

Separate for a Reason: Re-Examining Separation of Church and State in America

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Interview Questions

1. What is the meaning of the title of the book, “Separate for a Reason”?
 - a. The subtitle of the book is “Re-Examining Separation of Church and State in America.” The argument I make in the book is that there are good reasons for church and state to be separate. Not only should the government not *interfere* in the work of the church, but Christians shouldn’t look to the government to *promote* the work of the church which includes telling people about God.
2. When did you first write this book and why did you release a new edition in 2020?
 - a. I wrote a book in 2005 called “One Nation Under God.” It was based on a case from the Ninth Circuit which ruled that the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance violated the Establishment Clause and the idea of Separation of Church and State. The Supreme Court overturned that decision in 2004, but it was a great springboard for me to dive into the issues. In 2020, I released this book with a new title, but containing much of the original book along with fifteen years of legal updates.
3. Can you explain the issue about separation of church and state and how it started?
 - a. Many of the early settlers in the United States came here looking for religious freedom. When we became a new nation, it was important to the people that the federal government should not support one religion or set of beliefs over another. Although some states had official state churches, they were all done away with within 50 years of the founding.

Many of the founding fathers were influenced by their Christian beliefs in the way they led the nation. But they were careful not to define what beliefs about God were right or wrong, or even which religion was best. The First Amendment Religion Clauses were intended to allow each person to choose for themselves how—or even whether—to worship God.
4. You say in the book that Christians often have the wrong motives in wanting America to be a “Christian nation.” What are those motives?
 - a. We seem more interested in having a moral society than a truly Christian one. Some bad motivations for that are our own comfort (wanting everyone to believe and act the same way we do), fear of losing our religious freedom, and fear of what we could lose if God punishes our nation. Those are all centered on our desires, not God’s plans.
5. What should Christians want for America?
 - a. There are different beliefs about what God wants for America and the whole world. The traditional evangelical view is that the problem in our world is sin and how it separates us from God. Jesus paid the penalty for our sin through his death and resurrection, but the only way to receive forgiveness and restoration is through faith in Jesus. Obeying moral laws, participating in religious ceremonies, even belonging to a certain church do nothing to fix our relationship with God. So why are we trying to impose those things on people who don’t believe in Jesus? Shouldn’t we be sharing the gospel instead?