

SHARING THE GOSPEL & WRONG ASSOCIATIONS

(Biblical Guidelines of Separation for Church Ministries)

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

The great ecumenical cry of today is, “Let us stay involved with apostasy, error and questionable activities, as we seek to share the Gospel. Let us “**associate**” with the questionable and try to share the Gospel at the same time. Let us stay within the organization and try to change it. Let us be positive and take a stand quietly, without being offensive.” These sweet sounding clichés’ have been swallowed by New Evangelicalism today. The Bible, however, uses words of a different kind. They are words such as “be ye separate,” “touch not the unclean thing,” “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” and “prove all things.” I was talking to a dear brother in the Lord who attended a graduation ceremony. The guest speaker was the aged, New-Evangelical leader, Carl F. Henry. Within his address to the students, Carl F. Henry admitted that Evangelicalism had drifted too far away. In his own words, “**We have gone too far!**” How sad, that one of the leading advocates of this unseparated movement recognizes the unhealthy drift away from the truth of separation and standards. We must always remember, whenever we compromise we have gone too far! Furthermore, we can never tell where the compromise will end!

Principles to Ponder (Separation Principles from the Scriptures)

1. *In sharing the Gospel, we must separate from all unbelief and religious apostasy. Failure to do so, actually “associates” us with their false teachings and evil deeds. (see II John 7-11 - “Partakers” (partner or sharer), note our responsibility to - “withdraw thyself” (I Timothy 6:5), see also II Corinthians 6:17 - “come out from among them.”*

Principle Explained:

We do associate with evil doctrine and evil deeds or practices, when we identify with religious apostasy and error. This holds true of the worldly ways which religious apostasy promotes or sanctifies. Our presence tells the story of our approval of what goes on. We are actually “partners” in wrong doctrine, wrong doing and worldliness, when we identify with movements, men and religious services, which do not support all the truth of scripture. It’s a terrible thing to associate (be a partner) with the “doctrines of demons” or teachings which demons are behind and promote in the world (I Timothy 4:1). The spreading of demonic doctrines are actually the “evil deeds” of all apostasy

today. Spreading false teaching in the world and church is the occupation of apostasy. These evil deeds are numerous. They include the false teaching about the doctrine of Christ (II John 9-10), about the Gospel (Galatians 1:7-9) and even extend to the teachings of apostasy which promote unscriptural, worldly philosophies (I Timothy 4:3). A Christian should not associate (be a partner) with any type of these wicked deeds, which promote false teaching about Christ, the Gospel and worldly living. We should never sanction, support or encourage these wicked deeds which are the occupation or business of apostasy. Remember, apostasy is the departure from spiritual truth by individuals, churches or organizations. By taking part in any service or crusade, which brings a hodgepodge of denominations together with their false teachings, will make us an actual “partaker” (partner or sharer) in those evil deeds, which they themselves, as an apostate denomination teach. In uniting together with them, we are going along with their doctrines of demons and unscriptural teachings. We are “sharers” with them, even when the religious service does not focus on their evil doctrinal departures. By “**association**” with these people in any formal gathering, where it would seem that we are one with their evil occupation and wrong beliefs, is a serious compromise for the Christian believer. For this reason, scripture teaches that the believer and unbeliever should not be “yoked together” in any spiritual endeavor (II Corinthians 6:14). Likewise, we must separate from all apostasy which diverts from the truth, even when it involves the worldly apostasy of brothers (see Number 9). Even believers may not maintain a tender conscience toward spiritual truth. They can speak evil of certain truth and become sidetracked into the apostasy of error and the promotion of worldly living (Heb. 3:6, 14; 6:6; 10:23-25, 29; I Tim. 1:19-20). Therefore, there is a need to separate from all types of apostasy. Failure to do so will associate us with the end-time apostasy of covetous and unholy living (II Tim. 3:1-4).

2. *In sharing the Gospel, we must separate from religious-oriented services, which promote heathenistic practices of demonic involvement or influence. Failure to do so, actually “associates” us with their demonic practices and patterns (evil ways). (See I Corinthians 10:18-21 - note - “fellowship with demons.”)*

Principles Explained:

We do associate with the worldly practices and deeds, which are demonically - oriented in nature, when we fail to separate from places that promote these worldly things. We cannot deny this scriptural truth. It also makes good common sense. If we are seen in a religious service which promotes wrong practices of doctrine or worldliness, we will be seen as a promoter of these demonic things as well, whether it be false teaching or worldly methods and practices. These people were attending clubs within the pagan temple setting. These clubs were really religious temple services promoting idolatrous practices and those evil things attached to them. The food was good, but the atmosphere was totally pagan and worldly. In attending these paganistic services, they were actually “**fellowshipping with demons**” in an indirect way. They were associating with the

demonic (behind the idols) and the worldly practices of these heathen people which demonism promoted (such as the prostitution in the pagan temple setting). Although the believers had no direct desire to participate in the temple paganism, their very presence “associated” them with all the demonic idolatry and worldly lifestyles of the people. As a result, they also had fellowship with the demonic paganism and worldliness of those people. We can do the same thing today when we associate with the evil, worldly ways of demonism. We can do this by failing to separate from the paganistic practices of worldly worship such as satanic music, demonic experiences, New-Age teachings and services of liberal, gospel rejecting preachers and people, in a plea for Christian unity or the presentation of the Gospel. These are all ways to actually fellowship with the error and worldliness which demonism is behind and promotes.

3. *In sharing the Gospel, we must be careful to never take on the appearance of evil by our religious associations (ties) with error and wrong practices (see I Thessalonians 5:21).*

Principle Explained:

Our appearance at any church - oriented gathering sends a message to all of Christianity. Our appearance at a worldly service of music, disorder and doctrinal compromise for false unity, gives the appearance to everyone else that we accept the patterns, practices and policies of this group or gathering. Where we go, who we identify with and what we are associated with, will give an over-all appearance that we are in agreement with what they say, do and stand for.

4. *In sharing the Gospel, we must never “associate” with the “unclean things” of a perverted society in which we live. We must separate from all these unclean things. (see II Corinthians 6:17 - “touch not the unclean thing”).*

Principle Explained:

In this day, it was the “unclean thing” of pagan idolatry and ritualism. In our day, there are multitudes of pagan and worldly things which are unclean in the perverted culture in which we live. Separation from these unholy things of a wicked culture is a necessity, as we go to spread the Gospel. The message is clear. We must stay away from those who teach or practice false things, whether those things be false teachings or the pagan practices of a blinded culture. We should have no contact or association with the worldly philosophies, practices and patterns of the pagan culture of our day.

5. *In sharing the Gospel, we must always avoid fellowships between righteous and unrighteous ways or standards (see II Corinthians 6:14).*

Principle Explained:

In this passage, Paul says, “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness?” There should never be a mingling together and cooperation of these two opposites. Light and darkness do not mix and righteous things do not mix with unrighteous things. Therefore, it’s a serious matter and great blunder to try and fuse the two together. There can never be a peaceful coexistence between the two. This is why we cannot cooperate with services or associations promoting worldly music and worldly methods of darkness, in order to supposedly reach the lost. This is why we cannot cooperate and co-mingle with any known error or false, worldly way. The reason is simple. The two do not mix together. Light and darkness are at opposite ends of the spectrum. God is not pleased when we try to associate with any form of darkness (moral or doctrinal).

6. *In sharing the Gospel, we must not approve of disorderly conduct within the church-oriented service. To do so, without correcting the disorder, will “associate” ourselves with its very disorder (see I Corinthians 11:17, 19, 15:33, 40).*

Principle Explained:

To come into a service with the intent to only share the Gospel, but refuse to correct the wrong that exists, is contrary to Biblical revelation. Wrong must always be addressed and brought out into the light of truth. Christians never sit down at the table of compromise. In sharing the Gospel, we need to provide an orderly setting that promotes godliness and the fruit of the Spirit, such as self-control. Failure to do so, will only send the message that we “approve” of everything that is taking place within the service.

7. *In sharing the Gospel, we must never fellowship (“associate”) ourselves with the unfruitful works of darkness (see Ephesians 5:11).*

Principle Explained:

Never should we share the Gospel and associate with that which is wrong and questionable in practice. We must correct wrong and not accept it. If it cannot be corrected, we must separate from it. The “works of darkness” are those things which are contrary to the truth of scripture and the righteous, holy, separated life-style, which the Bible says we are to maintain. Failure to separate from those works of darkness will actually bring us into a “fellowship” or association with them. We must really stop and think of the sad consequences of not taking the position of separation from the worldly darkness of our culture and the world system.

8. *In sharing the Gospel, we should be “discerning” concerning what evil really is and hate the evil of this world (see Hebrews 5:14 with Micah 3:2, Isaiah 5:20, Psalm 97:10, 119:104, 119:128, Proverbs 8:13).*

Principle Explained:

To be a discerning Christian means that we will make a clear distinction between right and wrong, good and evil and the true and false. Discernment or discrimination simply means that we will draw a line between the right and the wrong influences of our lives. It’s a process of making careful distinctions between truth and error. As we go out to share the Gospel, we must be discerning about what we promote by our presence or involvement in church services. God calls us to discernment and not acceptance of worldly standards, culture and false teachings. We are to be discerning because of our holy hatred of all evil ways and worldly living.

9. *In sharing the Gospel, we must separate from “disorderly brethren” who promote worldliness in their lives, teachings and ministries (see II Thessalonians 3:6, 13-15, I Corinthians 5:11-13)*

Principle Explained:

There are times we must refuse to present the Gospel. If we must associate with the worldly ministry of a brother who is promoting rock music, charismatic services or other worldly methods of evangelism, then we must separate from such conduct. Never should we approve of his worldly ways by associating with the brother. If we are going to obey the established guidelines of the Bible, we should withdraw our fellowship or participation with a worldly brother, who does not uphold the standards of separation. We should not unite in a spiritual endeavor with a believer, who is unseparated in their conduct, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed” (Amos 3:3)?

10. *In sharing the Gospel, we must prove all things and not accept or “associate” with the wrong things (see I Thessalonians 5:21).*

Principle Explained:

“Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.” This Bible verse needs no explanation. If words mean something and language expresses something, then believe what the Bible clearly says. Prove (“test”) everything that you are part of or associate with it. Don’t sweep it under the carpet and fail to test its biblical foundation. We have the God-given orders to be on the offense and not the defense. We should be discerning and test everything we are part of. Our mandate is to always test the accepted practices and teachings in all of our Gospel meetings, which we are involved with outside of the church.

11. *In sharing the Gospel, we must mark those who do not adhere to the clean, separated, Biblical teachings, which we have learned to be true from the scripture (see Romans 16:17 with II Thessalonians 2:15).*

Principle Explained:

When someone does try to teach, promote or press something contrary to the truthful teaching of God’s Word (on the matter of separation), it’s our duty to “mark them out” as trying to divide the church by their false teaching. Although Paul was pointing to false teachers, there is a principle to apply to our Gospel ministries, as we go with the Gospel and cooperate with other believers. Remember, separated believers are not being divisive. The unseparated believers promoting distorted views of separation and neglecting the whole issue of separation are the people really dividing the church. We must “avoid them” as the Bible says and not mingle or associate with their accepted standards or teachings. Instead of accepting their worldly positions, we must speak out against their unscriptural approaches to evangelism (II Thessalonians 3:6) and “note the man” (II Thessalonians 3:14), so that he would be ashamed of his worldly approach to life and evangelism.

12. *In sharing the Gospel, we must always remember that there is a boundary line of separation which cannot be crossed (see II Corinthians 6:17 - “separate”).*

Principle Explained:

The Greek word “separate” in the Bible, speaks of a marked boundary line. It means we are to draw a line and not go beyond that line. We must set the limits and draw the lines. And they are not gray lines as everyone speaks about today! There are clear boundaries to be marked off. Let us learn where the limits are and by God’s grace endeavor to establish the lines, as we go out to minister to a lost and dying world. People need the Lord.

13. *In sharing the Gospel, we must always remember the need to judge righteously as the servant of the Lord (John 7:24, Luke 7:43, 12:57, I Corinthians 2:15).*

Principle Explained:

The Scriptures inform us that we should judge all things that we face in life (I Corinthians 2:15). In our endeavors to share the Gospel, we must not neglect to practice this much needed command. In judging error and worldliness, we will keep ourselves pure and our Gospel ministries free from worldly vice and worldly methods of evangelism and worship. This judgment is not like the ungracious, hypocritical judgment of the

individual, who establishes their own set of rules to judge people by, instead of the clear commands of scripture (Matthew 7:1-6).

14. *In sharing the Gospel, we must separate from a worldly atmosphere of compromise, so we do not become corrupted by the worldly atmosphere (see I Corinthians 15:33).*

Principle Explained:

We should never deceive ourselves by thinking that worldliness cannot rub off on us. We claim that we are strong and invincible, yet the Bible says we are not. Wrong “communications” (companionships or fellowships) with people and any evil practice, will eventually effect our lives in a detrimental way. The old adage, “Bad company corrupts good morals,” is still true. The bottom line is this. If we cooperate with error and worldliness long enough, we will begin to soften our heart toward it and eventually accept it as a normal part of Christianity. In short, it will rub off on us!

15. *In sharing the Gospel, we must always imitate the character of God’s holiness (Leviticus 20:7, I Peter 1:15-16).*

Principle Explained:

The Biblical foundation of separation rests upon the character of God’s holiness. The whole idea of separation is rooted in God’s holiness. There is a natural relationship between holiness and separation (separated living). Since God calls us to imitate His holiness, we will have to learn to separate from any worldly, pagan, cultural, questionable, compromising practice of our day. Let us never forget that the word holiness means to be “set apart.” This involves a separation from the world in every aspect and a separation unto the Lord. **Separation is really holiness in action.** This is a timeless principle which many of us have forgotten. In sharing the Gospel, we do not want to “associate” or “take part” in anything that might hinder or dishonor our determined obedience to imitate God’s holiness. Be ye holy, for I am Holy.” (I Peter 1:15)

**The Principles Applied
(Separation in Shoeleather)**

All of these principles need to be applied to specific religious services and situations. The servant who is seeking to be holy will be very discerning concerning the programs and places, which they identify with. Matters of doctrinal separation (from apostasy and false teachings), worldly separation (from music, men and movements which are specifically worldly in nature), correction or separation from disorderly conduct (charismatic chaos of tongues, spirit slaying, dancing, worldly, contemporary forms of worship) and separation from the matter of direct

associations (with evil deeds, ways and places) must always be taken into account. The scriptures teach **personal or private separation** (II Corinthians 7:1, II John 2:15-17, I Peter 2:11), and **Ecclesiastical (church) separation** from apostate, unscriptural denominations and cults with the disguise of religion (II Corinthians 6:17, I Corinthians 10:18-21, II John 7-11, Titus 1:10-16, Romans 16:17) and a **family separation from worldly brothers and sisters** who live worldly lives and promote worldly methods of evangelism and worship (II Thessalonians 3:6, 13-15, I Corinthians 5:11-13). Failure to apply Biblical separation (these principles of separation) to our own personal lives and our evangelistic outreach with the Gospel, will label us as a compromiser, associate us with evil and result in a life that God is not fully pleased with. May our desire be that of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ who said, “I always do those things which please him” (John 8:29). And remember, **the burden does not rest upon our shoulders to share the Gospel, when we must compromise to do so. We must let the results rest with God. Our burden should be to share the Gospel without compromise.** Whenever we willingly and willfully associate ourselves with religious apostasy and cultural worldliness (unrighteousness and unclean things) we become a compromiser. **There is a tightrope of separation, which we need to walk today.**

We have gone too far when we lock ourselves into a religious, compromising position with ecumenical, denominational gatherings of apostasy, false teachers and false teaching. When we lock ourselves into a worldly setting, such as a Christian service involving rock music and disorderly behavior, we have gone too far. When we attend noted bars or movie theaters of lust, we have overstepped the boundaries of separation. These are places which are not the common meeting places of general public life. They are not the kind of places people attend in order to function within society. The Bible does make distinctions between compromising places or positions and the common (normal) established places of society for everyday commerce. We can effectively witness to a lost world in the common meeting places of a society, without being a compromiser (I Corinthians 5:9-10). We are to be a witness to unbelievers in their personal settings in life (I Corinthians 10:27). Jesus was a friend **of** sinners in such a way as this (Luke 15:2). However, let us remind ourselves that a friend **of** sinners is one thing, but a compromiser **with** sinners is quite another thing! Let us remember that we should not participate with worldliness or apostasy within the church setting (I Corinthians 5:2, 11) or a religious oriented meeting (I Corinthians 10:18-21), where worldly and doctrinal compromise is seen (II Corinthians 6:14-18). Furthermore, when we compromise culturally by touching the “unclean thing” or associating with it, we have displeased the Lord with sin in our life. We have become a friend of the world (James 4:4). The Scriptural mandate for today is to separate from all pagan, modernistic, worldly gatherings and never are we to work or associate with the “unclean things” of those people and stated gatherings.

In a final note, we are to live and dwell **“in”** this world, but never are we to be **“of”** the world (I John 2:15-17, Romans 12:2, James 4:4). **We become “of” the world when we fail to counteract the wicked culture and compromise separation standards and principles.** We do this by associating with religious services or organizations which involve apostate gatherings of religions, worldly methods of evangelism (such as Christian rock music & rap music) and

disorderly conduct within their meetings (so-called tongue speaking, divine healings, laughing in the Holy Spirit, etc.). The Bible simply says that we send a strong message by our presence in any religious organization or service that we attend. It's a message of acceptance and involvement. If this is true (and it is), then we must follow the principles of separation and simply apply them to the ministries and opportunities we have to share the Gospel.

Jesus has commanded and commissioned us to “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). **Likewise, the Bible which Jesus gave us, also instructs us how to go!** A burden for souls and the burden for a walk of purity and steadfastness to the Lord, must go hand in hand.

*“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die...hold fast”
(Revelation 3:2, 3)*

*“Take heed unto thyself”
(I Timothy 4:16)*

(Hymn entitled: “Do Right”)

From the very start, have purpose in your heart, to do what's right and never question why. Never count the cost, though everything seems lost. The price for doing right is sometimes high.

Right is always right and wrong is always wrong and you must learn to separate the two.

If you love the right the Lord will give you light,
So seek the right in everything you do.
Do right till the stars fall, Do right till the last call,
Do right when there's no one else to stand by you.
Do right when you're all along, Do right though it's never known.
Do right since you love the Lord, Do right, Do right!

Thoughts to Ponder From the Principles

(Statements of Separation to Help us Along the Way)

- There is never a right way to do a wrong thing.
- It's never right to do a good thing in a wrong way.
- It's never right to do wrong in order to do right. (*Bob Jones*)
- There is a right way and wrong way to do God's work.

- We must always do God's work in God's way.
- It's far better to say, "No!"
- God never uses evil things which Satan does.
- The Gospel message is what wins souls, not the music or the manipulation techniques of man (Romans 10:17).
- Let us win souls in the right way.
- Our spirituality is not determined by the number of people saved, but by our faithfulness in doing what's right (I Corinthians 2:15).
- Satan is always pushing his program.
- Remember, the pressure to compromise standards of separation is always upon us.
- Compromise ties your tongue, so that you cannot rebuke evil. (*John Ashbrook*)
- What is popular is not always right; what is right is not always popular.
- Separation is holiness in action.
- A desire for recognition, fear of controversy, peer pressure and weak convictions are all reasons why we compromise.
- It is the aim of our enemy to attach every church to the ecumenical monstrosity.
- You cannot preserve a position without crusading for it. Trying to take a stand, while remaining all positive, is the halfway house between Fundamentalism and New Evangelicalism. (*John Ashbrook*)
- There are times in one's life when silence is not a virtue and failure to speak out against an evil becomes a sin. (*M. R. Deehan*)
- Accommodation or tolerance is the popular trend of the day.
- Beware of the drift of the times.
- God wants Christians to engage in careful living and not careless living.

- It's easy to be neutral.
- There is a tightrope of separation which we need to walk today. (*John Miles*)
- Compromise always takes a man further than he intends to go.
-
- God hates a mixture. (*Marvin Mayfield*)
- Participation softens the heart toward apostasy and worldliness.
- It's not "O.K." or "all right."
- It's easy to be swept into the current of worldly compromise.
- You must set the limits, draw the lines of separation and never go beyond those lines.
- God does not compromise on any issue. (*David Moss*)
- The most dangerous deviation is the one closest to your own position.

The Bible Position Must be Held!

“...turn not from it to the right hand or to the left...”
(Joshua 1:7)