

Why We Must Not Love the World

1 John 2:12-17

October 23rd, 2022

1. Be _____ (2:12-14)

2. Be _____ (2:15-17)
 - a. Do not _____ the _____.
 - i. The world is the system that is _____ to God in its thinking and behavior.
 - ii. _____ people follow the ways of the world before coming to Christ.
 - iii. The world is under the power and influence of the _____.
 - iv. Believers are still in the world but must not be _____ by the world.
 - b. Because it is incompatible with loving the _____ (vv. 15-16)
 - c. Because it is _____ away (v. 17)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on 1 John 2:12-17

1. How should the affirmations contained in 2:12-14 encourage you?
2. Review the following verses and summarize what they teach about “the world.”
 - a. John 15:8-9
 - b. Ephesians 2:1-2
 - c. 1 John 5:19
 - d. James 1:27
 - e. Romans 12:2
3. Why can't we love the world and love God at the same time? James 4:4; Matthew 6:24
4. How can we appreciate truth, beauty, and goodness in the world without inappropriately “loving the world?”
5. Why is important to remember that this world is temporary?
6. In what ways are you most tempted to love the world or the things of the world?
7. Rather than loving the world, how does John 17:15-18 explain the perspective we should have regarding the world? How are we sent into the world in a similar way as Jesus was sent into the world?

Why We Must Not Love the World

1 John 2:12-17

October 23rd, 2022

Big idea: We need to be affirmed in what we have and warned about what we must not love.

Intro

You probably don't know anyone suffering from too much encouragement. Not flattery but true encouragement.

Most of us are aware of many ways we are falling short, even if we are blind to other areas.

Most of us know we should do better, could do better.

We need encouragement and we need it from each other.

Hebrews 10:24-25 ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Paul is both commanding encouragement AND providing it by saying, "You're already doing this!"

Part of gospel culture in a church

The word means speaking that relieves sorrow or distress; comfort, cheer up

How do we encourage?

Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Chewing on God's Word together

Reminding each other of gospel doctrine

Romans 1:12 that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

Hearing and sharing stories of God's faithfulness

A challenging book like 1 John can intensify our need for encouragement as it puts a finger on some things that prick our conscience – we know we aren't obeying God perfectly and we aren't loving others perfectly. While those things are given as evidences of salvation, John sprinkles encouragement throughout the books.

This passage continues with a warning but before he gets to a warning, he encourages.

Children – this is what you have, this is who you are, this is what I see in you, this is what the gospel has produced.

That's good for us to hear. We need encouragement. We need to be reminded of what we already have not simply prodded into action or warned about dangers.

1. Be ***encouraged*** (2:12-14)
 - a. The poetic feel of this provides a break in the letter for emphasis to provide encouragement.
 - i. There is some debate over the categories of children, fathers, young men
 - ii. Do they represent stages of spiritual maturity in God's family as people move from spiritual children to spiritual youths to spiritually mature?

1. Maybe, but the descriptions for each overlap and its hard to see how they match stages of spiritual growth.
- iii. Do they refer to actual ages of the people?
 1. Possibly, fathers and young men are used of specific age groups in other places.
 - a. **1 Timothy 5:1** Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but *rather* appeal to *him* as a father, *to* the younger men as brothers,
- iv. His audience, like our church today, would be made up of a variety of ages and a variety of stages of spiritual growth.
 1. What's most important in this section is the encouragement – there isn't a command in these verses. There isn't a warning. There isn't a critique. There isn't a "do better." Instead what we have is a series of encouragements for what the believers already have.
- b. A few notes on the format of this section:
 - i. "I am writing" and "I have written" – stylistic for emphasis and repetition
 - ii. "because" is functioning as a "since" or "that."
- c. "Children" - Your sins have been forgiven, you know the Father
 - i. After explaining that growing obedience is an evidence of saving faith, including the growing obedience to the command to love, the assurance comes back to this – our sins are forgiven.
 1. Our disobedience is forgiven
 2. Our lack of love is forgiven
 - ii. And our sins are forgiven "for His name's sake."
 1. Communicates two things
 - a. We are not the terminus of God's plan but His glory and name are. Our forgiveness brings Him glory.
 - b. Our forgiveness is on account of Jesus.
 - i. Moving illustration this week by Hershael York on the two protestors who splashed tomato soup on a priceless painting. Gasps of concern for the painting but the museum explained that there was some damage to the frame but there was a crystal clear glass pane in front of the image that took the damage so the painting is undamaged. The glass took the attack meant for the painting.
 - iii. We know the Father.
 1. God is the gospel in that the gospel get's us to God. It get's our sin out of the way so we can know the Father.
 2. **1 Peter 3:18a** For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God,
- d. "Fathers" - You know Him who has been from the beginning (2x)
 - i. References back to 1:1-4 where the real Jesus was encountered by the apostles and told to everyone else. These "father" – whether spiritually mature ones or just the older believers know Him.

1. It makes sense that this would refer to older believers who have walked with Jesus for decades. What a blessing older members are to a church. Every time I teach Discovering UBC, I mentioned that although we have an emphasis on the campus, we have always wanted to be a church that has more than college students. Why? Because college students need the whole body. We need older saints who have walked with Jesus through economic recessions, miscarriages, church conflict, budget shortfalls, building programs, community changes, political movements that come and go, and through it all they know Jesus.
2. **Jeremiah 9:23-24** Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

e. "Young men" –

i. You have overcome the evil one (2x)

1. **1 John 4:2-4** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. ⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

ii. You are strong

1. Such clear affirmation and encouragement
2. **Ephesians 6:10** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.
 - a. Commanded but then affirmed in 1 John.

iii. The word of God abides in you

1. Not just "you've read the Bible" or "you have the Bible app" or "you know where your Bible is" but God's Word is in you.

f. These are truths to remind yourself of when you're discouraged.

- i. When you have to face a difficult conversation, you can remind yourself, "I'm forgiven by God. My biggest problem is solved. I know God and He knows me. Because of Jesus, I don't need to fear even the evil one himself. I'm strong in Jesus."

1. That isn't motivational mumbo jumbo. That's truth!

g. After encouraging he gives a negative exhortation – a serious "do not" – but don't view the warning apart from the encouragement. They belong together – look at what you have and I'm so encouraged by you! But/and there is danger here.

2. Be **warned** (2:15-17)

a. Do not **love** the **world**

- i. There are two key words in this passage: "love" and "world."

1. Both of these words must be unpacked as to their meaning to understand John's point. (Allen)
2. Because we might wonder, doesn't God love the world? John 3:16 – "for God so loved the world..."

- a. Why is it good for God to love the world but bad for us to love the world?
 - b. It comes down to these two words – love and world.
- 3. Different sense of love
 - a. God’s love is a holy love of redemption vs the selfish love of participation.
 - b. God’s love aims to save the sinner, the second aims to share his sin.
- 4. Different sense of world.
 - a. World can be used in scripture of the planet, the people, or the world system that is opposed to God in it’s thinking and behavior.
 - b. God loves the people but God opposes the system that opposes Him, and He warns us not to align with that world system.
- ii. The world is the system that is **opposed** to God in its thinking and behavior.
 - 1. **John 15:18-19** "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.
- iii. **All** people follow the ways of the world before coming to Christ.
 - 1. **Ephesians 2:1-2a** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world,
- iv. The world is under the power and influence of the **evil one**.
 - 1. **1 John 5:19** We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.
- v. Believers are still in the world but must not be **polluted** by the world or **love** the world.
 - 1. **James 1:27** Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and ***to keep oneself unstained by the world.***
 - 2. **Romans 12:2** And ***do not be conformed to this world***, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
- vi. “...or the things in the world.”
 - 1. There is also great beauty in the world to love – changing seasons, flickering aspens leaves against a white bark, art, music, diverse cultures, etc. That’s not what this is referring to, unless beauty and art hide a message that is anti-God, which certainly can happen.
 - a. There is a truth, beauty, and goodness that go hand in hand. We want to cultivate a love for truth, goodness, and beauty that we see in God’s world. That’s what a good education should seek to do.
 - 2. What he is critiquing and warning about are not “from the Father” – beauty in creation and even beauty created by His image bearers are from the Father.
- b. Because it is incompatible with loving the **Father** (vv. 15-16)
 - i. Some loves complimentary and exclusive
 - 1. You can love more than one child and as your household grows, your love for individual children doesn’t decrease.
 - ii. But some loves are mutually exclusive.

1. Imagine proposing marriage and your would-be-fiance responds, "Yes, I will marry you. And I'll cooperate in a home with you and be a partner in life, but you need to know that I love someone else." Would you still get married? Not if you're smart! There is an exclusivity to marital love.
 2. **James 4:4** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
- iii. He then explains why that love is incompatible.
1. These things are not from the Father.
 2. Lust of the flesh – desires that come from our fallen humanity apart from the influence of God's saving and changing grace in our lives. Broad category.
 3. Lust of the eyes – desires coming from what we see and crave, whether it is appropriate or not.
 - a. It could be sexual – constantly wandering eyes for every beauty that walks past.
 - b. It could be coveting things that belong to others, even lifestyles that you just want to trade your life for and it starts to consume you.
 - c. It's a focus on what "looks good" regardless of whether it is pleasing to God.
 4. Boastful pride of life – boasting in pride in your money, possessions, success, life; seeking to impress people with your wealth and possessions.
 - a. Social media can fuel this – Not just what we might think of as pornographic material but Instagram influencers presenting a vision of their lives that flaunts wealth, success, surface beauty – and it isn't real but it does stir up discontentment and coveting.
- c. Because it is *passing* away (v. 17)
- i. Present tense – currently passing away – it's temporary.
 - ii. The term can be used of a curtain coming down at the end of a scene in a play and the props are moved off stage.
 1. This world in opposition to God is temporary and passing away, like a scene in a play that is coming to an end. Why live for it?
 2. A character actor named Charles Dutton has had a successful career as actor, including a Golden Globe Nomination, multiple Emmy's, he graduated from the school of Drama at Yale, but you would not have expected him to be successful if you saw him as a young man. He spent 7 years in prison for manslaughter and a series of other crimes. It was actually while in prison that he started acting and developed a passion for it. But he was asked one time in an interview, "how did you make the transition through those prison years to Broadway?" His answer was, "Unlike other prisoners, I never decorated my cell because I wanted to be reminded every day this place is temporary." Prison was temporary. He was living for life after prison. (adapted from David Allen)
 3. Likewise, this world is temporary. It's passing away. Not the good that God has made – all that is true, beautiful, and good will endure. But all that is in opposition to Him will not endure.
 4. Why should we live for a world system that is opposed to God? Can we do that and pray, "Your kingdom come?" If we're praying that honestly, do we mean it even if it confronts the little kingdom we are building?

3. Applying the Word

- a. There isn't a need for additional clarified application points – it's just the two points we see in the passage!
 - i. Be encouraged – look at all that you have in Christ!
 - ii. Be warned – the world will entice you to love it, don't.



Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 1:12 that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

1. Be *encouraged* (2:12-14)

1 Peter 3:18a For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God,

Jeremiah 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;

Jeremiah 9:23-24 ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

1 John 4:2-4 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

1 John 4:2-4 ⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

2. Be warned (2:15-17)

a. Do not love the world

i. The world is the system that is opposed to God in its thinking and behavior.

John 15:18-19 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you."

ii. All people follow the ways of the world before coming to Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-2a And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world,

iii. The world is under the power and influence of the evil one.

1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

iv. Believers are still in the world but must not be polluted by the world.

James 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and *to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

Romans 12:2 And *do not be conformed to this world*, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

b. Because it is incompatible with loving the *Father* (vv. 15-16)

James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

c. Because it is *passing* away (v. 17)

“Unlike other prisoners,
I never decorated my
cell because I wanted
to be reminded every
day this place is
temporary.”
– Charles Dutton

