

# Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



## “Rivals for Our Affections”

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### Devotion and Discussion Questions

**Key Texts (TLV):** 1 John 2:15-17; 1:5-6; 2:1; John 3:16-21; Gen. 3:4-6; Lk. 4:1-9; Jas. 4:13-16

There is always something competing for our hearts. Sometimes it is obvious: a temptation, an unhealthy desire, a craving we know is pulling us away from the Lord. But often it is much more subtle. It can be the mindset of the world slowly shaping how we think, what we value, what we chase, how we treat people, and what we trust for security. We may still use religious language, still know the right verses, still avoid the “wrong” list of behaviors, and yet our hearts can be drawn toward a way of life that is not from the Father.

John has already told us that *“God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all”* (1 Jn. 1:5). So we cannot say we are walking in fellowship with Him while choosing darkness. We cannot claim harmony with the Father while living by the values of a world that rejects His rule, His character, and His love. That is why John’s first real call to action in this letter is so foundational: *“Do not love the world or the things in the world”* (1 Jn. 2:15). He is not calling us to stop loving people, creation, culture, beauty, or the broken. He is calling us to recognize the rival loves that compete with the Father’s love in us.

#### 1. DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD’S DARKNESS

John writes, *“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”* (1 Jn. 2:15). This can be confusing at first because Yeshua Himself said, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son”* (Jn. 3:16). So clearly John is not saying we should not love people. The Father loves the people of the world so much that He gave His Son, not to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. That is God’s way of loving the world: not self-serving, but self-giving... redemptive, sacrificial, holy, full of light.

No, John is warning us against a different kind of love for the world. He is warning us against loving the darkness that the world loves. Yeshua said, *“Now this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world and men loved the darkness instead of the light, because their deeds were evil”* (Jn. 3:19). That is the issue. The world, in this negative sense, is not the mountains, the sea, human cultures, or people who do not yet know the Lord. It is the system of values, desires, and decisions that rejects God’s claims and chooses its own way. To love that system is to love what stands apart from God’s love.

#### 2. RECOGNIZE WHAT THE WORLD IS REALLY OFFERING

John clarifies what he means when he writes, *“For everything in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the boasting of life—is not from the Father but from the world”* (1 Jn. 2:16). These three phrases expose the inner structure of the world’s way of life. The desire of the flesh points to the cravings and longings connected to what is merely human and temporary. It is the pull to live as though this present life, this present appetite, this present hunger, is ultimate. Yeshua faced this temptation in the wilderness when the adversary said, *“If You are Ben-Elohim, tell this stone to become bread”* (Lk. 4:3). But Yeshua answered, *“It is written,*

*'Man shall not live by bread alone'*" (Lk. 4:4). He would not use His power to satisfy Himself apart from the Father's will.

John then names "the desire of the eyes," which is the desire stirred by what we see. This is the craving that comes when the world places something before our eyes and says, "You need this. You deserve this. This will make you whole. This will make you important." It includes greed, envy, materialism, and the longing for what appears beautiful, powerful, impressive, or satisfying apart from the insight God gives. Those held by the grip of the world desire what they see rather than what the Spirit gives them eyes to recognize as good. Then John names "the boasting of life," the prideful confidence of a life built on one's own wisdom, resources, status, cleverness, or wealth. It is the heart that says, "I do not need God. I have this. I can build this. I can secure this. I can make myself great." These same temptations appear in the Garden, where the tree was seen as good for food, desirable to the eyes, and desirable for making one wise. They also appear in the wilderness, where Yeshua was tempted with bread, kingdoms, glory, and spectacle. John is showing us that the world's system is self-centered and grasping: feed what you crave, take what you see, exalt what you have built. But none of this is from the Father.

### **3. CHOOSE THE WILL OF GOD OVER WHAT IS PASSING AWAY**

John then gives the reason this choice matters so much: *"The world is passing away along with its desire, but the one who does the will of God abides forever"* (1 Jn. 2:17). The world's system feels powerful, urgent, and permanent, but it is passing away. Its cravings are passing away. Its pride is passing away. Its promises of control, pleasure, status, wealth, and self-rule are passing away. What the world offers is temporary; what the Lord offers is eternal.

So John is not merely giving us a list of behaviors to avoid. He is going deeper than that. It is possible to avoid certain outward sins and still be driven by a worldly heart and mindset. It is possible to reject whatever a particular religious group labels as "worldly," and yet still live in a self-serving, self-centered, me-first way. Someone can know the wisdom of avoiding alcohol, for example, and still be building a life centered around control, domination, pride, greed, oppression, and self-protection. John is calling us to examine the root system. The deeper problem is the radical autonomy of the human spirit that says, "I will be my own god." But the one who does what God desires, the one whose life is being shaped by the Father's will, remains forever.

### **CONCLUSION**

The call is not to withdraw from people, despise creation, or reduce holiness to a checklist. Yeshua was called a friend of sinners because He loved people with the Father's heart. He sat with the broken, touched the unclean, called sinners to repentance, and revealed the character of God. He was not shaped by the world's system, but He moved toward the world with the love of the Father. That is the difference John is pressing into our hearts.

So the question is not merely, "What do I avoid?" The deeper question is, "What do I love?" What is competing for my affection? What is shaping my desires? Am I being formed by the cravings of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the boasting of life, or is the love of the Father being made complete in me? The world's way is self-centered, grasping, and temporary. The Father's way is light, love, obedience, and life that remains forever.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. In 1 Jn. 2:15, John says not to love the world. How does John's warning differ from God's love for the world in Jn. 3:16?
2. Why is it important to understand "the world" as more than a list of outward behaviors?
3. Where do you most clearly see "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the boasting of life" shaping modern culture today?
4. In your own life, what is one area where the world's values may be competing for your affection or shaping your thinking more than you realized?
5. How can believers love people in the world with the Father's love without adopting the world's values, desires, and ways?

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Avinu Malkhenu*, Our Father, Our King, You are pure light, and there is no darkness in You at all. Search our hearts and show us where rival loves have been competing for our affections. Forgive us for the ways we have loved the darkness, trusted the world's system, or tried to build life around our own desires, our own eyes, and our own pride.

Fill us with the love of the Father. Teach us to love people the way You love the world, without loving the darkness that keeps people bound. Shape our desires by Your Spirit. Train our eyes to see what You call good. Deliver us from the pride of life and from the need to be our own god. May we do Your will and abide in what remains forever.

*B'Shem Yeshua*, In the name of Yeshua, amen.