

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, June 26, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THAT YOU MAY KNOW – A STUDY OF 1,2 & 3 JOHN *Choose Your Love: The World or The Father?* 1 John 2:15-17

“¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” -1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV)

BACKGROUND AND SETTING FOR 1ST, 2ND, & 3RD JOHN:

(1) **AUTHOR = The Apostle John** – If you will notice, the letter of 1 John bears no inscription (name, autograph, signature). It doesn't give us a name of an individual in the actual letter itself. For that reason 1 John is often called an “anonymous letter,” but 2 and 3 John do carry an inscription. They are written by someone called “the Elder,” a reference to one of Jesus' closest disciples/apostles who was a part of Jesus inner circle, John. The moniker “Elder” does indicate that John is advanced in years when these letter were written. The language and style of all three letters are identical to each other as well as to John's Gospel, so the traditional view and the most commonly held view is that all three were written by the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20-24). There is no reason to doubt this and early church leaders titled these three little book by John's name.

John actually wrote 5 books in the New Testament... not just these three.

5 Books Written by the Beloved Disciple:

1. **The Gospel of John**
2. **First John**
3. **Second John**

4. Third John

5. The Book of the Revelation

And this I think is significant... all of his books were written later in life and after all the other books in the Bible were recorded.

Here are some facts we know about John:

- He was the son of Zebedee and Salome (Mt. 4:21; 27:55-56; Mk. 15:40-41)
- He and his brother James were fishermen with their father (Mk. 1:19-20)
- He and James were called Boanerges or Sons of thunder by Christ because of their fiery behavior at times (Mk. 3:17; cp. Lk. 9:53-54)
- He was one of the 3 most intimate disciples of the Lord (Mt. 17:1ff; 26:37)
- He was a close associate of Simon Peter... the first ones to arrive at the tomb (Jn. 20:2-8), they suffered imprisonment together after healing a lame man (Acts 3 & 4), and they traveled together to Samaria after the gospel was preached (Acts 8:14-17) not to mention that they were the disciples closest to Jesus
- He was one of the pillars (prime leaders) of the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9)
- From external and extra-biblical sources (history/tradition), like Polycarp, Papias (*pappy-us*), and Justin Martyr (early church fathers) we are told the following about John from his writings – These early church fathers often quoted John and used his writings
- Polycarp and Papias were identified as pupils of John - They have writings dated as early as the 2nd century
- John was eventually banished to the isle of Patmos by the Roman emperor Domitian, from where he received the visions and wrote The Revelation (cp. Rev. 1:9)
- He returned to Ephesus to live out the rest of his life, from where he wrote these three epistles as well as the gospel that bears his name - Archeological remains bear his name in ruins of churches and shrines
- John outlived all the other apostles
- The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was written by John probably close to the same time he wrote these small epistles which bear his name.
- Remember the book of the Revelation was written about the vision that John saw while banished to the Greek island of Patmos on the Aegean sea.
- Tradition says that this was after John had been sentenced to death by martyrdom.
- We know little about John's later life and death from the Bible
- The most insightful bit of information comes from John 21 when the risen Christ was talking to Peter about Peter's death - After Jesus told Peter that he would not live long Peter asked about John's death. Jesus replied that if John lived until Christ's return, that was not Peter's concern. This was not a promise that John would live until the Lord returned, but it does seem to indicate that the Lord knew John would live a long time (John 21:19-23)

- **Tradition holds that John was sentenced to death in a boiling vat of oil, yet he emerged unharmed from the experience**
- **Again tradition tells us that John lived into old age perhaps dying sometime after AD 98... He is thought to have died in Ephesus – But in fact the mystery and unknowns concerning John’s death and what happened to him are not known and are varied...**

God Questions? How Did the Apostle John Die?

We know that the apostle John was exiled for his faith late in life (Revelation 1:9). The Bible does not give us details on how the apostle John died, but tradition gives us a few theories.

The most plausible theory of John’s death states that John was arrested in Ephesus and faced martyrdom when his enemies threw him in a huge basin of boiling oil. However, according to the tradition, John was miraculously delivered from death. The authorities then sentenced John to slave labor in the mines of Patmos. On this island in the southern part of the Aegean Sea, John had a vision of Jesus Christ and wrote the prophetic book of Revelation. The apostle John was later freed, possibly due to old age, and he returned to Ephesus, in what is now Turkey. He died as an old man sometime after AD 98, the only apostle to die peacefully.

Another theory concerning John’s death is associated with a second-century bishop named Papias of Hierapolis. According to one commentary on Papias’s writings, John was killed by a group of Jewish men. However, many historians believe Papias was misquoted or misread and doubt the credibility of this theory.

There is also a legend that says John did not die but rather ascended straight to heaven like Enoch and Elijah. There is no biblical evidence to lend validity to this story.

Ultimately, it is not essential to know how the apostle John died. What is important is the fact that he was not ashamed of Christ (see Luke 9:26) and was willing to die for his faith. A man will not die for something he knows to be a lie. John knew the truth that Jesus had been resurrected, and he was willing to die rather than to renounce his faith in his Savior.

(2) DATE = A.D. 90-95 - As with most books in the Bible, we cannot know for certain when and from where these epistles were penned. As to a date, it is commonly believed to have been written close to the end of the 1st century, with a fairly wide possible time frame... somewhere between 90-95 A.D. Again, we don’t know the exact time or order of the books having been written, but here are some possible dates for John’s writings...

Dates for John’s Biblical Writings:

- 1. The Gospel of John = AD 80 to 98**
- 2. First, Second and Third John = AD 90 to 95**
- 3. The Book of the Revelation = AD 94 to 98**

Of course we know God inspired the Bible and that it was written with His leading, but this may explain why the book of John seems so applicable to the readers of today. **Think of this... John had more time to think about what questions were raised in the 50 or more years after the resurrection of Christ. He knew what doubts had been raised and how to answer the questions before we knew to ask them.**

(3) PLACE OF WRITING = Ephesus – Again, as with most books in the Bible, we cannot know with certainty when and from where these small letters of John were written. Some guesses are better than others, but are still just that guesses. It is believed by most Biblical scholars that John wrote these letters from Ephesus, the place believed to be where he died. It is usually accepted that John wrote them late in his life. Supporters of this point to 2 John 1 and 3 John 1. In both verses, the author calls himself “the elder.” In the original text, there is a definite article before “elder.” Thus, the reference is probably to an older man rather than to one who serves as an overseer in a local church. Also, 1 John 2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 5:21; and 3 John 4 all reference John’s readers as his “little children.” Such a fatherly concern points to John as an older man.

(4) RECIPIENTS = 3 different audiences - The Epistles of John were written to various audiences. They were all written after John was an old man living in Ephesus.

3 Recipients of John’s Letter:

1. **Letter 1 = The Ephesian church (and/or surrounding churches)** - The first epistle was not addressed to anyone in particular, but was written more as a sermon
2. **Letter 2 = Elect lady** - The second was written to an unnamed “elect lady.”
3. **Letter 3 = Gaius** - The third to a man name Gaius. There are three men who bear that name to whom the letter could have been written. There was a Gaius in Macedonia (Acts 19: 29), Corinth (Rom. 16:23), and Derbe (Acts 20:4).

(5) PURPOSE = Multiple purposes - In terms of a positive stated purpose, John actually gives us reasons why he wrote these epistles:

3 Stated Positive Purposes for These Letters:

1. **That your (our) joy may be made complete = 1 John 1:4**
2. **That you may not sin = 1 John 2:1**
3. **That you may know that you have eternal life = 1 John 5:13**

Like the gospel of John, the 3 letters of John were written to supply evidence essential for the building of credible faith.

It also seems evident that John had a purpose to write that was negative in nature.

Three Stated Negative Purposes for These Letters:

1. **He addresses false doctrines that threatened the faith of the early saints = 1 John 2:26).**

2. **There were some who even went out from among the believers = 1 John 2:19 (see also Acts 20:30)**

3. **Of particular concern during these days was the threat of Gnosticism-**

- The word “Gnosticism” comes from gnosis, which meant “knowledge.”
- It was “the philosophical result of the blending of the cosmology (*Cosmology deals with the world as the totality of space, time and all phenomena. Historically, it has had quite a broad scope, and in many cases was found in religion*) of Greek thought with the theology of oriental religions, esp. Judaism” (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 3, p. 648).
- Gnostics believed they had superior knowledge, and such knowledge was limited only to their select group.
- According to them, salvation came from knowing theories rather than faith in a Savior.
- Such a claim obviously puts them at odds with the Lord’s apostles who were promised to be ‘guided into all truth’ (Jn. 16:13).
- It also contradicts the promise made to those who, upon reading inspired documents, would have apostolic insight into previously hidden mysteries (Eph. 3:3-5).
- To meet such a threat, the error of gnosticism had to be exposed. Gnostics believed that all matter was evil, and the spirit of man was good.
- They believed the human body and the spirit within had no effective contact with each other.
- A redeemed soul inside a sinful body was not affected by immoral behavior.
- Thus, a person could engage in all sorts of wickedness and it would not endanger the soul.
- This “theory” puts them in conflict with the Incarnation, or God dwelling in bodily form (cp. Phil. 2:7; Col. 2:9; Jn. 1:14).
- In terms of everyday application of such a doctrine, usually one of two extremes were practiced: (1) man should abstain from everything that would satisfy the sinful flesh (2) since the soul could not be affected by sinful behavior, man was at liberty to do anything that would satisfy the flesh
- Generally, gnosticism fell into 2 categories:

2 Categories of Gnosticism:

(1) **Docetic Gnosticism** – Docetic gnostics (from dokein, ‘to seem’) did not believe that Christ came in bodily form. He only seemed to have been physical; it was “imagined.” If He did come, He was not perfect while in the flesh (cp. 1 Jn. 4:1-3).

(2) **Cerinthian Gnosticism** - Cerinthian gnostics (named after Cerinthus, an Ephesian gnostic) attempted to make a distinction between the man Jesus and the Christ. They taught that Christ descended upon Jesus at His baptism, and ascended shortly before His crucifixion. Thus it was not Christ who suffered,

died, and rose again but Jesus (cp. 1 Jn. 5:6). In order to combat these heresies, John provides proof of the reality of the Lord's fleshly body. He offered testimony using 3 of his 5 human senses (1 Jn. 1:1). Also, to refute the notion that sinful activity can be indulged in without consequences, John pointed out the following: (1) only those who are pure have an eternal hope (1 Jn. 3:3) (2) only those who do righteousness are righteous (1 Jn. 3:7) (3) those who habitually practice sin are of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8)

¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” -1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV)

Few problems have been more troublesome for believers down through the centuries than worldliness. In an effort to be “relevant” and reach our culture, there is the very real danger that we will become just like the culture and lose our distinctiveness. So the apostle Paul would warn us of the danger in Romans 12:1-2, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

J. B. Phillips, in the Phillips Bible paraphrases it, *“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your lives from within.”*

Toward the end of his life, Paul sadly wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:10, *“For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.”* Even though he had once been a fellow-worker with the great apostle Paul (Philemon 24), Demas succumbed to the lure of the world.

So there is this clear and repeated warning throughout Scripture of this troublesome problem that has plagued believers down through the centuries concerning worldliness. But how? And how do you know... what are the indicators, that worldliness has gotten a hold of you, or that it is a problem in your life. After all we live in this world, we may be the last to really, honestly recognized it in ourselves.

Here are 11 signs you may look for in evaluating your own life for the germ of “worldliness” – a deadly cancer to your faith. I’d say... that with these 11 things it is nearly impossible for any truly honest person to not see some level of worldliness in their life... and any level at all is too much...

11 Signs of Worldliness in the Life of a Believer: *These 11 signs of worldliness will be manifested in someone who's professing to be a Christian but has gone back into the world.*

Many signs will show if a Christian is worldly or has backslidden and gone back to the world they once forsook when they got saved. Let's look at the 11 signs of worldliness that one will show if they have backslidden and gone back into the world.

- (1) **Love of the World** - The love of the world and the things of this world are some of the earliest signs of worldliness you will see in a worldly person or a Christian who still has a spirit of worldliness in their life. And this can be seen in many people who claim to be Christians but still have the love of the world in their lives which is seen in their lifestyles, dress code, love of and so on fashion. This is why today it's difficult to differentiate Christians from the people of the world as the so-called Christians of nowadays are no different from the people of the world which is sad indeed. **1 John 2:15-17** warns all true believers in Christ that they must not love the world or the things that are in this world. Otherwise, if they do so, then clearly the love of the Father isn't in them.
- (2) **Materialism** - A worldly person in love with this world will also exhibit materialism which will be seen in the flamboyant materialistic life that they live. Someone who's worldly will always love the material things of this world more than things that concern their spiritual lives and this materialism many people have including many so-called Christians stems from their covetous hearts that want to have everything. Such people are like the rich fool Jesus Christ talks about in **Luke 12:13-21** who was so materialistic that he didn't even care about his precious soul which God demanded that very day he was saying that he will staff his barns and enjoy his life. And many people including so-called Christians have this materialistic worldly mindset that is only concerned with accruing material possessions of this world forgetting that one day their souls will be required of them and all the material things they had won't help them at that time.
- (3) **Love of Sinful Pleasures** - One of the warning signs of worldliness in a worldly person is that they will be ardent pleasure lovers which are rampant in these last days we are living in. Paul in **2 Timothy 3:2-4** warns that in the last days before Jesus Christ returns many people will be pleasure lovers more than the lovers of God. And this love of pleasure can be seen in many people and fake Christians who love partying, drinking and worldly entertainment as opposed to the things of God. This is why most people find going to church boring compared to partying and drinking which indulges and excites their sinful flesh.
- (4) **Conforming to this World** - A worldly person or world Christian who has backslidden or fallen from grace will conform to their evil patterns and systems of this world which will be seen in their daily lifestyles. And this conforming to the worldly affairs of this world will manifest in such people in the way they dress, love of worldly entertainment, how they live their lives, love for worldly fashions and so on. Everything about such people will scream worldliness and will not be interested in conforming to godly standards of the bible which frankly speaking will find old-fashioned and dated. But if you claim to be a true Christian, you will not conform to this wicked world nor its patterns Paul warns all believers not to in **Romans 12:2**. But you will be transformed by the

renewing of your mind by the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus which will make you heavenly minded.

- (5) **Lack of Grace** - The lack of God's grace **Titus 2:11** talks about in the new testament which teaches one to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts will not be present if a person is worldly. And this lack of grace is seen in many people who claim to be Christians who are unable to overcome worldly desires and worldly lusts in their lives. Many people nowadays including Christians in many church circles are interested in worldly pleasures due to the lack of grace in their lives to help them deny world desires and lusts of the flesh. You must remember that you can't live a Christian life that is pleasing until the Lord if you are still involved in worldly affairs as those two things don't go hand in hand.
- (6) **Immoral Lifestyle** - Living an immoral lifestyle will be one of the signs that will indicate worldliness in a person which has become commonplace nowadays even in church circles, sadly where seeming professing Christians who are now playing a harlot. Paul warns of this kind of immoral lifestyle in **1 Corinthians 6:18** that anyone who claims to be a true Christian must flee all forms of sexual immorality which the people of the world indulge in like pigs in sewage. Sadly, most people including professing Christians haven't taken Paul's advice in the above verse which is why they live sexually immoral lifestyles and don't see any problem indulging in sex before marriage which is commonplace today. Sex before marriage and pornography is now freestyle these days as most people don't lack biblical moral standards to guide their lives and live like wild animals now.
- (7) **Misplaced Faith** - A worldly person will have misplaced faith which means that the faith of such people will all be in the wrong places such as the material things or the false spiritual gurus and religions of this world instead of God. When you exhibit worldliness in your life, you will have little faith in God and His word which you will find ridiculous indeed. Instead, your faith will be in your sinful flesh and the things of this world which can't give your what your soul truly desires. Instead of having faith in the God of the bible **Mark 11:22-24** talks about which never fails, you will instead find it appealing to have faith in the false religions of this world which can't grant you eternal life and the truth you seek. But if you are a true Christian who's separated from the world, you will have **the living faith that comes from hearing God's word** that will enable you to move mountains in your life and not the dead faith worldly people have which isn't in Jesus Christ.
- (8) **Covetousness** - People who exhibit worldliness in their lives will be covetous and will want the things that others have instead of being content with what they have. To such people, nothing is ever enough for them due to the raging covetousness in their hearts which makes them want more and this has become a problem in many people including many believers. And this covetousness can easily be seen on social media today where people flaunt their material possessions which have resulted in unhealthy carnal comparisons to others who seeming have more. Everyone these days want to be better than their neighbours and are under the spell of living up to the Jones and have forgotten

that godliness with contentment in all you have is the greatest gain one can ever have in this world (**1 Timothy 6:6-10**).

- (9) **No Love for the Truth** - A worldly person does not have the love for the truth found in God's word which rebukes sin but takes pleasure in unrighteousness and evil (**2 Thessalonians 2:12**). And this lack of love for the truth can be seen in many so-called lukewarm Christians of today who only want to be told what they want to hear or what will make them feel good. Messages based on the sound doctrine of the bible that talks and condemns worldliness are seen as offensive by worldly people who are so much in love with this fallen world of sin. This is why a church where the whole truth and counsel of God's word is preached and taught usually has few people compared to mega prosperity churches which only talks about money and how to have your best life now regardless of your sinful state.
- (10) **Disinterest in Prayer** - Lack of interest in prayer is one of the early signs of worldliness you will notice in the Christian life of a person who is slowly losing their love for God. If you are worldly, prayer won't seem an attractive thing for you to do because of the carnal mind you still have that is only interested in things that please the flesh. The lack of prayer is the reason why many Christians are worldly in the way they live and conduct themselves as well as the reason why many go back to the world after some time like the way Demas did in **2 Timothy 4:10**. Remember, if you don't want worldliness to overcome you as a Christians, you need to have an active prayer life because you are not wrestling against flesh and blood. Overcoming worldliness is a spiritual battle that can only be won through prayer.
- (11) **Compromise** - Last but not least, a worldly person will compromise his or her principles to choose the easier path in life, especially when it comes to suffering persecution and hardship for Christ's sake. By definition, compromise is simply going against the high standards one has set on themselves. So if you decide not to be worldly be it in the way you dress or conduct yourself but later one you decide against that, it means you have compromised your Christian faith. You must remember, spiritual compromise in upholding the sound doctrines of the bible is the precursor to backsliding. Most backsliders have backslid into the world because of a little compromise they let in their lives. And the Lord says in **Hebrews 10:39** that He has no pleasure in those who draw back into perdition that is to compromise and go back into the world which you once forsook.

I hope those 11 signs of worldliness will maybe be a help to you and I to see the advancing signs creeping in our lives. I would argue that with the pervasive influence of modern media, of social media, of today's culture, the tug of the world is greater now than it ever has been. Daily we are bombarded with attractive people telling us that we can't be happy unless we own the product that they are selling or adopt the lifestyle that they are pursuing. We thumb through magazines that lure us with beautiful homes, new cars, luxury items, or expensive vacations that all can be ours, if we just get enough money or go into enough debt. There are plenty of worldly offers that will help us get hopelessly in debt, if we're not careful. It is

lust for the things of the world that prompts Americans to spend billions on casino gambling and lottery tickets. Just one lucky hit and you will have it all!

Christian attempts to counter worldliness often have swung to the opposite direction: withdrawal from the world, along with extra rules to reign in the flesh. This is the method of the monastic movement and of isolationist groups, such as the Amish. An extreme example of the ascetic approach was Simon the Stylite (c. 390-459), who lived in extreme austerity for 36 years on top of a platform on a 60-foot pillar. Thousands of people flocked to see this “unworldly” man and listen to his preaching. I doubt that Simon is a model of what John had in mind when he warned us not to love the world!

I, like many of you, grew up in Baptist circles that had lists of “dos and don’t”... of what constituted “worldly” behavior. It usually included the “filthy five”... drinking, smoking, attending movies, playing cards, and dancing.

Concerning such manmade rules, Paul wrote in Colossians 2:23, *“²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”* **What do you think Paul is saying? Why is this true?**

The rules approach to the problem of worldliness doesn’t work! It doesn’t and never has been able to address the real problem... sin. It always and only stoked the inward flames of desire and drew us to the flame. Worldliness is, at its core, a matter of the heart. If your heart is captured by the world, you will love the things of the world. If your heart is captured by the love of God, you will be drawn to Him and to the things of God. **The only way that our hearts can be transformed so that we love God is by the supernatural new birth.**

John wrote this letter to churches that were being infected and confused by certain heretics. They claimed to have enlightenment, but John says that they were still in the darkness. They tried to draw people into their inner circle of knowledge, but their doctrine and their practice revealed that they did not truly know God. John gives three tests by which his readers could evaluate these teachers and by which they could tell whether their own faith was sound:

John’s Test for Evaluating False Teachers:

- (1) **The moral test = obedience** - In 1 John 2:3-6, John applies the first test: authentic faith obeys God’s commandments
- (2) **The relational test = love for others** - In 1 John 2:7-11, he applies the second test: authentic faith loves God’s people.
- (3) **The doctrinal test = believing the truth about Jesus Christ** - Then he pauses in 1 John 2:12-14 to give an assuring clarification, showing his confidence that his readers do have authentic faith. Now, he resumes his application of the tests by showing that authentic faith is not of the world in 1 John 2:15-17 (our passage), but rather it knows and believes the truth about Jesus Christ (2:18-27).

John characteristically draws a sharp line, with no middle ground: **If you love the world, you do not love the Father.** He shows that...

You must choose your love and then maintain your choice: you love either the world or the Father, but not both.

He's saying the same thing that Jesus said in **Luke 16:13**, "**You cannot serve God and Mammon.**" He did not say, "You *should not* serve God and Mammon," but, "you *cannot*" serve them both. You must make a basic decision in life...

John's Basic Choice We Each Must Make:

- (1) Will you live to know God and His eternal love?**
- (2) Will you live for this world and its fleeting pleasures?**

You can't take a little of both. Once you've made that decision, you must fight to maintain your choice against the strong current of the world.

- "**Do not love**" is a present imperative, indicating that it is an ongoing battle.
- "**Love**" is the Greek *agape*, indicating that it is a commitment, not a feeling, that John is commanding.
- The only way that you can fight the love of the world is to maintain and grow in your love for the Father.
- The old Scottish preacher, **Thomas Chalmers**, has a sermon, "**The Expulsive Power of a New Affection**," where he argues that, "**The only thing powerful enough to drive out our love for the world is our new love for the Father.**"

We need to define the key term:

WHAT IS "THE WORLD" OR "WORLDLINESS"?

John's word in **1 John 2:15** may pose a lot of question for us... or at least cause some confusion, some mix-up, some misinterpretation issues. Hear John's words again... "**¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**" Matter of fact verses/passages like this beckon a deeper look... a more thorough deep dive into exactly what is being said. *What are some of the issues this verse may raise? What do you see in those words that may raise some questions?*

Some Objective Questions Raised by 1 John 2:15:

- (1) But doesn't God love the world? (John 3:16) –** "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**"
- (2) But aren't we called in Scripture to love the world (those in the world)? (1 John 4:7-11) –** "**⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is**

born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

- (3) **But aren't we known as Christians by our love for the world (those in the world)? (John 13:34-35)** – ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Some Hermeneutical Principles (Principles of Interpretation) to Remember: (note that there are more hermeneutical principles than these few named here, these principles are most instructive for our passage in 1 John 2:15)

- (1) **The rule of definition** – What does the word mean? Any study of Scripture must begin with a study of words. Remember the Bible was originally written in the language of the day; Hebrews (Old Testament), Greek and Aramaic (New Testament). We have a translation of those words and sometimes defining those words on their original language can be difficult to define as originally intended. In our case the word “world” is key to our understanding the complexity of this verse.
- (2) **The rule of context** – The meaning must be gathered from the context. Every word you read must be understood in the light of the words that come before and after it. Many passages will not be understood at all, or understood incorrectly, without the help afforded by the context. In my estimation “context” will always dictate meaning... a statement or verse may seem contradictory and confusing until we under the context of what is being said Scripturally, historically, culturally, etc. In our verse context become very important in understanding what is being said concerning “loving the world.”
- (3) **The rule of unity** - The parts of Scripture being interpreted must be construed with reference to the significance of the whole. **And important fact/principle of interpretation of Scripture is that Scripture/the Bible does not contradict itself.** An interpretation must be consistent with the rest of Scripture. An excellent example of this is the doctrine of the Trinity. No single passage teaches it, but it is consistent with the teaching of the whole of Scripture (e.g. the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are referred to individually as God; yet the Scriptures elsewhere teach there is only one God). *NOTE: If there is an apparent contradiction in Scripture, study deeper, dig deep, go further with our interpretation because of this principle... the Bible does not contradict itself.

Some Facts (to understand “world”):

- (1) **The Greek word for “world,” cosmos, occurs 185 times in the New Testament**
- (2) **John uses it 105 of those times... 78 times in his Gospel of John , 24 times in John’s little letter (1,2 & 3 John), and 3 times in the book of Revelation**
- (3) **The word “world” (cosmos) originally meant “order,” and it came to refer to the universe as the well-ordered ornament of God.**

- (4) Our English word “cosmetics” comes from the word. Applying cosmetics is an attempt to bring order
- (5) The word “world” may refer to the physical world (John 1:10) or to the people of the world collectively (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2)
- (6) In those senses, there is nothing wrong with loving the world. We should enjoy God’s creation and we should love sinful people who need to know the Savior
- (7) But John also uses the word “world” to refer to the evil, organized system under Satan, which operates through unbelieving people who are God’s enemies - He writes in 1 John 5:19, *“We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”*
- (8) Jesus spoke of the world hating both Him and those who follow Him - John wrote in John 15:18-19, *“¹⁸If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”*
- (9) It operates on the basis of ungodly thoughts, attitudes, motives, values, and goals. As God says in Isaiah 55:8-9, ⁸ *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. ⁹“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”*
- (10) It does not seek to promote God’s glory or to submit to His sovereign authority
- (11) It is in this sense that we must not love the world
- (12) When John adds that we are not to love *“the things of the world,”* he does not mean that you must hate inanimate physical/material objects... - i.e. your house, or your car, or your cell phone, although I sometimes do hate my cell phone and want to throw in the pond behind my house! Rather, he elaborates on those “things” in 1 John 2:16 as, *“the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.”*
- (13) In other words, worldliness is primarily an attitude that is motivated by wrong desires and the wrongful promotion of self - A poor man who does not have many possessions may be very worldly because he desires those things as the key to happiness. But, a wealthy man may not be worldly in that he uses his possessions as a steward of God and as a means of promoting God’s purpose and glory.
- (14) So, to be worldly is to operate on the same principles as unregenerate people. It is to think and act out of selfishness, greed, pride, and personal ambition. It is to have a selfish desire for the things that you do not have and a sinful pride in the things that you do have.
- (15) Rather than living to please God, (who examines the heart,) the worldly person tries to impress people, who look on things outwardly - For example, if you refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages because you want to impress others with how spiritual you are, and you take pride in your not drinking and look with contempt on those who do, you are actually being worldly by not drinking! I don’t say that to encourage anyone to drink!

IMPORTANT: Bottom line... we don't hate people, we hate what people do. We don't hate the people of the world, we hate what people of the world who apart from God do. If we don't hate that something is wrong with us... the Bible says the love of the Father is not in us!

I'm only pointing out that worldliness is not a matter of keeping some list of dos and don'ts. It is a matter of your heart motives before God.

JOHN'S TWO MAIN POINTS IN 1 JOHN 2:15-17

John makes two main points:

2 Main Points of 1 John 2:15-17:

(1) Choose your love... either the world or the Father, but not both (1 John 2:15) –
"¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." -1 John 2:15

John states the main command... *"Do not love the world nor the things in the world."* Then, he gives the implication... *"If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* It is either/or, not both/and.

The "Love of the Father" Could Have 2 Meanings:

- 1. "The love of the Father," could mean His love for us -**
- 2. "The love of the Father," could mean our love for God -** To be parallel to the first half of the verse, it most likely refers primarily to our love for God. John means that the one who loves the world does not love God. Or, conversely, our love for God should be the ruling principle of our lives.

The only way that we can overcome the strong desires of the flesh and the world is to be consumed with loving God. John uses *"Father"* to describe God in 2:15 & 16, as he did in 2:13, where he said that the children had come to know the Father. It focuses us on God's tender love for us as His children (3:1). It is the Father's first love for us that motivates us to love Him in response (1 John 4:19).

In light of the Father's great love in sending His own Son to be the propitiation for our sins and adopting us as His children, loving Him should be our great delight and joy.

It is significant that the Bible directs its commandments to our hearts or affections.

- The greatest commandment is Jesus words in Matthew 22:37, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind"*
- Solomon wrote in Proverbs 4:23, *"*
- *Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."*

- As **Jonathan Edwards** argued in his “Treatise on Religious Affections” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards* [Banner of Truth], 1:236), “**True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.**”

If your heart is cold toward the Father and captivated by the glitz of the world, you need to ask yourself, “Do I belong to the Father or to the world?” So John’s commandment (2:15) challenges use... choose your love.

Either you love the world or you love the Father. You cannot straddle the line. The Father is a jealous lover who deserves and demands total allegiance. Loving the Father begins at the cross when you receive His supreme gift of love, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the substitute for your sins.

- (2) **Maintain your love... either the world or the Father, but not both (1 John 2:16-17)**
 – *“¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”* – 1 John 2:16-17

Any love relationship must be maintained, and that is true of your relationship with the Father. It is especially true in that the enemy is trying to lure you from the Father’s love with all of the temptations of the world, as John shows in 2:16. If you yield to them, you will maintain love for the world. In 2:17 he shows how to maintain your love for the Father.

How to maintain you love for the world?: (1 John 2:16)

1. **To yield to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life is to maintain love for the world (1 John 2:16)** - *“¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world”*. Verse 16 is explanatory of verse 15 (“For”), showing how love for the things in the world does not come from the Father.

Many have pointed out how the three aspects of temptation listed here parallel the way that Satan tempted Eve. She saw that the forbidden fruit was good for food (Gen. 3:6), which was an appeal to the lust of the flesh. She saw “that it was a delight to the eyes.” This appealed to the lust of the eyes. She also saw “that the tree was desirable to make one wise.”

This appealed to the boastful pride of life. The same pattern occurs in Satan’s temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-12). Satan urged Jesus to turn the stones into bread (the lust of the flesh). He showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth, offering to give them to Him (the lust of the eyes). He encouraged Him to jump off the pinnacle of the

temple, which could have been a source of pride in this miraculous accomplishment. Let's examine John's three aspects of "all that is in the world"

2. **To yield to the lust of the flesh is not to love the Father, but the world** - "Lust" refers to a strong desire or impulse. It is used almost always in a negative sense in the New Testament. "Flesh" refers to our fallen nature, which is not eradicated at salvation. "The lust of the flesh" includes any strong desire or inclination of our fallen nature, including sexual sins, but also all activity that stems from the self-seeking, godless nature that we are born with. Many natural desires are legitimate if they are kept under control and used in the sphere for which God designed them. The desires for food, companionship, sex, and security are legitimate when we keep them within God's limits and when we do not allow them to usurp His rightful place in our hearts. But they become sinful when we seek to fulfill them in selfish, ungodly ways.
3. **To yield to the lust of the eyes is not to love the Father, but the world** - This term points to the sinful desires of greed and covetousness, to want that which you do not have, but which others may have. It also refers to the desires that stem from false, superficial values. Through our eyes, the world appeals to us to find satisfaction in the superficial, which never can satisfy. "Buy this bigger, newer home and you will be happy!" "Find a beautiful woman (or a handsome man) and you will be satisfied." "Get the perfect job and have plenty of money and your inner longings will be quenched." But, as is evident by the lives of the rich and famous, none of these things deliver what they promise.
4. **To yield to the boastful pride of life is not to love the Father, but the world** - While the lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes refer to the desire to have what you do *not* have, the boastful pride of life refers to sinful pride over what you *do* have. It is the desire to be better than others so that you can glory in yourself and your accomplishments. There is a proper sense, of course, of doing your best in school, athletics, or at work in order to be a good steward of God's gifts and to bring glory to Him. But it's easy to forget that He gave you everything that you have (1 Cor. 4:7) and to start boasting in your achievements and possessions as if you attained these things by your own intelligence or hard work. It's easy to think like Nebuchadnezzar, who said (Dan. 4:30), "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" God immediately drove him out into the fields to live as a wild beast until his heart was humbled!

We all battle these temptations daily, and we often fail. But John's point is, if you go on yielding to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life as your way of life, you are not maintaining love for the Father. Rather, you are maintaining love for the world. Worldly people wallow in these things; God's children fight them continually. How do we maintain our love for the Father?

How to maintain you love for the Father?: (1 John 2:17)

1. **To obey the Father with our eyes on eternity is to maintain our love for Him (1 John 2:17)** - To obey the Father is to maintain your love for Him. The opposite of loving the world is not only loving the Father, but also obeying Him—“doing the will of God.” “The will of God” here does not refer to following His direction in your life. It refers to obeying His commandments as revealed in His Word. As Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15). “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10).
2. **A key reason to obey God’s commandments is the transitory nature of this world and its lusts, as contrasted with the eternal promise of heaven** - “The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides [lit.] forever” (2:17; the original NASB correctly translates “abides,” not “lives”). If you love the world or the things in the world, you will lose them all at death. All that the worldly person lives for is gone in an instant and means nothing in light of eternity. Even if you have attained your worldly desires, what good are they at death? But, if you do God’s will, you will abide with Him in heaven throughout all eternity!

CONCLUSION

In 1989, **Tom Sine** wrote some insightful words that apply just as much now, as then (*Christianity Today* [3/17/89], p. 52):

“Whatever commands our time, energy, and resources commands us. And if we are honest, we will admit that our lives really aren’t that different from those of our secular counterparts. I suspect that one of the reasons we are so ineffective in evangelism is that we are so much like the people around us that we have very little to which we can call them. We hang around church buildings a little more. We abstain from a few things. But we simply aren’t that different. We don’t even do hedonism as well as the folks around us ... but we keep on trying. As a result of this unfortunate accommodation, Christianity is reduced to little more than a spiritual crutch to help us through the minefields of the upwardly mobile life. God is there to help us get our promotions, our house in the suburbs, and our bills paid. Somehow God has become a co-conspirator in our agendas instead of our becoming a co-conspirator in His. Something is seriously amiss.”

Here are a few questions to ask yourself, to evaluate whether you love the world or the Father (adapted from **A. W. Pink**, *Exposition of 1 John* [Associated Authors and Publishers], p. 126):

A.W. Pink’s Questions to Evaluate Whether You Love the World or the Father:

(1) Which do you seek with more fervor: the wealth and honors of the world, or the riches of grace and the approval of God?

- (2) Which have the greater attraction: the pleasures of the world, which are only for a season, or those pleasures at God's right hand, which are for eternity?*
- (3) Wherein lies your confidence: in the money you have in your bank account or investments, or in the living and faithful God, who has promised to supply all your needs?*
- (4) Which causes the deeper sorrow: a temporal loss, or a break in your fellowship with God?*
- (5) Upon which do you get more joy: spending money for personal comforts and luxuries, or spending money to further the gospel?*
- (6) What most dominates your mind: thoughts and schemes after worldly advancements, or resolutions and efforts to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord?*

Some of may need to make the basic choice: Will you love the Father, or will you love the world? Most of us have made that choice, but we need to maintain it. Do not yield to the temptations of the world, but do the will of God. You will abide forever!