



Finer Grounds Bible Study

1, 2, & 3 John Lesson 5: 1 John 2:15-17

Read 1 John 2:15-17

What John has to say to his readers next is as important for us today as it was for them: “Do not love the world, or the things in the world” (v.15). The instruction is two-fold: 1) Don’t love your life here and 2) don’t make your time on earth about pursuing the things this world has to offer.

The pursuit of the world is in direct contrast with a pursuit of God—because if we love the world, the love of the Father isn’t in us (v.15). This indicates that God’s love is neither received nor returned. It is not that God fails to love us when we err, but that His love doesn’t abide in us when we do not love Him first above all else. When we pursue the things of the world, we neither embody the love of the Father nor abide in His love.

When we consider what loving God and hating the world means, we realize that loving God is about priority more than feeling. Remember that hatred means to “love less”. While feeling ebbs and flows, priorities are something we make a constant. Our priorities become evident when there is a choice between two to be made, and they reveal what truly matters to us.

Notice the context: to truly love God and hate the world as we must, we need to learn to love what Christ loves (the church; 2:7-11) and hate what He hates (the things of this world; 2:15-17). Of course, this doesn’t mean that we can’t ever

think on or enjoy this world again—to do so we’d have to go out of this world (cf. John 17:15). However, while we are forced to be in this world and think on the things of this world every day—our food, our clothing, etc—we cannot think more on the world and more of the world than we think of God. He cares whether He is first in our lives or not (Matthew 6:33). He cares whether we choose light (Christ) or darkness (the world).

The things of the world are in direct contrast to the Father’s will for us. For us to understand how to not love the things of this world, we need to better understand exactly what John is talking about here. Let’s take a deeper look at each of the things of this world and what they might look like in our lives:

The lust of the flesh

To lust after the flesh is to be dominated by natural desires to the point that they are taken the wrong way. It is important to realize that desire (lust) in and of itself is not wrong. This same word “lust” here is used for right desires in other contexts (cf. Luke 22:15; Philippians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:17). It is only when the world takes those perfectly right and good desires and twists them—fulfilling them in ways that God did not intend for them to be fulfilled—that they become sinful. For example, sexuality is beautiful and right in the right context, but the world takes it out of its context and turns it into something God never intended it to be. An essential part of Christianity is training our desires to find their



Finer Grounds Bible Study

true and right expressions within the realm of His will. It is only when we make His desires ours and pursue them that we will find ourselves putting aside the lust of the flesh for a desire for the things of God.

“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God” (1 Peter 4:1, 2).

The lust of the eyes

To be overcome by the “lust of the eyes” is to be dominated by covetousness, jealousy, and/or envy. These show up in our lives in these ways:

1. In wanting what another person has or what is not mine to own (jealousy)
2. In not being content with the things that we have (covetousness)
3. In resenting others for what they have that we don't (envy)

These character traits will manifest themselves in different ways—ways that will be different for each and every person as they deal with their own unique temptations. Each of us has to be able to evaluate and recognize the lust of the flesh in our own lives. The following are some temptations and desires that are common to women when dealing with the lust of the eyes (not the only ones, mind you!).

1. overwhelming desire: the perfect body
result: discontentment with ourselves, wishing we had other's bodies/situations, hatred of any woman that we perceive has it better,

gossiping about other women, putting down others, immodesty, judgment, etc.

2. overwhelming desire: a man who looks good or treats their wives really well
result: discontentment with our own men, jealousy or envy towards other women, lusting after other men, flirting, adultery, etc.
3. overwhelming desire: a better financial situation
result: wishing we had another's wealth, putting down rich people, and discontentment with our situation, lack of gratitude towards God, trying to gain through dishonest means, pursuing work/career above spiritual things, lack of integrity, etc.
4. overwhelming desire: a nicer house
5. result: discontentment with our own houses, putting down others, jealousy towards other women who have nicer houses, bickering with our husbands, nagging, manipulation, etc.

The solution to covetousness, jealousy, and envy isn't an easy one. To fight off these pervasive attitudes, we must make a habit of:

1. being aware of the things that tempt us—ask yourself, what is it that I am tempted to lust after? (James 1:14)
2. being quick to remove ourselves as far as we can from temptations (2 Timothy 2:22)
3. gratitude to God for what we have (1 Thessalonians 5:18 et al)
4. gratitude to God for what others have and are succeeding in (1 Corinthians 1:4-5)



Finer Grounds Bible Study

5. requests to God for others to prosper (3 John 1:2)
6. requests to God for yourself to have only what you need (Proverbs 30:7-9)
7. radical generosity (especially if you struggle with this—think of the rich young ruler; Luke 18:22-23)
8. regularly complimenting and lifting up others—especially those you are tempted to feel jealous towards (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
9. actively befriending and fervently praying for anyone you see as competition (it is really hard to be jealous and envious of those we are learning to like)
10. deep study into and reflection upon the mind of Christ so that you can put it on (Philippians 2:1-5)

The pride of life

We may not think that this is something we struggle with, but it is a more pervasive attitude than we are often willing to admit. The pride of life manifests itself in us when we become self-reliant and/or selfish. Life often “gets in the way” of our pursuit of God because we get caught up in all the things we are doing and forget that it is God who is in control—and that it is Him we must be diligently seeking, rather than being consumed by our daily cares. To put the pride of life aside in our lives, we need to remember that:

1. God is in control of everything (Luke 12:16-21)
2. God who gives us all that we have (James 1:17)
3. we need to rely on Him for our daily provisions (Matthew 6:33)

4. the things in this world are temporary and our life here will end, but the pursuit of God will lead to an eternity with God (1 John 2:17)

Read 1 John 2:17

In contrast to the unstoppable power of light (cf. v. 8), darkness (here, the world) is fading away (v. 17). While we are on this earth, it will often seem like darkness is going to triumph (2 Thessalonians 2). It is the temptation of Christians to lose hope in the face of what seems to be the overwhelming power of darkness. However, Christ will be victorious – and He who does the will of Christ will join Him in victory (1 John 5:4). There is a reason that God reminds us over and over again about our eventual victory—the more we reflect on the fact that this world is temporary, the less likely it is that we will be enticed by its many temptations. Reflecting on our victory and this earth’s eventual demise strengthens our resolve. Christ has already overcome—we only need to live in Him and walk in His light to share His victory.

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

How can we love the world (i.e. life and God’s creation) without loving the world (i.e. allowing our love to become a stumbling block)?



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Consider the moment where Eve eats the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3:6. Can you identify the three sins (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life) in this verse?

- The lust of the flesh:
 - What are some natural desires that can be good or bad depending on the context and object of our desires?

 - What are some ways you can keep your natural desires in the right place and help others to do the same? Consider things like entertainment choices, the way you dress, etc.

- The lust of the eyes:
 - What are some ways we can learn to be more content with what we have?

 - How can we show that God is our pursuit, rather than material things?

- What are some ways that we can prioritize our time to show that God is first?

- Pride of life
 - Consider what Jesus told the rich young ruler (Luke 18:22-23)—what might this mean for some of us?

 - Consider 1 Timothy 6:17-18—What does this mean for those of us who are more fortunate than others? What should our attitude be to our riches?

 - In affluent societies, it is easy to forget that we rely on God for our “daily bread” (Matthew 6:11. How can we be more mindful of what God has given us and not become prideful?



Finer Grounds Bible Study

What are some scriptures that talk about focusing on eternal things rather than the things that are temporary? Reflect upon what they teach you about your attitude. Use a concordance or search engine to find them if you need to.

What are some scriptures that talk of our victory?
