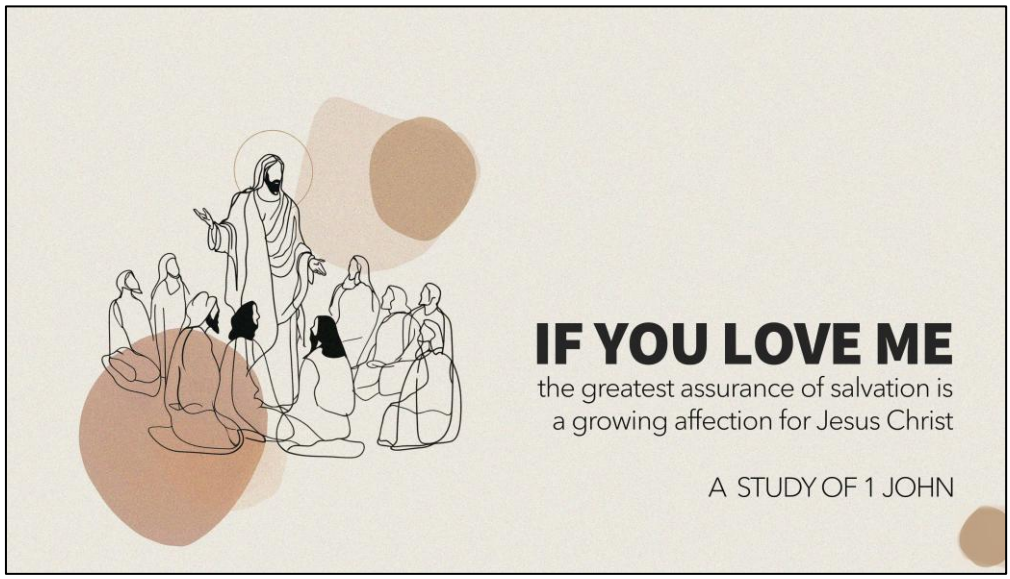


Loving Jesus More

1 John 2:12-17

Lake Arrowhead Church, Waleska, Georgia
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LOVING JESUS MORE
1 John 2:12-17

American companies spend billions of dollars on advertising each year. Fortune 500 companies spent $254 billion on marketing last year. Nike and AT&T spent $2.5 billion. Walmart and Home Depot spent $3 billion. Microsoft and Disney spent $4 billion. And the top advertiser in America was Amazon, which spent $6.7 billion on marketing.

Advertisers often use visual tricks to make us crave their product. Some of those tricks are used by food stylists who photograph food for commercials. Here is the comparison of an actual burger versus the fake burger. And this photograph of a cheesy pizza is actually a trick using glue. And most deceptive of all, the syrup on these pancakes is actually motor oil.

Advertising works by making us crave something. Convincing us that we're missing out, that everyone else is buying it, and that if we buy it, it will make us happy. Temptation works in the same way. Satan tries to entice us and convince us that we're missing out, and if would just grab it, we would be happy.

But around the age of 90, and around the year of 90 AD, the Apostle John gave this warning. "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. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17, ESV).

In 1 John, John explained what Jesus meant when He said, "If you love Me …" John describes what a true Christian looks like. To truly believe and truly love Jesus Christ. And 1 John can be summed up in this sentence. ***The greatest assurance of salvation, the greatest proof of salvation, is a growing affection for Jesus Christ.***

That's why we are studying 1 John, to deepen our love for Jesus Christ. ***And the more we love Him, the less we will be enticed and influenced by the world.***

A WARNING

Writing as a grandfather, John warned a new generation about the influence and seduction of the world. And he called that generation to love Jesus more than anything else.

"I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men … because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:12-14, ESV).

John wrote to every level of spiritual maturity. To "little children," who were young in their faith. To "fathers," the most mature in their faith. And to "young men," who had their whole

lives ahead of them. No matter how long a person had been a Christian, John warned them, and he warns us, "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 John 2:15, ESV).[1]

When John said, "Do not love the world," he was referring to a system of values that disregards God's will and under the influence of Satan. The Bible calls Satan the "prince" of the world, and the "whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (Ephesians 2:2, 1 John 5:19, ESV). The "world" John was talking about is a lifestyle that pursues pleasure, seeks security, gratifies self, and exalts self above God.

The definition of worldliness is when anything entices or influences us to seek pleasure, security, or significance apart from God. It's when "the things of the world" take the place of God in our lives. It's when we love, desire, crave, depend on, or worship anything above God.

That's why John warns us, "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 John 2:15, ESV). It is impossible to love God and love the world at the same time. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24, NIV). James said, "Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4, NIV). And Paul said, "Do not be conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2, ESV).

John was saying, "***Don't make pleasure your god, make God your pleasure***." And that's why we must deepen our love for Jesus. ***Because the more we love Him, the less we will be enticed and influenced by the world.***

SAYING NO TO SAY YES TO SOMETHING BETTER

John challenged a new generation of Christians ***to say "no" in order to say "yes" to something better.*** "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. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world" (1 John 2:15-16, ESV).

As humans, we have a legitimate need for pleasure, security, and value. God created us to enjoy pleasure. He created us with a need for safety and security. He created us to be loved and valued. These are legitimate needs. But Satan, in all his craftiness, perverts these legitimate needs and seduces us to satisfy them outside the will of God. And he uses three traps – pleasure, possessions, and pride.

Pleasure. God created us to enjoy pleasure, whether that's sex, food, or the love of family. But satisfying that need apart from His will is sin. That's why John urges us to restrain "the desires of the flesh." Or the "lust of the flesh" which refers to something that stirs within us. It's an appetite, a craving, and a hunger for pleasure. Of course, that lust could be sexual, but it goes beyond that. The craving can be sex, food, entertainment, or adventure. It's finding pleasure outside the will of God. And John is warning us, don't make pleasure your god, make God your pleasure. And John warns us about deceiving ourselves, and saying, "Surely, not me."

Possessions. God also created many beautiful and wonderful things in this world for us to enjoy. But the trap is when those things become possessions, and when those possessions become our satisfaction and security. "The desire of the eyes" is wanting more and more and more. It could be anything from a new golf club to a new car. It's this constant need to upgrade and to have more.

Jesus warned us about the pleasure of possessions or seeking security in possessions with this parable. "Beware!" He said. "Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own." Then He told this story. "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I'll sit back and say to myself, 'My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!' But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?'" Then Jesus said, "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God" (Luke 12:15-21, NLT).[2]

When John warned us about "the desire of the eyes," he was warning us about greed and envy, coveting and materialism. He was also warning us about a lack of contentment. So did Paul. "For we have brought nothing into the world," he said, "so we cannot take anything out of it, either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction" (1 Timothy 6:6-9, NAS). Very simply, the Bible says, "Be content with what you have" (Hebrews 13:5, ESV).

Again, John warns us about deceiving ourselves, and saying, "Surely, not me."

Pride. God also created us with a need to be loved and valued. But again, how we satisfy that need makes all the difference. "The pride of life" (ESV) is also translated "the boastful pride of life" (NAS).[3] It means "arrogance of life." It's a life driven by ego. It's saying, "Look at what I've done!" and "Look at who I am!" But the Bible says, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18, ESV). God warns us, "Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think" (Romans 12:3).

Again, John warns us about deceiving ourselves, and saying, "Surely, not me."

Pleasure, possession, and pride. The "desire of the flesh" could be sex, food, alcohol, travel, fun, adventure, entertainment, anything that gives us more pleasure than our love for God. The "desire of the eyes" could be possessions, money, stuff, anything that gives us more satisfaction and security than our love for God. The "pride of life" could be success, accomplishment, titles, degrees, anything that gives us more significance than our love for God.

Pleasure, possession, and pride can derail any of us. Here's an example. Demas was a traveling companion of Paul. He participated in preaching the Gospel and encouraging churches throughout the Roman Empire. Demas left his home and his family and risked his life for the Gospel. And yet, here is what the Bible says about him. "Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me" (2 Timothy 4:10, ESV). As one writer put it, "What a tragedy! A life wasted … He deserted his Savior."[4] What happened? "Before Demas deserted, he drifted."[5]

And so will we, if a love for the things of the world exceeds our love for Jesus Christ.

MODERN-DAY IDOLS

After all the things John wrote about in his letter – about the deity of Christ, resisting sin, loving each other, obeying Christ's commands, prayer, and eternity – the last thing he said was "little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21, ESV).

When we think of idols, we think of the golden calf the Hebrews made when they tired of waiting on God. We think of the first of the Ten Commandments, when God said, "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above … You shall not bow down to it or serve it, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:3-5, ESV).

And when it comes to ancient idols, Isaiah said, "Those (with gold or silver) hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god, then they fall down and worship it! They lift it on their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there, and it cannot move. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save one from his trouble" (Isaiah 46:6-7, ESV).[6]

Ancient idols sound absurd to our modern minds, of making your own god out of wood or gold and thinking it will help. But what about modern-day idols?

Again, ***the definition of worldliness is when anything entices or influences us to seek pleasure, security, or significance apart from God***. It's when we love "the things of the world." It's when we love, desire, crave, depend on, or worship anything above God. It's when "the things of the world" become an idol.

Your degrees and your titles can become an idol. Your career and success can become an idol. Your self-image, the image you project to others, your need to impress, can become an idol. Financial security can become an idol. Politics can become an idol. Your nicely decorated house can become an idol. Travel, sports, entertainment, and living from one thrill to another can become an idol. The comfortable life you've made can become an idol.

An idol is anything that gives us pleasure, security, or significance apart from or more than our relationship with God.

Do we have idols today? Yes. How do we know? How can we recognize when something that seems innocent has become an idol in our lives? If the grandchildren spend the weekend with you and all you ate was pizza and ice cream, when you step on the scales on Monday morning, you'll know you over did it. But what scales can we step on to show when something has become an idol?

So much of the Christian depends on time in God's word, walking with Jesus, and being filled with the Holy Spirit. As we read God's word, His truth exposes the idols in our lives. As we walk with Jesus, in relationship with Him, He exposes the idols in our lives. And when we allow the Holy Spirit to stir in our hearts, He exposes the idols in our lives. And friends, trusted spiritual

friends, who love us enough to tell us the truth about ourselves, can help us identify the idols in our lives.

Again, John warns us. "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. 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" (1 John 2:15-16, ESV).

And then John said, "The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17, ESV). "The things in the world," all the pleasures of the world, will not satisfy and will not last.

James warns us, "Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4, ESV). Paul urges us, "Do not be conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2, ESV). And Paul said, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2, ESV).

LOVING JESUS MORE

The purpose of studying 1 John is to deepen our love for Jesus Christ.[7] That's the cure for worldliness. ***The more we love Jesus, the less we will be enticed and influenced by the world.***[8] As the hymn says, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus and the things of earth will grow strangely dim."[9]

When John wrote 1 John, he was 90 years old and was the elder statesman and spiritual father of the church in Ephesus. In the book of Revelation, John recorded the words of Jesus to the church at Ephesus. So John was there, in Ephesus, when Jesus commended the church for their "toil and perseverance" and for taking a stand against false teachers. John was there, in Ephesus, when Jesus confronted the church. "But I have this against you, you have left your first love" (Revelation 2:4, NAS). The church known for its courage and its theology had left their first love. They believed all the right things; they just did not love Jesus like they used to.

In this precious letter, John explained what Jesus meant when He said, "If you love Me" (John 14:15, NAS).[10] What does it mean to love Him?

- To respect Him and revere Him.
- To cherish Him, value Him, honor Him, and count Him precious and dear.
- To love Jesus is to long to sit with Him, walk with Him, and talk with Him.
- To love Jesus is to be in relationship that goes both ways. Mutual affection, mutual love. It's loving Him and being loved by Him.
- To love Jesus is make Him the priority of your life, to put Him first, as Paul said, to "give Him first place in everything" (Colossians 1:18, NAS).
- And the greater our appreciation for what He did for us on the cross, the greater our affection for Him. The more we consider how much He loved us, the more we will love Him.
- To love Jesus is to proudly say, "He is *my* Savior and He is *my* Lord."

CONCLUSION

"Hey John, why do you love Jesus?"

Paraphrasing John from the opening of his letter, "*The Creator of the universe has appeared. I've seen Him, I've heard Him, and even touched Him. I'm an eyewitness and I proclaim to you that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In a human body, He died on a cross for our sins. But then, miraculously, He came back to life. And through Him, we can have eternal life. I love Jesus because He has invited me into a relationship that will never end.* ***I love Jesus because the life He offers is far more satisfying than anything this life can offer."***

NOTES

[1] When John said, "Do not love the world," he was not contradicting John 3:16, when Jesus said, "For God so loved the world." Jesus was talking about how God loved every person in the world so much that He gave up His Son to save the world. When John said, "Do not love the world," he was not talking about creation or nature. Genesis says, "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31, ESV). The world God created is a beautiful and wonderful place. But the world has also been corrupted by sin, and we now live in a fallen world.

[2] In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21, ESV).

[3] The Greek word for "pride of life" is ἀλαζονεία (*alazoneia*), and refers to arrogance, boasting, and pride.

[4] C. J. Mahaney, *Worldliness: Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), page 19.

[5] Ibid., page 20.

[6] See also Isaiah 40:19-20.

[7] When we focus on the cross, Puritan John Owen says, "The baits of sin lose their attraction and disappear. Fill your affections with the cross of Christ and you will find no room for sin." [Mahaney, quoting John Owen, "Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," from *The Works of John Owen.*] And John Piper adds, "I know of no other way to triumph over sin than to gain a distaste for it because of a superior satisfaction in God." [John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of A Christian Hedonist* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2003), page 12.]

[8] The psalmist Asaph made God his pleasure. "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25, ESV).

[9] Lyrics from the hymn "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus."

[10] See also John 14:21, 14:23, 15:10.