

9.23.19 - Be Separate

We are all familiar with the verse **2 Co 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, .**

This verse is used to justify isolation from those we think will lead us astray or make us unclean. Does it apply to the relationship between naturists and textile believers? Should they feel superior because they are more “righteous” than we are? Should they refuse to associate with or speak to us because we believe that God had a reason to create human-beings naked and they see that as sinful? Should we feel sorry for them because they are not as enlightened as we are about naturism? Let’s try to find out.

We will look at the verse first. A quick read seems to indicate that we who have the Bible teaching on nakedness should separate ourselves from the textile believers. It also seems that believers should separate from nonbelievers. If we add a few more teachings like: long hair on men, pants on women, speaking in tongues, Holy Spirit fullness, tithing, church attendance, Bible reading, bus ministry, food ministry, missions giving, baptism, communion, working on Sunday, dating, we can see that the separate groups will be very small to get agreement on just this list. It cannot mean that naturists should stop talking to textile people or some of us would have to learn to enjoy talking to God and ourselves. Come out and be separate can not apply to every teaching in the Bible. Where does it apply? Does it only apply to the big issues...and if so, what are the big issues?

Before going on, lets try to define separate. The definition that I liked is *to part, to be disconnected, to be disunited, to withdraw from each other*. Seems to be what is meant by the verse. Come out and withdraw from them, but where does it apply and how

complete is the disuniting. Do we stop talking with them? Can we invite them to our house for conversation? May we go to their house for a meal? May we exchange labor with them or baby-sitting service? Not much help. We've managed to add more questions than answers.

If we go to **Matthew 18:17** **And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.** Here we have Jesus' teaching on separating on conflicts within the church. The question then becomes...how should we treat heathen men and publicans? Some verses that apply are **Luke 6:31, 32, 35** **And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. But love your enemies and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.** This also is a quote from Jesus. Seems like a conflict. No one wants to be put out of even a group where he has little interest. If we do not want to be put out, then how can we justify throwing anyone out? On the one hand we are to separate and on the other hand we are not to separate. Is the church outside these verses? After due process can the church separate from a member without regard to **Luke 6:31, 32, 35**?

Trying another verse that applies to our problem. **Heb 13:5** **Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.** If Jesus is our pattern, then it will be hard to justify separation. But Jesus separated Himself from everyone to pray. Yes, that is right and He sent the crowds away and would not let the demon possessed man go with Him in the boat. This is taking the example to an extreme where our

problem does not exist. We all do things in private like praying or showering or Bible study. We all tell our children that they cannot go with us to some places like to work or a hunting trip with a group of men when they are too young. That is not seen as separation. Does that mean we never separate from anyone? Maybe, but let's try a few more verses.

In the Old Testament we have **Num 16:26 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.** Moses is telling the people to separate from the men who wanted a position that God was not willing to give them, but they were willing to try to force Moses to give them the position. This verse indicates there may be cases where we need to separate from wicked people to avoid being swallowed up with them.

To settle the conflicts that were erupting between Abraham's and Lot's herdsmen we have: **Gen 13: 9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.** that suggests that to keep peace in the family we may need to separate. If an older child cannot understand that he is not in charge of the home, it may be time for him to move out.

Psa 101:4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. The Hebrew word for “know” in this verse does not apply to being able to put a name to a face of a wicked person. Of the many meanings that it could have, “to be instructed” seems to fit this verse best. That would mean that we should not get instructions about God from a godless person. This can be shown by **Psa 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.** and **Psa**

119:115 Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. Now we are allowed to separate from the wicked person and anyone who would infringe on the peace of our family. So, it would appear we can justify separating from almost anyone. If I do not like them, they are wicked, right? Not necessarily, but you would not need to misapply much scripture to justify labeling them wicked or a threat to the peace of your family.

Here is another passage that needs consideration on this topic. **Mat 25:37-45** Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. Those who did not serve the King may have been the ones who separated from the "wicked people" in their lives but God may have seen them as "the least of these". We are all created by God and therefore one of the "least of these". In other words, many legalists make rules that put them in the last group because they were too good to help the "least of these".

Jesus lived this passage. He was not born of famous or wealthy parents, He did not grow up in a king's palace, He walked instead of riding a horse or donkey, most of His miracles were done for common people. One example should serve to illustrate the point. In **John 4** we have the story of the woman at the well. Jesus took the way through the mountains instead of going up the Jordan River valley. The river valley would be a gradual climb to Galilee. The mountains would be a series of climbs and descends which are very tiring on foot. He took this path for a woman of an outcast group of despised gentiles mixed with some Israelites far back after the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Not only was this woman an outcast by birth, she had a bad reputation even with her own people for a list of 5 husbands and living with a man not her husband. She went to the well at noon during the heat of the day when no one else went in order to avoid the shunning of the other women. The Pharisees would never do anything near this "sinful". They had no dealings with the Samaritans or with sinners so a Samaritan sinner like this would be at the top of their list of people to avoid. Note the contrast, Jesus went to a lot of extra trouble to reach this woman who was certainly one of the "least of these" and the Pharisees would not even consider helping her. We need to be careful of who we label as "wicked" and who we chose to separate from.

Much of this conflict comes from not looking at the verses around the one we are studying. We still have verses for separating and not separating. If we take **2 Cor 6:17** in context with **2 Cor 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?** We can see that the topic Paul is addressing is marriage to unbelievers. The verse is to be applied to choosing a marriage partner. To expand that a little, separation seems to be important in close relationships like marriage, church family,

close friends and business partners. Maybe with close relationships desecration would be a better word. This agrees with Jesus' behavior. He had only men who were loyal to Him and teachable for His inner circle. What about Judas? He was needed for God's plan, but we have no guarantee that our loyal friends today will not betray us if the price is high enough or they become disturbed enough with our behavior.

As we move out from our intimate group, separation rules become unnecessary. The person with a drinking problem, can not have close friends who continue to drink. It is much more likely that the friends will end his alcohol-free record than it is that he will get them to stop drinking. He should still talk with them, but he may not go to the bar with or without them and he might have to be careful about a visit in their homes. This restriction usually loses their friendship. Similar restrictions apply to other addictions like, negative attitude, gossip, uncontrolled temper and other "acceptable sins". Even here you still treat them like you would like to be treated. Jesus made some strange "sheep", but He can supply us with what we need to deal with them. Just do it from as safe a distance as possible.

This next sentence is vitally important to understand: I do not see any way to justify breaking off all communication with anyone over any issue. Jesus answered most of the questions the Pharisees asked Him even though it was obvious they were trying to give Him a hard time and they had no interest in learning from Him. He did not act like He was superior to them but His answers and miracles proved that He was far ahead of anyone living at the time or in the past. He was even willing to wash the feet of the disciples, which was the job of the lowest slave. If the creator of everything would serve as the lowest slave, how can we think we are in a position to decide who we will and will not speak to?

Psa 1 does tell us to discriminate on where we get our advice and who we follow. **Pro 1:10-16** **My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet tun to evil, and make haste to shed blood.** are instructions on who to avoid following. Close relationships and councilors should be chosen carefully. It is scriptural to keep undesirables out of these areas`. In fact, there is a lot of advice on these areas in the scriptures. The church needs to protect the members from people who are causing trouble by their sinful lifestyle within the church. None of us have a right to be proud of our righteousness. Without help from the Holy Spirit we would follow our wicked hearts, which no one knows how bad that can become. All of us know people that we need to separate from so that their bad influence doesn't lead us astray ourselves.

The long and short of it is that there are a lot of Christians who are choosing to separate over issues that are personal opinion rather than Bible doctrine. Mostly due to conflicts rather than doctrines. This ought not to be. We should be finding ways to repair relationship, build friendships, lift up the fallen, rescue the perishing, etc. Jesus as the Good Shepherd is willing to leave the ninety and nine to go rescue the one who has gotten himself lost in the world; we should be quick to respond in like manner rather than jumping on the judge train. We cannot influence those who we do not communicate with. You cannot easily win the lost or restore the fallen if you do not speak to them. Do not allow Christians who have chosen to reject you against God's will to discourage you...instead find someone who needs encouragement and be the blessing. Do not allow someone's

judgment of your Biblical naturist position to dissuade you from living life as God intended. Also, do not sit in judgment of those who have not accepted the Bible on nakedness, be patient with them and be a blessing to them...who knows you may be the one God chooses to use to bring them closer to Him.

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.