

Do Not Love the World

1 John 2:15-17

Introduction

A. Why does a church exist? What is the point? Why bother belonging? When we consider why the Church (or a church) exists we should know there are 3 very good reasons. Dr. Grudem:

1. Ministry to God: **Worship** (singing, lifestyle, all for the glory of God)
2. Ministry to **Believers**: Nurture (edify, equip, disciples who are mature in Christ)
3. Ministry to the **World**: Evangelism and mercy (we proclaim Jesus and we love others)

“Once we have listed these three purposes for the church someone might ask, which is most important? Or someone else might ask, might we neglect one of these three as less important than the others? To that we must respond that all three purposes are commanded by the Lord in Scripture; therefore, all three are important and none can be neglected.... All three purposes must be emphasized continually in a healthy church.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 868-869

B. Surely a healthy church is our goal. What things might derail us? How might we miss the mark for which we aim? I suppose there are many possibilities. We could possibly:

1. Lack sound doctrine (we live what we believe to be true)
2. Lack love for the Scriptures (hear and do the Word)
3. Devour one another in conflict (sin aims for our destruction)
4. Or we could succumb to worldliness (other ways as well)

C. John, the apostle closest to Jesus, had a significant concern about worldliness (as does Ben). Our text is found in John’s first letter, 1 John 2:15-17:

1 John 2:15-17 (ESV) “[15] Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. [17] And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

1. My title is **Do Not Love the World**.

I. What does John mean by “the world”?

A. The Bible uses the word world in essentially three different ways. When doing the work of interpreting the original language of the Bible the context helps determine meaning.

1. World may mean **the people of the world** as in John 3:16 (cannot mean sin).

John 3:16 (ESV) [16] “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

2. World may also mean **the created order** (*cosmos* - cosmetics) as in Acts 17:24.

Acts 17:24 (ESV) “[24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”

- We may rightly (carefully) say we love God’s creation (glorious!) and we may say we love the people of the world. What does it mean then to “not love the world?”
- 3. World is also used in the Bible to describe **anything leads us away from the worship of God**. The Bible uses words like adultery or idolatry to describe this situation.

“The system of rebellion and pride that seeks to displace God and His rule.” R. C. Sproul

James 4:1-4 (ESV) “[1] What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? [2] You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. [4] You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

1 Corinthians 10:6-7 (ESV) “[6] Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. [7] Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.”

- B. Poet and musician Bob Dylan got it right when he penned the lyrics to *Gotta Serve Somebody* (and somehow won a Grammy in 1979 for the message he sent).

- 1. I don’t know who Bob Dylan is serving now but here is the lyric he wrote then:

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed, you're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody
Bob Dylan, *Gotta Serve Somebody*

- 2. Loving the world, and the things in the world, means we are devoted to the world’s treasures, pleasures, pastimes, aspirations, philosophies, and priorities (and the devil).
- 3. If the world worships power, riches, sex, then so does the person who loves the world.
- C. Here is why this matters for the Christian (John writes to us). It is possible to be ineffective.

Matthew 5:13-15 (ESV) “[13] You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.” [14] You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.”

- 1. This is a challenging sermon to preach. I want to invite each of us, myself included, to examine our faith and our love for Jesus Christ. And our practices.

2. I do not desire to condemn a sensitive conscience (and we should always remember there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ).
 3. I do not desire to placate the legalist who may say “don’t taste, don’t touch, don’t handle” (see Col. 2:20-23).
 - I was raised in a faith tradition that said godliness is “no dancing, no drinking, no swearing, no movies, no playing cards (except Rook), no gambling, and no rock ‘n roll. A list of negative rules is not the answer.
 4. I do wish to challenge anyone present who loves the world. It is not my aim to give you a list of rules but I do hope to disturb your conscience and to get you thinking.
- D. Worldiness is first and foremost a question of the heart. It has to do with the desires of our heart. No one makes us choose worldiness. No one twists our arm.
1. No, we go there willingly. We love darkness, said Jesus, rather than light. The problem is the heart and the affections of the heart.

Matthew 15:18-20 (ESV) “[18] But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. [19] For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. [20] These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”

2. The command is clear. “Do not love the world or the things in the world.” This is a present tense imperative indicating an ongoing battle.

II. How does love for the world show itself in a person?

- A. John, in verse 17, tells us there are three ways. First, though, John draws a clear line.
1. Verse 15 - if you love the world, the love of the Father is absent. John is saying that, in our heart of hearts, there is only room for one love.
 2. Asaph penned these inspired words in Psalm 73 that describe a heart devoted to the love of the Father.

Psalm 73:25-26 (ESV) “[25] Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. [26] My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

- B. We can’t have two masters, we can’t have two paths, we can’t love darkness and light (oil and water). So how does love for the world reveal itself? Verse 16 tells us:
1. **The desires of the flesh** - this is bodily pleasures and sensual desires. Here, if we love the world, we will find cravings for food, sex, and recognition. Our appetites rule us.

Philippians 3:18-19 (ESV) “[18] For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with

tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. [19] Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things."

- Our appetites are a good thing but they do not rule us.

2. **The desires of the eyes** - here, if we love the world, we see and imagine things that we don't have but would love to have. This is coveting. We desire something but not God.

Exodus 20:17 (ESV) "[17] 'You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.'"

- You would not be happier if you commit adultery. Sin always deceives.

3. **The pride of life** - here, if we love the world, we are proud of our accomplishments and possessions. We say, "look at what I have built." We grab glory and we forget God.

Luke 12:15-21 (ESV) "[15] And he said to them, 'Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'" [16] And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, [17] and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' [18] And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. [19] And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" [20] But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' [21] So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

- This person is self-sufficient but only God is ultimately self-sufficient.

- C. We may sum this up by saying our desires are not fixed on God but anywhere else we like.

1. Love for the world is anything that cools your affection for Jesus. We must pay close attention to our heart and our affections (thank God for grace which trains us).

Proverbs 4:23-27(ESV) "[23] Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. [24] Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. [25] Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. [26] Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. [27] Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil."

"Whatever commands your hope will control your heart and what controls your heart will direct your words and behavior." Paul Tripp

Ex: Everyone worships. You have objective truth (God and the gospel) and you have appetites. Ultimately, your heart will be set on one or the other.

- D. You may believe that you are strong and wise and oriented toward God. And perhaps you are but we must take care regarding our steps (our practice, which way we are facing).

1. Samson was strong and he fell. Solomon was wise and he fell. David the psalmist had a heart for God and he fell. We must watch our steps and the steps of our brother.
 2. If you know the stories of these mighty men of God you know they didn't go from loving God to massive sin one step. No, there were many intentional steps away from God.
- E. Where are we vulnerable?
1. What small steps might be a danger to us? They are truly legion. It is not that doing any of these things are finally fatal, and some are good, but it is a question of direction.
 2. It is not so much a question of "where is the line?" There isn't a line but there is a trajectory that we choose to take. Friend, where are you headed?
- F. Here is a list for your own careful, prayerful, consideration (not your neighbor) of worldliness.
1. **Media** (internet, TV, movies, sports, smart phones, music, video games)

Ex: There are judgments to make. The Greatest Showman, modesty lacking for one family member but not for another. Know your conscience, know what is evil.
 2. **Possessions** (wealth - you daydream about winning the lottery - not content)
 3. **Appearance** (modesty for girls and guys)
 4. **Language** (the content of your language)
- G. To be worldly is to want to be accepted by the world, to have the same pleasures they have, and the same possessions they have. We want to be like them. Do you ever say no?

III. How do we fight worldliness and gain holiness? Two steps:

- A. First, I only read 1 John 2:15-17. But the Christian is grounded in Christ and knows their sins are forgiven. We live in the good of 1 John 2:12. We are grounded in the gospel.

1 John 2:12 (ESV) "[12] I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake."

1. For His glory! And, John has written to us so that we may not sin.

1 John 2:1 (ESV) "[1] My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

2. We who are in Christ have been redeemed with a price and we are not our own. So don't act differently! Tighten your grip on the gospel (no wrath). We boast in the cross.

"If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have

drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.” John Piper, *Hunger for God*, p. 23

- If you don’t want Jesus now you really have no interest in heaven.

3. Saving faith and love for God are inseparable. One results in the other. Friend, are you in Christ? Have your sins been forgiven? Is Jesus Christ yours? Or something else?

“Can anything be added to the conception of being with Christ? For it must be true, as an old writer says, that he who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only.” C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

B. Second, we **pursue common, ordinary means of grace.**

1. Corporate worship (preaching and singing) - sporadic attendance on Sundays is unwise
2. Community Groups (fellowship, prayer, mission)
3. Fasting (and some solitude)

“Fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose. There are many bodily functions which are right and normal and perfectly legitimate, but which for special peculiar reasons in certain circumstances should be controlled. That is fasting.” Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in The Sermon on the Mount*, Vol. 2, p. 38

Ex: Fast Netflix or ESPN or news for a week (suggestion). Or food for a day.

C. Jesus will ultimately satisfy you and this world cannot.

1. Verse 17 - the world is passing away. It is temporary. But friends, eternal glory awaits us on the other side.
2. In this battle, happily, we have weapons. The Word, the Spirit, and the grace of God. It is good news that He holds us fast. But the battle is real.

D. Which love will it be? The love of the world or the love of the Father? We can’t love the world and be a faithful church (worship or edification or outreach). Let’s fix our eyes on Jesus.

Close

A. I’ll conclude by reading a hymn and a prayer (make these thoughts your own).

1. The hymn (John Newton):

Let worldly minds the world pursue, it has no charms for me
Once I admired its trifles too, but grace has set me free
Its pleasures now no longer please, no more contentment afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these, now I have seen the Lord

As by the light of opening day, the stars are all concealed
So earthly pleasures fade away, when Jesus is revealed
Creatures no more divide my choice, I bid them all depart
His name, and love, and gracious voice have fixed my roving heart
John Newton quoted by Ray Ortlund Jr., *Isaiah Preaching the Word Commentary*, p. 85

2. The prayer (John Wesley):

"I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will, put me to doing, put me to suffering, let me be employed for You or laid aside for You, exalted for You, or brought low for You. Let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing, I freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are mine and I am Yours. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen." John Wesley from Richard Alleine, quoted by J. I. Packer, *Praying the Lord's Prayer*, p. 61

B. May we never boast except in the cross of Jesus Christ.

1. Not our appetites, desires, or possessions. We have Jesus Christ and He is enough.

Prayer

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Living Hope Church.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:

By Ken Mellinger

Website: <http://livinghopechurchpa.com>