



# IRRECONCILABLE!

Lesson 3  
The Separatists

**“When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples:  
“Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” (Mark 2:16).**

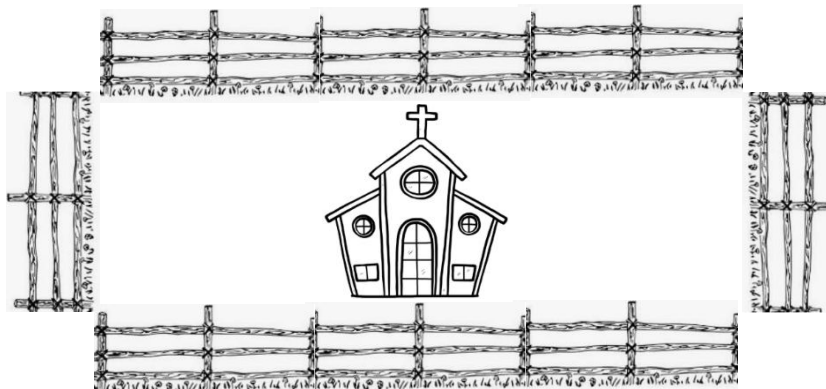
## Setting the Stage

### Friend or Fence?

Goal: Explore how separation can either protect or harm faith and relationships.

#### ✓ Your Task:

1. **Split into small groups of 3–5**
2. **Discuss this prompt:**  
“You’re in the early stages of forming a new congregation with exciting new ministries. Who do you immediately engage as spiritual leaders or ministry partners—and who might you first disciple, teach, or correct before entrusting with leadership? Why?”
3. Each group writes on the picture below:
  - Types of people inside the “fence”.
  - Types of people outside the “fence”.
  - Be ready to explain “why?”
  - In your reasoning, think about both spiritual protection (Psalm 1; Romans 16:17) and Jesus’ pattern of loving outreach (Mark 2:16–17).
4. **A few groups will be invited to share their conclusions**
5. **Debrief:**
  - What motivated your choices?
  - What does Psalm 1 say vs. Jesus’ meal with sinners?
  - Is it possible to ‘fence out’ false teaching without fencing out the sinner who needs the gospel? How?



## When Separation Separates You from God

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### 1. “Separated by Pride” – The Pharisee and the Sinner (Luke 18:9–14)

**Read Together:** Luke 18:9–14

**Key Observation:** The Pharisee *separated himself from sinners* and thought that proved his righteousness.

**Small Group Prompt (2–3 people):**

Imagine you’re overhearing this prayer in church today.

- What’s the Pharisee really saying about himself and others?

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- What does the tax collector say about *himself alone*?

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- Which one is “separate” from God at the end—and why?

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**Group Takeaways:**

- The Pharisee’s \_\_\_\_\_ *separation* led to \_\_\_\_\_ *separation* from God.
- The tax collector, who \_\_\_\_\_, was justified.

**Discuss:**

- What makes self-righteous separation so tempting?

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- How can we detect it in ourselves?

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## 2. “Separated from Abraham” – A False Spiritual Line (John 8:31–39, 44)

**Read Together:** John 8:31–39 (also mention v. 44)

### **Brief Context:**

The Pharisees were confident they were God’s people—because of their heritage and tradition. But their separation from Jesus showed they were not Abraham’s true children.

### **Group Discussion Prompt:**

Sketch a spiritual family tree:

- Who did the Pharisees claim as their spiritual father?

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- Who does Jesus say is actually their father—and why?

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- What made Abraham “righteous” in God’s sight?

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### **Big Idea:**

**True spiritual lineage is not based on \_\_\_\_\_ from bad people, but on \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ.** The Pharisees’ pride separated them from their spiritual heritage.

### 3. “Separated for the Right Reasons” – The Narrow Middle Path (Psalm 1; Matthew 7:15; Romans 16:17)

#### Read Together:

- Psalm 1:1–2 – Avoiding the counsel of the wicked
- Matthew 7:15 – Watch out for false prophets
- Romans 16:17 – Avoid divisive false teachers

#### Whole-Class Chart:

##### Godly Separation (Protecting Faith)

Avoids...

Clings to...

Aims to...

Begins with...

##### Pharisaic Separation (Projecting Pride)

Avoids...

Clings to...

Creates...

Begins with...

#### Discussion Questions:

- Why does God call for separation from false teaching?

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- How do we avoid making that separation about *us* instead of *Christ*?

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#### Wrap-Up Reflection

##### Ask:

- In what ways does our desire to stay “separate” risk separating us from Jesus and his mission?

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#### Closing Truth:

- Separation *from sin and falsehood* is necessary. But **separation based on pride, fear, or self-righteousness cuts us off from grace**. Jesus invites us to separate from sin *by clinging to him*, not by boasting in ourselves.