

Light & Love

Don't Be Lead Astray

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: 1 John 2:15-29

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I remember when I first saw this picture on the internet that explains the difference between how men shop and how women shop. For the mission, go to Gap and buy a pair of jeans. The guy goes to Gap and gets a pair of jeans. But the woman, of course, you know 3 hours and 26 minutes and \$876 later walks out with a pair of jeans. Now, I can laugh at this because I can be just as guilty as the woman's side of this depending on what store I go into. Now, certainly not in Macy's and JC Penney, do I have to worry about this?

But I do remember she had texted me. It was just before Christmas, and I was getting ready to head home from work, and she said, "Hey, can you head to Meyer and pick up something for us we need?" And so I drove to Meyer, and I walked in, and I looked at all of the people, and I looked at the lines, and I just walked back out and said, "Honey, we're just going to have to wait until later." you know I couldn't even deal with all of the people that were in the store. And so generally, I go in, get what I want, and then leave. But there are times that I can relate. For instance, when I walk into a woodcraft store, for anybody that knows what that is, you know that I love woodworking.

And so I walk into that store, and it's like I instantly get ADD. My mind just starts going crazy. I want to tinker with everything. I want to see all of the tools from the huge 16-inch joiner that they have, all the way down to the little chisels for making dovetails and things like that. I want to see every tool. And I honestly have spent hours in that store before. The difference is I walk out costs zero because I don't have any money to spend. So I just look at it and dream about all of the things that I want.

There have been times that I've told my wife, "Hey, I just need to run into the store and grab something really fast," and she just looks at me like, "Yeah, right." you know And sometimes we have that feeling. Sometimes the only way I feel like I can walk through that store and just get what I need is to put on those horse blinders. Do you guys know what those are? You've seen those? They put on these things, so you got to stay focused and look ahead of you. I can be the same way when we drive into a big city. I like to look at all of the buildings and see all of the stores and shops and restaurants and things there are.

I want to look around at everything. And of course, there's too much to look at when you're driving at a normal speed, and my wife often has to remind me, "You're supposed to be driving right now," you know? Like, "Keep your eyes forward. Please look at what's going on." Now, you can laugh at me, but you all have similar things. Now, it might not be tools and woodworking or big cities, but for some of the ladies, maybe it's clothes, and you go through all the stores and want to look at everything. For others, maybe it's animals. You love looking at animals, and so you go into a pet store.

For others, it's cars. If you go into a car lot, you want to see all of the different cars. For others, it's toys. Maybe as our kids go down the toy aisle and their eyes light up. For me, sometimes this is also true. Costco, you just walk in and there's all these things, right, and all these people. And so you just lose track of what you were going there to begin with, which I think is their ploy, right? You cannot walk out of Costco without

spending over \$100. That's just the rule. That's why they check your receipt when you walk out. It's not to see you know if you actually bought everything.

It's to make sure you spent enough. Now, although those things are funny and we can get sidetracked, the same is true actually in our spiritual lives. And many of us know this to be true. The enemy is always looking for ways to get us off track. The enemy is always looking for ways to deceive us. The enemy is looking for ways to lead us astray. Maybe he's looking for ways just to get a little foothold in our life in order to make us fall. And so we've realized, those that have been believers for a while, that it takes effort, it takes commitment to stay on the right path.

It doesn't come naturally because there are a million opportunities for our focus to be lost and for us to trip up and to pay attention to things that really don't matter nearly as much as our relationship with God. And so some of those things that we fall for are the pursuit of money, sports, pleasure, hobbies that we have, comfort, entertainment, false teaching. The list goes on and on of the different things that we can fall trapped to.

And the crazy thing about most of those things that we pursue is that they aren't bad in and of themselves. Many of them, there's nothing wrong with those things, but they can become more important than our relationship with God. And so we get distracted from our goal. We forget our purpose. We forget why we're here and why God has placed us here. Today, as we continue our series in 1 John, John is going to encourage us to keep our head in the game.

Don't get sidetracked. John believes that our time is getting short. As we're going to see in 1 John chapter 2, he believes that we are living in the end times. And so we shouldn't get caught up in all of the things of this world and lose our focus. So if you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up to 1 John 2: 15. That's where we left off a couple of weeks ago. 1 John 2:15.

Let me pray and then we will jump into the text. Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity, the freedom to gather with others, many like-minded people who have come here to offer our praise and our gratitude and our thankfulness for who You are and for what You have done for us. Lord, if we have come just to hear good music and hear somebody talk, we truly have wasted our time.

My prayer is that we would hear from You this morning, that we would open ourselves to hear from Your words, that they would transform us, that they would change us, that they would cause some sort of action on our part, some step that we can take in order to grow. And so, Father, speak to us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, before we get into the text today of 1 John chapter 2, one of the things that you're going to begin to recognize as we continue in this sermon slash letter that John is writing, is that he doesn't write like the apostle Paul writes. And so when we look at letters like 1 and 2 Timothy and Galatians and Ephesians, often Paul would use a train, a thought of logic, and he would move from point A to point B to point C, and he would keep moving through that.

But with John, we see something different here because it is written in a more kind of message format. And so instead, it's like John has these three points, and he wants to share these three points, and they are extremely important, so much so that he takes time to almost circle back to him over and over and over again. And every time he gets to one of these main points, he just adds a little more information, a little more truth.

And so it's like this typical three-point sermon that a pastor is going to share, and he keeps going back to that. The ones that we've seen already are God is light and God is love. And so he's come back to those. And now we're going to get to kind of that third thing that he wants to share about, but he will also go back to those.

So we jump in in 1 John chapter 2, starting in verse 15. John says, "Do not love the world or anything in the world.

For if anyone loves the world, the love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of our eyes, and the pride of life comes not from the Father, but from the world. For the world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. And I still remember when I first read this and I was thinking to myself, "This is a little harsh. What does John mean we're not supposed to love the world?"

Does that mean? Is John telling us that I'm not allowed to love my wife or to love my kids or to love my church? What in the world is John saying? Do not love the world or fall in love with the things in the world." And I'm glad that verse 16 exists. I'm glad that John didn't just stop there because he's going to clarify the point that he is trying to make that the things of the world that he is talking about are things like the cravings of sinful man, the cravings of our flesh, the lust of our eyes, the boasting of what we have or what we've done.

When John says, "Don't fall in love with the things of the world," John is talking about the results of sin in the world in which we live. All too often, we can go through life and we can forget that the world we live in currently doesn't look the way that it was supposed to. Our world has been tainted by sin. It's been corrupted by sin. And even though we can get up in the morning and watch a beautiful sunrise or we can go to the beach and see a sunset.

Although we can see the miracle of a baby that's being born and we can see the beautiful pictures of a landscape. Those are only small images of God's goodness in a world that is tainted by sin. You see, God has graciously allowed us to see a peace, to experience a little bit of the goodness of God, but not in its fullness.

The things of this world will pale in comparison to standing with God face-to-face. John wants to remind us, "Don't get caught up in the things of this world which are here today and tomorrow are going to be thrown into the fire." Therefore, don't get too enamored with the stuff that is here and now. Don't forget that you are an eternal being. Don't spend too much time and energy focusing on those things that won't last.

Instead, continue to keep that eternal perspective. For our motivation as followers of Jesus, John says, is different from those that just live in the world. We have a different calling. We have a different purpose. We have different goals. John goes on in verse 18, he says, "Dear children, this is the last hour. And as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.

This is how we know that it is the last hour. For they went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they have what remained with us, but their actual going out showed that none of them belonged to us. John wants to bring another truth here. This is the last hour, John says. John believed that he was living in the end times even though he wrote this 2,000 years ago.

But according to Scripture, he was living in the end times. What was the sign? What was the proof that John was living in the end times? It was the birth of Jesus. That was the beginning of the end times. That was the beginning of the last days. And so with Jesus being born, the Messiah, the Christ, John knew that meant the end times had begun. We were entering a new phase into the history of the humanity of mankind.

There was another sign that John saw, and that was the rising up of these antichrists, the appearance of Antichrist. Now, I know this is something that many believers like to talk about when we get into the end times, and most of the time, they want to talk about who the Antichrist is going to be. This one great deceiver that is going to exist, but we all need to recognize that there have been many antichrists. So what is who is an Antichrist?

It's in the name Antichrist. It is anyone who doesn't believe that Jesus is the Messiah. Anybody who would teach or say that Jesus is not the Messiah is an antichrist, and they will come in many forms. But every single

one of them will take away the deity of Jesus. They will take away that Jesus is God. And during John's time, the specific group of people that he was dealing with were known as the Gnostics.

But there would be many that would come, many that we even deal with today. And so John says, "If we are living in the end times, if this is the last hour, then we should keep watch. We should be on the watch for Jesus' return, for Him coming back. We should keep our eyes and ears open for those who are opposing Jesus and His deity." Truly, as crazy as it is to even say, we have been in a waiting pattern of expectation that has lasted for 2,000 years.

If you're like me, when I think of end times or last hour, I don't think 2,000 years. John didn't feel that way, and often we don't feel that way. We feel that it's imminent. It could happen at any moment, and that is how we are supposed to live. In that time, the last 2,000 years, John says some people have walked away, but John says, "I question whether they were really with us to begin with." He goes on in verse 20, "But you," he says, "to the church, have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie comes from the truth." John is writing to the church. He's writing to us, and he's saying, "Listen, don't misinterpret what I am saying to you. I'm not condemning you. I'm not saying that you have bought into any lie. This is not a condemning message that he's giving. I'm writing because you do know the truth, and I want to make sure that we keep that as our foundation. For you have received the Holy Spirit when you confessed Christ as your Savior, as your Lord, you received the Spirit.

So don't let anyone come in and deceive you into believing a lie. You have the truth. Stick with it. Verse 22, "For who is the liar?" John asks, "It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the Antichrist, denying the Father and the Son. For no one who denies the Son has the Father, but whoever acknowledges the Son also has the Father.

You see, there were people that were going around and teaching things that were half-truths or completely opposite from the truth, so much so that John would refer to them as liars or false teachers.

Again, these Gnostics, some of you are familiar with their belief system, but if you're not, the Gnostics, especially during this time period, were going around and teaching that Jesus in the flesh was not actually God, that the Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism, and then the Spirit of God left Him at the cross because there couldn't be this connection between the Spirit of God and Jesus because they believed the Gnostics taught that everything that was physical was evil, including our flesh, everything that we can see and touch and hear and smell, everything that existed in the physical world was evil, but the spiritual world was good.

So it's impossible that Jesus in the flesh was actually God. John calls them liars. He says, "Listen, you guys can teach whatever you want to teach, but are you forgetting? I was with Jesus for over three years. I talked with Him. I walked with Him. I know what He claimed to be. I know what He taught. And I know what I believe to be true. And that is that Jesus and the Father are one. John says, "That's my belief.

You're not going to change my mind. That's what I believe to be true." He goes on in verse 24, "As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father." And this is what He promised us, eternal life. I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.

As for you, the anointing you receive from Him remains in you, speaking of the Spirit, and you do not need anyone to teach you anymore. But as His anointing teaches you about all things, and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit, just as it has taught you, remain in Him. Don't be misled by false teachers. The truth of who Jesus is hasn't changed.

The truth that John taught them is still the truth. Don't fall for these lies and schemes and beliefs of others that didn't even live with Jesus and are trying to interpret what took place. You see, we see a similar problem

today. Different faiths keep trying to change who Jesus was and is. This is why the conversation about Jesus is so important. It's because it's foundational to our faith. We already talked about this.

This is John circling back to the truth that we need to focus on who Jesus is. That is the foundation of our faith. If that falls apart, everything else is going to crumble. If you start to change the truth about Jesus, you actually end up with a different faith. It's no longer Christianity.

And John says, "I need you to be aware that many will come along claiming to be smarter, to have a higher knowledge, a greater understanding, or maybe even have received a new revelation about Jesus, and they will try to teach that to you, but it won't be true." There have been many who have come over the last 2,000 years to try to teach a different truth about who Jesus is.

There have been many that have claimed to receive a new revelation from God outside of Scripture that now it exposes the real truth, and so we should follow them. John says, "Don't believe it. That is the Spirit of the Antichrist." He wraps up chapter two with verses 28 and 29, and John says, "And now, dear children, continue in him so that when he appears, because he was waiting expectantly for Jesus to appear, when he appears, we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming.

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of Him." Again, there is a sign. Our actions will define us. "Continue in Him," John says, "With great anticipation, with great expectation of His return, you and I as followers of Jesus can be confident. We can be unashamed that one day the truth is going to be seen by all.

So let your conduct, let your life be marked by righteousness. Continue to do good. Continue to be faithful in how you are living. Live in the truth and the excitement that Jesus is the Messiah. Don't let anybody change your mind. As we wrap up chapter two, we can see how important this theme was to John, that we would know the truth about Jesus.

This couldn't be messed up. In John's eyes, this whole truth about Jesus couldn't be messed up because if you miss Jesus, then you miss everything. That's what our faith is about. Jesus was different. He wasn't just some prophet or some human being. He wasn't even just a God, as some people have tried to claim. No, He was capital G God. Yahweh, Elohim, he had to be God.

That's the issue that happens when you try to take away the deity of Jesus. He had to be perfect. He had to be sinless, or the plan doesn't work. The whole story, the good news of Jesus, is that He is God. If He isn't, it doesn't make sense. The sacrifice wouldn't have been sufficient. If you take away Jesus' deity, you take away everything, and it all falls apart. So it shouldn't be surprising to us that this is where Satan attacks.

This is how other faiths get started. This is how other religions get started. He wants to trouble our faith from the very foundation. If I can change your mind about who Jesus is or was, then I can take away salvation. John taught that we are in the last hour. So we have to ask the question, do we live our lives that way? Do we live like we are living in the last hour, not wasting the opportunities that are given to us.

John wants to make sure that every single one of us has the opportunity to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" Even as we started this series, I shared with you, that's the most important question that you will ever answer in your entire life, and it dictates where you spend eternity. John didn't have any doubts. After spending three years with him, John came to the conclusion Jesus is the Messiah.

He is God in the flesh. And this conclusion changed John's life. It can change yours as well. As we close this morning with a song, as always, the altars are open. We'll have people up here that would love to pray with you. If you have a surgery coming up, if you have a relational issue you're struggling with, you just want prayer. That's why we're here. Please come up and receive prayer. If you don't want anybody to pray with you because you have some private business to do with God, that's fine.

Just come to the altars, do your business with God, and we'll make sure to allow you the freedom to do that. Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, I pray that the truth that Jesus is the Messiah would be firmly founded in our hearts and in our minds and in our lives, and that that truth would truly change how we live, how we act, what we view as important, where we spend our time and our energy and our resources, that we would live for you.

Following your example, living a life of righteousness and holiness, pointing others towards you. Thank you for separating us from our sin. Thank you for making us pure through the sacrifice of Jesus. May we continue to love you and may we continue to love others. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.