

Love Not the World

(1 John 2:15-17)

Introduction

Sometimes in our life as young Christians we feel like a child in time-out; it is a beautiful day outside and all our friends are out playing and having fun. We wish we could be out there, doing what everyone else is doing and enjoying as much as everyone else is enjoying. However, we feel as if our parents are forcing us to be stuck inside, and we can only wishfully look through the window at the great time everyone else is having.



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What would we do if we felt like our “watchful parent” was not there to make sure we are observing our time-out anymore? What if no one was there to keep us from leaving the house and joining all the “fun” that is going on outside?

By the time we get to college we may find ourselves in such a situation; we feel like we are not being watched as closely as before, and, if we want, we are free to open the door, go outside and be with, and like, everyone else...

What are you going to do?

Love Not The World

- I. John urges us not to love the world
 - A. 1 John 2:15-16 encourages us not to love the world or the things in the world. It also reminds us that there are only two ways, and what does not come from God must come of the world. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are of the world and not of God.
 - B. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are indeed lures that the devil uses to entice us to fall into temptation. These lures work in many ways, and they have been working since the beginning in the garden of Eden (see Gen 3:1-6, especially verse 6).
- II. ...but I do not love the world to begin with!
 - A. How many Christians do we know who go around declaring to everyone how much they love the world? However, too often we hear of people falling away from the faith (see 2 Tim 4:10).
 - B. Maybe we should not ask ourselves if we love the world...
 1. ...maybe we need to ask ourselves what is that “one thing” (or “things”) that we admire so much about the world and the people of the world
 2. ...maybe we need to be honest with ourselves and realize that at times, deep down, we do value the wrong priorities
 - C. OK! But “admiring” is very different than “loving”! - Yes! Admiring is very different than loving. The main difference is that “admiring” is one of the early steps in the process that eventually will bring us to love something or someone.
 1. This could be a “positive” process - a young man admires a young woman very much, he gets to know her, they like each other, love each other, get married and live happily ever after.
 2. Or it could be a “negative” process - Judas Iscariot had a problem. He was attracted by money that was not his (John 12:5-6). He would just take a little money out of the bag for himself every now and then. However, eventually 30 pieces of silver became more attractive to him than his loyalty to his friend Jesus (Matt 26:15). Judas realized what he had done only when it was too late (Matt 27:3-5). Once we sell something (or, in Judas’ case, someone) we have no control over it anymore. Let us be careful what we value!

3. What we simply “admire” today can easily become something that we like and even love tomorrow! Let us choose wisely! (see also Prov 4:23).

III. We do not love the world... but deep down, at times, we may admire or desire some of it

B. We may admire the “apparent freedom” young people in the world seem to have - they seem to be able to do whatever they please without any restriction

1. A really current issue is the one of sexual purity before marriage. Statistics say that only about 3-5% of Americans are successful in waiting until marriage to have sex¹. That is an extremely low percentage. One would think that such percentage is higher among religious people. It is indeed, but not as high as we would expect; in highly religious groups only about 20% wait successfully until marriage².

2. What happened to the purity that God expects to see in His people? Even those who profess to be God’s people, though being warned of the danger, are not willing to contain their lusts! No wonder we hear teaching about this issue so frequently - the statistics above show how urgent of an issue this is! How are you pleasing God?

a. We are encouraged to be pure, and abstaining from sexual immorality is a way to sanctification. This is the will of God (1 Thess 4:3-8)! If you are dating someone, are you both doing your best to keep each other pure? Anyone can allow lust of the eyes to get in the way of purity (Matt 5:28); it does not matter if you are single, dating or married. Even one of the great men in the Bible committed terrible sins because he gave in to his lust (2 Sam 11). Learn and practice purity now because, as Christians, we are to be pure for all our lives (again, no matter if you are single, dating or married).

b. Wait for the proper time and the proper context (Gen 2:24; Prov 5:15-21) to enjoy each other in the way that God has designed, not in the way the world promotes so strongly. Patience and self-control, which are fruits of the Spirit (see Gal 5:22-23), go hand in hand and are crucial in pleasing God and making a wise decision. Trust God, and He will take care of you (Matt 6:25-34; Prov 18:22). You may as well use the time you have to pray for wisdom and guidance in choosing the right person, or in understanding if the person you are considering is right for you. As you are “choosing” and getting to know the one you could spend your life with, ask yourself if with this person you are both going to heaven.

B. We may desire the riches this world uses to entice us

¹ <http://waitingtillmarriage.org/4-cool-statistics-about-abstinence-in-the-usa/> and http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/health/2006-12-19-premarital-sex_x.htm

² <http://waitingtillmarriage.org/4-cool-statistics-about-abstinence-in-the-usa/>

2. Especially as we are young and we plan for our future, we often desire to have careers that will allow us to make good (a lot of?) money. We will want to drive a nice car, live in a big house and have plenty to travel the world or spend on our favorite hobby. Sometimes we are even semi-altruistic in our purpose reminding ourselves that we will also want to take good care of our family one day.
 3. How about a career that will allow us to have plenty of time for our wife, our kids and the church? In Colossians 3:1-6 Paul encourages his readers to focus their mind on the “things above, not on the things that are on earth.” How about a career that will encourage us to spend time with our wives (1 Cor 7:5), thus helping us be faithful to them, and to spend time teaching our children (Eph 6:4; Prov 22:6). Also, how about careers that will allow us time to work in the kingdom? (Matt 9:37-38). Finally, let us make goals for ourselves as Christians in the local church and not only as people in our careers. Today, while we are still young, is the best time to start working towards becoming a leader and an elder in the church, developing the required traits and becoming “above reproach” (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6).
- C. There are also some issues that are a bit less blatant, less talked and taught about, but nonetheless still very current in the lives of many young Christians? The issues below leverage more on pride than on lusts, but they are still rooted in the love for the world.
2. Often by the time we get to college we think that now “I am a grown up, I am on my own, and I can do whatever I want!” In this situation the first thing we are tempted to do is to try to prove how independent we are by going against one, or some, of the principles our parents spent years trying to help us understand and practice. Just like the child’s example in the introduction, we feel like we have been in time-out most of our life, but now we are “finally free” to make our own decisions. What are we going to do?
 - a. The young son described by Jesus in Luke 15:11-32 felt as if he were finally enough of an adult that he could be on his own. After requesting his part of the inheritance from his father (15:12), he left and went to a distant country, as far away as possible from his family and his upbringing. Here he ended up squandering everything he had in loose living (15:13) and maybe going as far as being with prostitutes (see 15:30). He thought he could be independent, but he ended up realizing his severe and immature mistake (15:17-29). Making our decisions just to prove, maybe simply to oneself, that now “I am a grown up” is a foolish mistake! Often there is no rational motivation or reasoning behind those

decisions. We simply desire to be different from the way we were brought up spiritually and morally. That is because pride gets in the way!

- b. When it comes to faith, we must develop our own faith. Paul says, “The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God” (Rom 14:22a). We must not object to what we were taught just to show that now we are independent. That is very immature behavior. We must reason on and carefully evaluate the teachings we see in the word of God and conclude on our own if we want to follow the truth or make our own decisions. This is what faith is about. Faith is not a feeling “feeling,” but is based on conclusions we make from reasoning through evidence (John 20:30-31). Ultimately remember we will face consequences for the decisions we make (Gal 6:7-8).
- 3. It may happen that instead of looking at the world with longing eyes, we may look at it with an attitude of superiority. In the situation described above we desire to show our independence by doing what we want after feeling like we have been in time-out all our life. On the contrary, we may still look at the world, but feel like we are superior to it because we simply do not live how the world lives. In this case the world becomes our standard, and as long as we do a little better than the world does, or not as bad, we believe we are pleasing God. In reality we are just fooling ourselves and living a mock-Christianity that is tailor made to what we think is right. What we are really to do is to hold Christ as our standard and mold ourselves after His image (Eph 4:13-16). We are to be like Him, think like Him and act like Him (Phil 2:5). After all we were created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and not in the image of the world.**
4. More and more we are raised in a society that prides itself in being “tolerant” if not even “accepting” and “welcoming.” Right and wrong do not seem to exist anymore; good and bad are often blurred together if not even reversed. In this world it does not matter anymore how one lives; we are just different, and “if it works for you it is OK for me too!”
 - a. Long ago the prophet Isaiah wrote, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil...” (Isaiah 5:20). The modern ideology of being accepting and welcoming - of what is actually sinful behavior - as a sign of a progressed and civilized society goes against Biblical teachings. The Corinthians were taking pride in their openness, but are in fact condemned by Paul for welcoming an immorality that was even worse than what the Gentiles had conceived thus far (1 Corinthians 5).

- b. God hates divorce (Mal 2:16). Divorce was not ever meant to exist, but it is a concession God made for a specific situation (Matt 19:8-9; 5:31-32). Also, homosexuality has been declared a detestable act since the law of Moses (Lev 20:13) and is not natural (see Rom 1:26-28 and Gen 2:24). God loves the sinner (John 3:16), but does not tolerate sin. In the same way His people must not tolerate, much less accept sinful behavior. We must start with ourselves!
- IV. As I examine myself as a Christian, and as I consider how to live so as not to love this world, what should I do?
 - A. Maybe we need to be more scared of the world. We simply may be not scared of the world enough. We may find ourselves at ease in the world and among people of the world. We may feel comfortable when we are in the world and with the world. This is a strong sign that our love for the world is stronger than our love for God. This also means that we love “the god of this world” (see 2 Cor 4:4) more than we love Christ, and the devil has nothing to do with Christ (John 14:30b). Again, remember that there are consequences for our choices (Gal 6:7-8), and that the consequence of sin is death (James 1:15).
 - B. Maybe we do not appreciate Christ enough. Maybe we do indeed think that Christianity makes us feel like a kid in time-out, and we cannot wait for our independence so we can do what pleases us. Are the vain lusts that the love of the world presents us with really fulfilling (see Eccl 2:1-11)? Do we realize what Christ has done for us, and do we care to live how we were meant to? (1 John 3:4-10)
 - C. We are eternal beings - “The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God has eternal life” (1 John 2:17). The world and the things in the world are temporary. This means that both the “good” that the world has to offer (riches, pleasures and enjoyment) and “bad” (suffering, pain, death, rejection) will end one day. If we pursue only the “good of the world,” what we will get in this life is all we will have. If we pursue the will of God, the suffering and rejection that we may have to go through in this life one day will finally end. We will be as sheep among wolves (Matt 10:16), and we will have to recognize the dangers of this world and not let them get in the way of our purity. Let us guard our hearts and mouths (Prov 4:20-27) and set our minds on the things above looking forward to eternity with God (Col 3:1-4).

Final Considerations

The love of the world and the lusts that come with it are a serious hindrance to our desire to live the Christian life God designed us to live. Especially at an age and in a time when many forsake

the truth to abandon themselves to their own lusts, it is of the utmost urgency and importance that we stand firm with God, entrusting ourselves to Him. If the way we feel towards Christianity were the same way a child feels towards his time-out, we would do a great injustice towards Christ, who died for us, and God, who created us in His image. We would also do a great injustice to ourselves, knowing that we were not conceived to satisfy fleshly lusts that tempt us. We must know and believe that God will take care of us, and that whatever this life will present, good or bad, one day we will be in eternal peace and rest with our Creator.

What are you going to do?