical light from physical darkness (Genesis 1:3-4).

--The Bible concludes with God separating spiritual light from spiritual darkness. Saints enter the eternal city; sinners are consigned to the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15; 12:6-8).

2A. THE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURAL SEPARATION:

1b. The predicament:

It should not be necessary to demonstrate that the Scriptures teach separation. However, in contemporary evangelicalism, separation is ridiculed and rejected even by those who once were in fundamentalist ranks. The concept of separation is a scriptural one. We dare not dodge or deny the doctrine!

2b. The passages of Scripture:

The following is adapted from an unpublished paper by G. Archer Weniger, "What the Bible Says About a Godly Attitude Toward Heresy."

In these days of theological confusion and ecclesiastical compromise, what is the Biblical position for an evangelical to assume toward heretics and false religious teachers? Are we to patronize them, associate with them, accept their sponsorship, increase their numbers, send them converts, add to their prestige, follow their leadership, identify our churches with them, and obliterate important Biblical distinctions with them? The Bible's answer is clear:

1. **Try them.** 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
2. **Mark them.** . . . Romans 16:17, "Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them." Verkuyl says, "and to keep away from them."
3. **Rebuke them** . . . Titus 1:13, "This witness is true. Wherefore, rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith." Verkuyl says, "Correct them sternly."
4. **Have no fellowship.** . . Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Verkuyl says, "Expose them."

5. **Withdraw thyself . . .** 2 Thessalonians 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 ye received of us."
6. **Receive them not . . .** 2 John 10-11, "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." Verkuyl says, "Do not extend him your greeting." To our day false teachings are fostered by misplaced hospitality.
7. **Have no company with him . . .** 2 Thessalonians 3:14, "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." Berkeley Version says, "Do not get mixed up with him, so he may grow ashamed."
8. **Reject them . . .** Titus 3:10, "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition, reject."
9. **Be ye separate . . .** 2 Corinthians 6:17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."
10. **Put them out . . .** 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

3A. THE PROBLEM OF BIBLICAL SEPARATION:

1b. The system of fundamentalism:

In the latter days of the last century, and especially in the early years of this century, a fundamentalist-modernist battle raged in the United States. Many churches withdrew from main-line denominations because these denominations had become liberal and denied certain fundamentals of the faith. Bible believers insisted that a denial of the central doctrines was a departure from the Christian faith. They formulated the fundamentals and thus became known as fundamentalists, declaring and defending these doctrines to be the statement of the fundamentals:

1. *Inspiration of the Bible*
2. *Virgin Birth of Christ*
3. *Deity of Christ*
4. *Substitutionary Atonement*
5. *Physical Resurrection and Return*

2b. The statement of the fundamentals:

Robert Lightner writes correctly about these fundamentals of the faith:

“These are still the criteria by which to establish whether an individual of an organization is orthodox or heterodox. Other doctrines might be listed as equally essential to the faith. What is believed about these, however, will reveal what is believed about other Biblical truths. They are determinative! A glance at these five historic fundamentals of the faith reveals that they all center around two crucial doctrines, the very two which liberal church unionists of our day deny in any orthodox sense—the doctrine of Christ, the living Word and the Bible, the written Word” (*Church Union—A Layman’s Guide*, 126).

3b. The spirit of fundamentalism:

Many evangelicals can give whole-hearted endorsement to the five fundamentals but are not fundamentalists. They have a belief in these doctrines, but are not willing to do battle for them. They declare the fundamentals but do not defend them against heresy and apostasy. A life of comfort is to be preferred over a life of conflict. But the believer is in enemy territory. He is engaged in a battle. Fighting for the truth is not optional but an order.

1 Timothy 6:12: “The good fight of faith. . .”
 Jude 3: “Earnestly contend for the faith.”

4b. The skepticism toward separation:

- 1c. Because of the extreme positions of some.
- 2c. Because of the great ignorance of the nature of liberalism.
- 3c. Because of the ignorance of the biblical teaching on separation.
- 4c. Because of the compromise of many evangelicals.

4A. THE PURPOSE OF BIBLICAL SEPARATION:

The late National Representative of the GARBC, Dr. Paul R. Jackson, has spelled out the ultimate need for the practice of separation:

“Separation, as I have so often explained, is to the whole ministry of the Word of God and the service of Jesus Christ what sanitation and sterilization are to surgery. When you

go into surgery you are not at all prejudiced against the practice of surgeons, and others that enter that room, to scrub and scrub and scrub! You want every germ destroyed. If there is any possible chance of an infection you may be the victim of it, and you are well satisfied for sanitation at its ultimate and absolute to mark those who minister to you. But, as a matter of fact, no matter how long the surgeon scrubs, it will do you no good until he finally takes hold of the scalpel and the other instruments to perform the surgery. Unless he ministers to you in the other spheres of medical attention, the sanitation is valueless to you. Cleanliness is only the necessary condition and atmosphere in which the real ministry of the surgeon takes place. It is not an end in itself, but it is an essential condition to the rightful end.

If we make Biblical separation an end in itself, or major upon it to the neglect or exclusion of other great Biblical doctrines, we have failed those to whom we minister, as the surgeon would fail who sterilizes but never operates. But, on the other hand, let us never forget that we also fail if we do not preach and practice this doctrine of separation, as the surgeon will fail, no matter how skillfully he operates, if he neglects proper sanitation in the operating room. We must be clean in order to carry out the total ministry of the Word” (GARBC Information Booklet #12, “The Position, Attitudes, and Objectives of Biblical Separation,” 1-2).

5A. THE PRINCIPLES OF SEPARATION:

1b. Separation from apostasy and unbelief:

An *apostate* is an unbeliever who has formerly professed the truth but has departed from it. A *heretic* is a believer who brings doctrinal disunity.

Many passages could be cited to support separation from apostasy. A few must suffice:

Ephesians 5:11
 2 Corinthians 6:14-17
 1 Timothy 6:5
 2 Timothy 3:5
 2 John 9-10

Dr. Ernest Pickering, in his classic book, *Biblical Separation: A Struggle for a Pure Church*, suggests that it is not all that difficult to identify an apostate group. The believer is not simply asked to separate from apostate individuals who hold false doctrines, but from groups who espouse the same doctrines. Dr. Pickering suggests the following:

A body is apostate when:

- (1) Men and women in its leadership deny the verities of the Christian faith. If such are welcomed into places of leadership, the body has departed, though individuals within it may yet be sound.
- (2) Official periodicals and media presentations promote views contrary to the orthodox Christian faith.

- (3) Official schools of the body employ faculty members and/or utilize visiting speakers who teach views that are at variance with essential Christian doctrines.
- (4) No effort is made by the leadership of the group or the majority of its constituency to expunge the offending parties.

Sometimes objection is raised that to ascertain what constitutes essential doctrine and to determine when a group is actually apostate requires the making of a judgment. Yes. It is true. Judgments are to be made here as in many other areas of the Christian walk. But this does not invalidate the principle of separation. Because the act of separation requires a judgment does not imply that the judgment is wrong or that the action is wrong. God has given ample spiritual guidelines to help the Spirit-taught believer make those judgments.

2b. Separation from heresy and immorality:

Many evangelicals would concur that separation from apostasy is necessary. Some evangelicals, however, reject the idea of separation from other believers. Paul Lightner's comments are much to the point:

An even more difficult truth for many to accept and obey is that Holy Scripture commands separation from Christian brethren who persist in walking in disobedience. As in the case of separation from apostasy and false teachers this does not mean each believer is to set up his own beliefs as equivalent to God's truth. God's Word and the essentials of the faith constitute that from which there can be no deviation, and these must be the norm by which our views are to be judged.

Though difficult to understand and sometimes even more difficult to obey, God's Word addresses itself to the question of a believer's fellowship with another believer who persists in disobedience and specific sins. The Corinthian Christians were told bluntly to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" in their assembly who was guilty of gross sin and who refused to confess it (I Cor. 5:13). The "wicked person" is described as one who is called a brother and is guilty of fornication, coveteousness, and drunkenness, among other things (I Cor. 5:9-11). Again to the saints at Thessalonica the Apostle wrote definitely: "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). Here the issue was doctrinal. Professed believers seem to be in view in Paul's words to the Christians at Rome: "Mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). The Apostle insisted that his inspired messages concerning the Lord Jesus Christ allowed for no deviation. Christ is crucial to Christianity: in fact, without the Christ of Scripture Christianity does not exist.

6A. THE PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL SEPARATION:

- 1b. The importance of separation from error and fighting for the truth:

Jude 3 "Contend for the faith"

2 Timothy 1:13 "Hold fast to the form of sound doctrine"

Colossians 1:23 "continue in the faith"

1 Corinthians 15:58 Abound in "the work of the Lord"

2b. The imperative for separation:

Commands of Scripture to separate are not completely obeyed until the believer exhibits humility and love. Right after Paul's exhortation against false doctrine he said, "Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5).

Humility needs to characterize those who seek to restore one, "overtaken in the fault" whatever that doctrinal or moral fault might be (Galatians 6:1).

A bitter and harsh attitude, the prideful and holier-than-thou spirit are wrong. But just because these attitudes are sometimes associated with some who practice separation does not make the doctrine of separation unbiblical. What is needed desperately in our day is an obedient spirit in the Word of God, a commitment to His truth, and a balanced ministry which has a concern for the lost and a concern for the truth. Ignoring separation is ignoring Scripture. May God grant us a balanced ministry.

FUNDAMENTALISM

Positively	Negatively	
Declares the Truth	Defends the Truth	
Expounds the Truth	The System	Exposes Error
Upholds the Fundamentals	The Spirit	Upholds Falsehood
Stands for Sound Doctrine	The Stand	Separator from Denials

The Fundamentals of the Faith are:

1. Inspiration of the Scriptures
2. Virgin Birth
3. Deity of Christ
4. Substitutionary Atonement
5. Physical Resurrection and Return

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

*What the Bible Says About
A Godly Attitude Toward...*

H E R E S Y

TRY THEM

I John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

MARK THEM

Romans 16:17, "Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them."

REBUKE THEM

Titus 1:13, "this witness is true. Wherefore, rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith."

HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP

Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

WITHDRAW THYSELF

II Thessalonians 3:6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us."

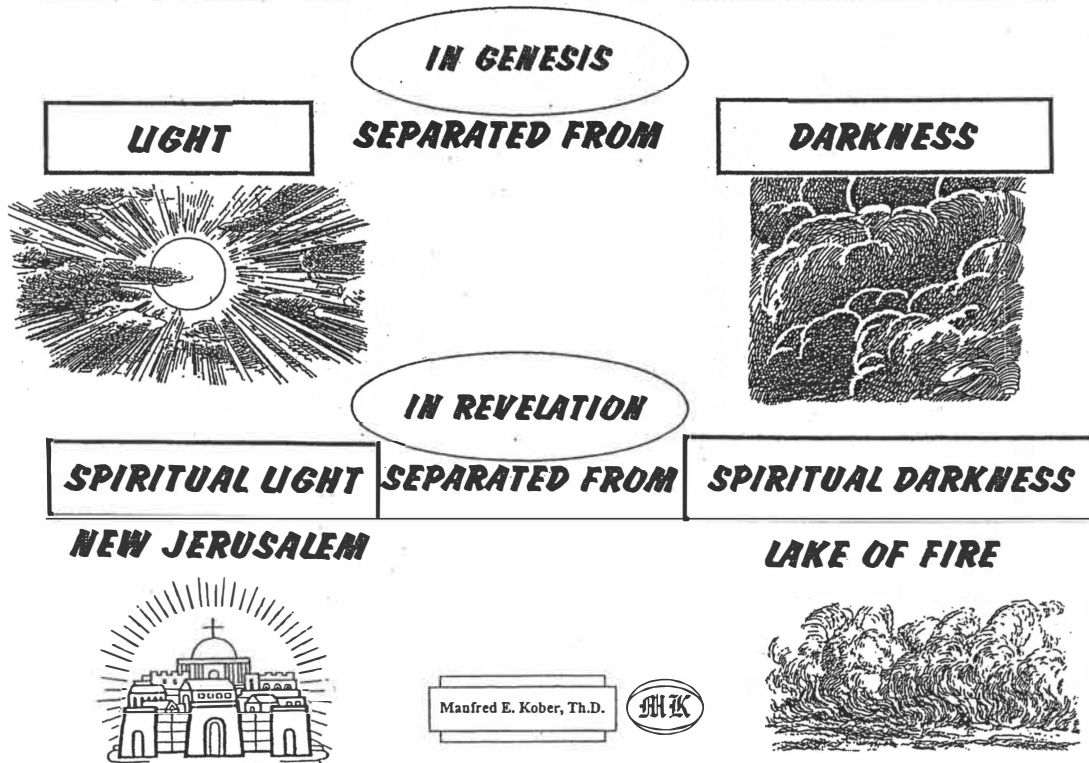
RECEIVE THEM NOT

II John 10-11, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

HAVE NO COMPANY WITH HIM

II Thessalonians 3:14, "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."

THE BIBLICAL PATTERN FOR SEPARATION



Distinctives of the Evangelical Free Church of America

*"In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, charity.
In all things, Jesus Christ."*

— Chrysostom

1. The Evangelical Free Church of America is inclusive not exclusive.

The great heritage of EFCA people around the world includes the fact that fellowship and ministry opportunities in the local church are based solely on one's personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and trusting in Him alone for salvation. Membership requires commitment to sound doctrine as expressed in our Statement of Faith. However, a person is not excluded from membership because he or she does not agree on every fine point of doctrine. Within the EFCA, there is allowance for legitimate differences of understanding in some areas of doctrine.

2. The Evangelical Free Church of America is evangelical but not separatistic.

The EFCA was born out of a heritage of commitment to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. We have deep convictions based on the authority of God's Word, but we do not draw battle lines over minor points. Nor do we make minor issues of doctrine a test of fellowship in the local church. We are evangelical. We believe in separated living and personal holiness, but we are not separatists.

3. The Evangelical Free Church of America is ecumenical in spirit though not in structure.

We believe in the spiritual unity of the Church though not necessarily in structural union. We join with other Christians and other denominations of like, precious faith in common goals and ministries to accomplish the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. But we believe that there is strength in diversity and that it is important to preserve our distinctives. We recognize that union

in structure does not guarantee unity of spirit. Our foremost concern is unity of spirit with our Lord, with each other and with other Christians.

4. The Evangelical Free Church of America believes in liberty with responsibility and accountability.

We believe in Christian liberty, but freedom always has its limitations. Responsible Christians do not abuse freedom. The apostle Paul wrote forcefully about Christian liberty in the Book of Galatians. He shattered the legalists with the doctrine of grace. But in First and Second Corinthians and Romans, the apostle also rebuked believers when liberty was abused. He declared boldly the principles of Christian liberty, but spoke with equal forcefulness about Christian accountability. The EFCA desires to preserve our freedom in Christ. We encourage our people to be responsible, godly men, women and young people who desire to live under the control of the Holy Spirit in obedience to the principles and precepts of God's Word, and in harmony with God's will for life as revealed in the Scriptures.

5. The Evangelical Free Church of America believes in both the rational and relational dimensions of Christianity.

We believe the Scriptures must be applied to our individual lives with warmth of heart, warmth of message and warmth of concern. We believe it is essential to have solid, biblical content in our doctrinal understanding of faith, but it is equally important to have a dynamic, vital relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son and to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. Sound Christian doctrine must be coupled with dynamic Christian experience. Ours is a ministry of love and spiritual reconciliation.

6. The Evangelical Free Church of America affirms the right of each local church to govern its own affairs.

The EFCA is committed to a congregational form of government as stated in Article 10 of our

*What the Bible Says About
A Godly Attitude Toward...*
**APOSTASY, HERESY &
IMMORALITY**

TRY THEM

1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

REJECT AND AVOID

Titus 3:10, "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject."

MARK THEM

Romans 16:17, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

BEWARE OF THEM

Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

REBUKE THEM

Titus 1:13, "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."

HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP

Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

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"BE YE SEPARATE"

2 Corinthians 6:17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

PUT THEM OUT

1 Corinthians 5:7a, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened."

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