

1 John 2:15-17 ▪ No Competing Loves

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Intro: There is a story about the late evangelist Billy Graham that is quite insightful.

It goes back to when Graham was dating his wife during their college years. He found out through the grapevine that she had another guy friend she would spend time with—which may have fallen in the category of a date.

Billy Graham was serious about the relationship and expected the same from her. So he had a serious conversation with her and said,

“You have two options. Either you can date me. Or you can date every other guy in the world *except me.*”

In other words, in this relationship there can be *no competing loves*.

› The same standard is there spiritually—when we come to Christ, he says: No competing loves.

—These few verses remind us of that.

Review: Last week we ended with Gospel Encouragement—drawn from 12-14.

—Your sins are forgiven!

—You know God.

—You are strong and God’s word resides in you.

—You are spiritual overcomers.

- We move from Gospel Encouragement to Gospel Warning

It’s helpful to see the balanced way in which the Lord disciplines us.

It’s like dieting. Diets that restrict to one element don’t typically last over the long haul. Like no-carb diets fads. They worked for a short time because of the shock value—but do not bring about change over the long haul.

Our bodies need a healthy balance of micronutrients protein, faith, and carbs.

IN our spiritual lives—we can’t live off just encouragement; we also need warnings...promises, wisdom...rebukes.

We are moving from gospel assurance to gospel exhortation.

Do not!

- You may have heard before “Love is the Answer”—the answer is not always love....it depends on *what* you love, who you love.
- Believers are called to love God, His Word, and other believers ... but

› Then we are hit with: Do not love the world!

- The present form of the command means this is an *ongoing action*.

It could come across: Stop loving the world!!

- You may ask: Why not love the world? Doesn't the Bible say that God so loved the world ([Jn 3:16](#))

—In 1 John, “the world” takes on different shades of meaning. We need to look at the context.

1. The whole created order
2. The unbelieving pagan society
3. The *fallen condition* that is in need of redemption and repair

**It includes any of the influences in our life that cause us to remain in the fallen condition—that resists the repair work of the Spirit.*

World= affections, attitudes, and actions that are sinfully opposed to God's will.

- It's also important to know what is meant by love. Love is not a mere emotion—love is the steady devotion of our will. **Love is what we *prefer* and *practice*.

What if?

- So clearly the world is the competition; it's the threat.
- What if we take the bait, hook line and sinker?
- Here, the consequences are spelled out:

If the world captures our hearts, it means one thing: *God's love has not*.

- The “what if” is clear: The love of the Father is not in him. It means we have no love for God left in our hearts if we love the world.

A husband can't come home from work one day and tell his bride, "I met this other woman recently...she is very nice, you would love her too. I'll make room for both. "

That's called adultery. It's incompatible with true love and devotion in the marriage.

If we allow for competing love—it's akin to spiritual adultery.

James 4:4 ESV

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

This means that our hearts cannot be divided. It's a call for full allegiance to the Lord Christ.

Like a one-way street, our affection must move in one direction: away from the world and to God.

› ***The Kingdom of this World, and the Kingdom of the Father can never coexist peacefully.*

What is?

- We are given 3 marks of "all that is in the world".
- Just to be clear, this does not mean that things in creation is bad. This is not a rejection of the material world.

Some have misunderstood this. John is not a pleasure crushing person, trying to make us feel bad for enjoying God's good gifts of life and beauty.

It's not a contradiction of Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 9:7–8 ESV

Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

› The problem is not what God has created—the problem is that we turn things into *idols*.

(v16)

- Desires of the flesh & Desires of the eyes:
- Some translations translate the word desire as lust (KJV, NSAB, NIV, CSB)—to highlight these are sinful desires.

-Lust of the flesh: ungodly desire that comes from our sinful nature

-Lust of the eye: ungodly cravings that come from what we see. We can lust after a person (sexual lust) or we can lust after a product (coveting).

E.G. The eyes are a powerful example of an avenue to sin in the OT.

—Eve lays eyes on the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6)

—Achan casts a coveting look at clothes and gold (Josh 7:21)

—David's lustful look at Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2)

Apply: Be careful little eyes what you see.

—Pride of life

- The word translated pride means pretension or arrogance—it's what we take glory in.
- The word "life" is not the normal word for physical life, but often used for material possessions.

1 John 3:17 ESV

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

- In Lk 15:12 to describe the property the prodigal son requested as part of his inheritance.
- It may refer to lifestyle also. Used for civilian life—in contrast to a soldier's life in 2 Tim 2:4
- ESV footnote—pride in possessions is more helpful in understanding. Arrogance of your lifestyle.

One commentator, "the vaunted sense of self-importance derived from one's possessions, position, or prestige."

Whatever gives us a sense of self-importance apart from Christ fits this category.

The other time we see this word for pride in the NT is Jas 4:16—lets take a look.

James 4:13–16 ESV

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

We can really catch the heart of this worldly thinking in that example, can't we? Arrogance of lifestyle—when our main goal is to live a certain way. When all of our planning and purpose is tied to attain a certain lifestyle.

John Piper has a very well-known sermon he preached where he chided an article he read. The main focus was on a couple who retired early so they could live in Florida and collect shells.

“My shell collection Lord...Here is my shell collection”.

We don't have to be nearing retirement for it to apply; whatever we own can quickly own us—and create a false sense of confidence.

This one in particular has such a strong hold on people.

Apply: We know that God gives us good things to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17)—but do we know, do we have enough self-criticism to know when things become a barrier in our discipleship?

Jesus warns:

Luke 8:14 ESV

And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

Apply: This is why we need to take this so serious. The way I understand the parable of the sower is that only the good soil is a heart of a true believer. It's not an option to say, “Yeah, I've been sort of a world-loving believer most of my journey.”

Why?

- The final verse answers.
- Children have a hard time hearing “Do not”—so they often ask, “why?”.

The world is passing away.

(cf. 2:8)—same exact word is used and gets us to the “Why”.

Apply: Someday all of our possessions will mean nothing. They will be gone.

And one day sin will be gone too!

So why linger in this world.

So how should we live in the world - use the world?

1 Corinthians 7:31 ESV

and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

Yet there is another thing to note:

- › “Do not” are often lifesaving.

—Do not drive recklessly or distracted.

—Do not go on the boat without lifejackets.

Apply: The *Do Not Love the World* of 1 John 2—is not just good advice—it’s a matter of spiritual life and death.

When I was a young boy—7 or 8 years old, I rode my bike everywhere in our neighborhood. There was a pretty busy, main artery road.

Across the street an old building was being torn down. It’s every young boy’s dream to watch earth moving equipment and wrecking balls.

So late one afternoon I crossed the street to check it out.

It was also getting close to the time my parents said to be home. I distinctly remember the small blue digital watch I had on.

So I quickly jumped on my bike and started to cross the street. Immediately I heard car tires screeching and saw a few tons of a 1980’s vehicle moving rapidly toward my tiny 8 yr. old body.

My life flashed before my eyes and I really thought I was going to get hit. In God’s kindness the car came to a screeching halt a few feet away.

I’m sure that at some point I was given the typical commands—do not cross the busy road, *and do not cross any road unless you look both ways*.

But I didn’t listen carefully, and it almost cost me my life.

Friends, we need to stop loving this world if we are going to abide forever.

Conclusion:

One preacher commented on this text:

“The more you are gratified, the less you will be satisfied.”

It summarizes the final why.

Why should we take this seriously?

Why take pains to stop loving the world?

Ultimately because we have a Father who is good and wants to do good. We have a Father who gives good gifts to his children.

The sinful world, comes in the packaging that looks good—but remember who is behind it:

A Deceiver

The Father of Lies

A Murderer

“The more you are gratified, the less you will be satisfied.”

John 10:10 ESV

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Lord, let there be no competing loves that remain as we drink in the abundance that Christ offers.