

Weekly Tools - Apr 19, 2026

Discussion Questions

In what ways do you experience the tension between wanting to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and being drawn to the patterns and pleasures of the world?

How does understanding the world as a spiritual and moral kingdom rather than just physical creation change the way you view your daily choices and allegiances?

When you examine your life honestly, which of the three temptations (desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, or pride of life) do you find yourself most susceptible to, and why?

What does it reveal about God's character that He sent Jesus to overcome the same temptations in the wilderness that Adam and Eve failed in the garden?

How might viewing repentance as a gift rather than a burden transform your relationship with God and your willingness to confess sin?

In what practical ways can you shift from trying harder in your own strength to abiding in Christ and allowing His victory to work through you?

How does the concept that only Jesus can change your affections challenge the modern belief that looking within yourself is the path to becoming who you were meant to be?

What would it look like for you to walk into spaces with a 'there you are' posture instead of a 'here I am' mentality, and how might this combat the pride of life?

How does understanding that the war for your soul is spiritual rather than merely behavioral change the way you approach sin and spiritual growth?

What specific practices of abiding in Christ (worship, Scripture reading, prayer, community) do you need to prioritize in order to cultivate greater affection for God over the world?

5-Day Devotional: The War for Your Affections

Day 1: Recognizing the Battle

Reading: 1 John 2:15-17; Ephesians 2:1-5

Devotional: You are at war, though not the kind fought with weapons. This is a battle for your heart's allegiance—God or the world system that pulls you away from Him. The world isn't inherently evil; God created it good. But sin has twisted it into a system designed to keep you from loving God rightly. Today, acknowledge this reality. You weren't made for this conflict; you were made for love. Yet here you stand, daily choosing which kingdom receives your loyalty. The tragedy isn't that temptation exists, but that we often mistake the chaotic familiarity of worldly patterns for home. Ask yourself honestly: where are my affections truly set? Confession is the first step toward freedom.

Day 2: The Unholy Trinity Within

Reading: Genesis 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11

Devotional: Three forces wage war within you: desires of the flesh (self-indulgence), desires of the eyes (covetousness), and pride of life (self-sufficiency). Eve faced all three in the garden—the fruit looked good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for wisdom. These same temptations assaulted Jesus in the wilderness, yet He stood firm through God's Word. Notice how subtle these desires are. They don't announce themselves as rebellion; they whisper of deserving comfort, needing what you see, and building security apart from God. Today, identify which of these three most frequently captures your heart. Don't shame yourself—simply see it clearly. Awareness is the beginning of transformation, not condemnation.

Day 3: The Greater Affection

Reading: John 15:1-11; Hebrews 12:1-3

Devotional: You cannot defeat old affections by willpower alone. Thomas Chalmers wrote that only "the expulsive power of a new affection" can displace the old. That new affection is Jesus Himself. Where you fail, He succeeded. Where you're weak, He's strong. The Christian life isn't about trying harder to love God; it's about beholding Jesus until your heart is captured by something better than what the world offers. Fix your eyes on Him—the One who endured the cross for the joy set before Him. That joy was you, redeemed and brought home. Today, spend time simply looking at Jesus in Scripture. Don't just read about Him; see Him dying for your

fleshly desires, rising to conquer your wandering eyes, and emptying Himself to destroy your pride.

Day 4: Abiding in the Victor

Reading: John 3:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Devotional: Being Christian isn't adopting a new religion—it's receiving a new nature. When Jesus told Nicodemus he must be "born again," He meant a complete transformation, not incremental improvement. Through the Spirit, you receive Christ's very heart, the one that chose the Father over the world. You don't fight this war by imitating Jesus from a distance; you abide in Him, letting His victory become yours. His wilderness triumph over temptation isn't just an example—it's a power now living in you. Today, practice abiding. In moments of temptation, don't just resist; turn to Christ within you. Pray, "Jesus, You already defeated this. Live Your victory through me now." Abiding isn't passive; it's active dependence on the One already victorious.

Day 5: Living in the True Home

Reading: Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:9-12

Devotional: You're no longer a wanderer between two homes. In Christ, you've been brought into the Father's house—a place of steady love, discipline, protection, and genuine care. Yes, it feels unfamiliar at first. The chaotic patterns of the world feel normal because you've known them longest. But you're learning to trust this better home. Repentance isn't punishment; it's the gift of running back to the Father when you've wandered. Worship reminds your heart where you belong. Scripture is the Father's voice saying, "I've done this for you." Prayer is conversing with the One who holds everything together. And community—you cannot fight alone. Surround yourself with others exploring God's house. Today, take one practical step: confess to someone safe, worship intentionally, or invite another believer into your struggle. You're home now. Live like it.

Small Group Guide: "A War of Loves"

Based on 1 John 2:15-17

Opening Prayer

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to His truth, and to help the group honestly examine where their affections lie.

Ice Breaker (5-10 minutes)

Share about a time when you had to choose between two good things. What made the decision difficult? How did you ultimately decide?

Key Scripture

1 John 2:15-17

"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, 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."

Key Takeaways

1. **We are in a spiritual war for our affections** - The battle isn't against countries or people, but for our souls and what we love.
2. **The "world" is a spiritual system, not creation itself** - John isn't talking about hating nature or people, but the spiritual kingdom that opposes God.
3. **Three manifestations of worldly love:**
 - Desires of the flesh (self-directed indulgence)
 - Desires of the eyes (being ruled by appearance and acquisition)
 - Pride of life (life revolving around self, not God)
4. **Only Jesus can change our loves** - We cannot win this war by trying harder; we need a greater affection to replace the old ones.

5. **Jesus overcame what we couldn't** - Where Adam and Eve (and we) fell to temptation, Jesus succeeded and offers us His victory.
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the War (15 minutes)

1. **The pastor said, "Do you realize that you're at war?"** How does thinking about the Christian life as a "war of loves" change your perspective on daily struggles with sin?
2. **What does it mean that the world is "inherently good" but "twisted"?** How does this help us understand what we should and shouldn't love?
3. **Read John 3:16 and compare it to 1 John 2:15.** How can God love "the world" while commanding us not to? What's the difference?

The Enemy Within (20 minutes)

4. **The sermon defined sin as "a deep corruption of the heart that turns our loves away from God."** How is this different from just thinking of sin as "breaking rules"?
5. **Discuss the "unholy trinity" from Genesis 3 and 1 John 2:16:**
 - **Desires of the flesh:** What are some modern examples of good things becoming overindulgent comfort mechanisms? (Consider food, entertainment, relationships, etc.)
 - **Desires of the eyes:** When have you experienced FOMO (fear of missing out) or the "grass is greener" mentality affecting your spiritual life?
 - **Pride of life:** In what areas of life are you most tempted to think "I don't really need God for this"?
6. **The pastor said, "When you're constantly desiring what you see, how is it forming you for later?"** How have you seen the downstream effects of worldly desires in your own life or in others?

The Greater Affection (20 minutes)

7. **Read Matthew 4:1-11 (Jesus' temptation in the wilderness).** How did Jesus overcome each temptation? What does this teach us about fighting our own battles?
8. **The quote from Thomas Chalmers states: "The only way to dispose the heart of an old affection is the expulsive power of a new one."**
 - What does this mean practically?
 - How is this different from just "trying harder" to stop sinning?
9. **The pastor emphasized that being a Christian means having "a whole new nature" through being born again.** How does understanding that Jesus lives through you change how you approach temptation?

10. **The sermon used the analogy of a child moving between a chaotic home and a good home.**
- Which "home" feels more familiar to you right now?
 - What would it look like to trust the "good home" of God's love more this week?
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Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

Take 2-3 minutes of silence for personal reflection, then share as comfortable:

Choose one question to reflect on quietly:

- What am I loving right now? (Be specific and honest)
- Where am I trying to build security apart from God?
- What would change in my life if I truly believed Jesus has already won this war for me?

Optional sharing: Is there one insight from your reflection you'd be willing to share with the group?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge (Choose 1-2):

1. **Daily Affection Check**
 - Each evening, ask yourself: "What did I set my affections on today—God or the world?"
 - Journal specific examples and bring them to God in prayer
2. **Identify Your Weak Spots**
 - Write down which of the three (desires of flesh, eyes, or pride of life) you struggle with most
 - Find a Scripture that speaks to that specific struggle
 - Memorize it and speak it when tempted
3. **Practice "There You Are" vs. "Here I Am"**
 - This week, when entering rooms or conversations, intentionally think "there you are" instead of "here I am"
 - Look for one way to serve or encourage someone without them knowing it was you
4. **Abide in Christ**
 - Set aside 15 minutes each day to simply "be" with Jesus (not asking for things, just being present)
 - Read John 15:1-17 slowly each day this week

- Ask: "What does it mean for me to abide in You today, Jesus?"
- 5. **Repentance as Gift**
 - When you sin this week, practice immediate repentance as a "gift" rather than shame
 - Thank God that you can run to Him, not from Him
 - Remind yourself: "Jesus has already covered this"

Accountability Partner

Pair up with someone in the group and commit to:

- Sharing one specific area where you're battling worldly affections
 - Checking in mid-week via text or call
 - Praying specifically for each other's "war of loves"
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Prayer Time (10-15 minutes)

Guided Prayer Prompts:

1. **Confession:** Honestly confess to God where your affections have been misdirected this week
2. **Gratitude:** Thank Jesus for going into the wilderness and winning the victory you couldn't win
3. **Surrender:** Ask the Holy Spirit to give you new affections—greater love for God than for the world
4. **Intercession:** Pray for others in your group who are fighting their own battles

Closing Prayer:

"Father, we confess that we often love the world more than we love You. We give ourselves to comfort, to appearances, and to pride. Thank You that Jesus has already won this war for us. Help us to abide in Him, to trust His victory, and to find our affections drawn more and more to You. Where our flesh is weak, may Your Spirit be strong. In Jesus' name, Amen."

For Next Week

- Read 1 John 2:18-27 in preparation for next week's discussion
- Come prepared to share one way you experienced victory over worldly affections through abiding in Christ

- Bring your questions about what it means to "abide" in Jesus
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Additional Resources

Recommended Reading:

- *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection* by Thomas Chalmers (70 pages)
- John 15:1-17 (Jesus on abiding)
- Ephesians 2:1-10 (dead in sin, alive in Christ)

For Further Study:

- Compare the three temptations of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11) with the three temptations in the Garden (Genesis 3:1-7)
- Study other "war" passages: Ephesians 6:10-20, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, 1 Peter 5:8-9