

HOW TO LIVE FOREVER

(1 JOHN 2:15–17)

What is True & What Christians Should Do:

The world's system and its ways oppose God and are passing away; you cannot love it and God at the same time, so do not love the world nor the temporary things in it, but instead do the will of God and live forever.

1.) Do not love the world, nor the things in it! (a continuously applicable command to Christians in verse 15)

- In v.15, **to “love”** : means *to take pleasure in*; or to have high esteem or satisfaction with something or someone¹
- In v.15, **the “world”** means everything that opposes Christ and his work on earth. The Apostle John is speaking of the evil world system with its principles and practices, all under the authority of Satan, which includes all ideas, teachings, activities, attitudes, culture, etc. that are opposed to God (i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds with anything divine, depraved). For example: a fixation on the material over the spiritual, promotion of self, pleasure, selfish gain, selfish desires over others.
 - Jesus called **Satan** “the ruler of this world” (Jn. 14:30, 16:11)
 - Paul called **Satan** “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4)
 - Jesus referred to **all unsaved people** (non-believers) as “the sons of this world.” (Luke 16:8)

2.) Reason 1: Love for the world is not compatible with love for God because the world and its ways are not from God (v.15–6)

- It is **impossible** for a Christian to truly love God and the world's system at the same time.
- In v. 15, the phrase “the love of the Father” means “that person's love **for** the Father.” (**not** “the Father does not love you”).

- (“[to you:] Do not Love *the World*; [to you:] Do not love the things in the world; if [you] love the world, then [you] do not possess love for the father.”); ‘You’ is part of “anyone,” v.15
- To say “the father does not love you” wrongly implies God does not love Christians who sinfully at times love the world contrary to God's will.
- Keep in mind, John is writing to Christians and there is an implied assumption that some at that time were struggling with allowing their fleshly desires and conduct to be fashioned by earthly –not kingdom- values (which is still true today).

3.) Reason 2: The world is temporary and passing away, but God is everlasting and offers eternal life to those who do His will (16–7)

- Characterization of worldly living: impermanent / fleeting
 - *Fleshly desires* (includes but not limited to sexual lust); “lust” is all **sinful desire contrary** to the will of God. For example, a life dominated by the senses (“gluttons with food, drunkenness, impurity, anger, divisions, jealousy, lax morals, pleasure seekers without regard to the will of God)
 - *Things we see* (eyes cause temptation); see Mt. 6:22–23, Pr. 17:24, Ps. 73:7. Often becomes love for materialism. We cannot find a path to God through nature or created things alone, which are temporary and will be destroyed.
 - *Our boastful pride of life* (everything we have, enjoy, or pride ourselves in—money, education, family, job, possessions); Ex. self-conceit, self-indulgence, self-gratification, self-satisfaction, egotism, arrogance, false views of superiority, inflated sense of entitlements.
 - Example: Eve's temptation (Genesis 3:6), “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (**lust of the flesh**), and that it was a delight to the eyes (**lust of the eyes**), and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise... (**pride of life**)”
- Characterization of godly living: permanent / ever-lasting

¹ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

KEY POINTS:

- Enemies of the Christian: the world, the flesh, and the devil (you cannot overcome them alone, apart from the Holy Spirit of God).
- John is not telling us to reject all aspects of culture, much of which does reflect the glory, goodness, and gifts of God. The point is that we are not to love and idolize thoughts, values, and behaviors that are contrary to God's Word and His will (v. 14, 17)
- Loving the things of the world more than God is idolatry (worshiping / loving the creature not the creator). Note: 1 John ends (v. 5:21) with a warning to Christians against idolatry.
- The world's ways stand in opposition to God (1 Jn. 2:15) and thus are incapable of knowing God (Jn. 17:25); Compare 1 Jn. 4:5 and Christ's intercession in Jn. 17:9; The world's views are refuted by the Holy Spirit in Jn. 16:8. Neither Christ himself in Jn. 17:14, 16; 14:27, nor his own in Jn. 15:19; 17:14, 16; are of the world. Christians do not belong in any way to the 'world' (1 Jn. 3:1). Rather Christ has chosen Christians 'out of the world' (Jn. 15:19), even though for the present they must still live 'in the world' (Jn. 17:11); See also Jn. 13:1; 17:15, 18. All the trouble we as Christians must undergo because of this means nothing when compared with the victorious truth that Christ (and the believers w. him) have overcome 'the world' (Jn. 16:33).¹
- John teaches that our relationship to this fallen, evil, corrupt, sin-filled world must be one of opposition. You do not have to "give up" the world. The truth is this: the world will be opposed to you if you live for Christ (Jn. 15:18).

APPLICATION (v. 15-17):

- ✓ Christians! Do not love the world or the things in it! Does your life exhibit deeds of the flesh or fruit of the Spirit? (Gal. 5:19–24)
- ✓ Love, obey, and please God first—not people. Pray God would reveal areas of pride in your life so that you could eliminate them.
- ✓ Make a covenant with your eyes not to lust (Job 31:1); Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh (Ro. 13:14). Do not prioritize prideful living in self-comfort and ease.

TELLING SIGNS OF LOVING THE WORLD:² (Ask yourself...)

- Do worldly things consume your thoughts to the point of no intentional time meditating upon the things of God? ("Do you love (pick your favorite thing/activity) more than reading your Bible?")
- Do worldly things consume more of our conversation? ("Do you talk about (pick your favorite thing/activity) more than Jesus?")
- Are you unwilling to part with or rebalance something to God's purposes, or re-prioritize time, resources, money, or level of a commitment when needed? Which comes first place in your life, God or your love for (pick your favorite thing/activity)?
- Are you unhappy with what you have? Do you have a level of unhappiness with a portion of the world's goods? Do you secretly grieve because you do not have earthly conveniences, have (pick your favorite thing/activity), or have an equal wealth that others have? Are you content that God should govern and distribute gifts and resources as he pleases?
- Do you pursue things in the world (job, money, title, stature, leisure, pleasure, rank, recognition by people, etc.) with greater zeal? Do you work toward and enjoy (pick your favorite thing/activity) with higher satisfaction than serving God and enjoying His favor/pleasure?
- Do you pride yourself in worldly distinctions? For example, I am the best and everyone knows me for my skill and achievements at (pick your favorite thing/activity)? Do you expect recognition from men for what you have done or resent not getting it?
- Are you seeking to acquire or retain objects/things/title/rank in a wrong manner or by unethical or unjustified means? Do you seek to achieve goals in (pick your favorite thing/activity) without regard to seeking His will, pleasing Him, or obeying His Word? Do you just "do" whatever comes to mind without seeking God's direction and guidance in your life through prayer first?
- Do you say, "I will serve Jesus, go to church, read the Bible, pray daily. I will do my best," but when life gets hard or those things become inconvenient, does what *you* want come first?

² Adapted from Dr. David Allen, 1-3 John, *Fellowship in God's Family*, 97.