

1John was written by an aged Apostle to complacent churches in late 1st century Asia minor. They'd been confused by false teachers, but John had not because he got the message directly from Jesus. He wrote this letter to restore their assurance of salvation by clarifying certain facts about the gospel.

- Two extremes seem to dominate the church landscape when it comes to dealing with sin. Let's call the first extreme "*the bubble method*." This is where churches pretend sin can be avoided by avoiding "*the world*". Let's call the second extreme "*anything goes*", we'll that's what the Corinthians called it anyway. This is where we treat Jesus like a vaccination that allows us to indulge all the sin we want. Neither of these extremes properly deal with our problem...sinful desires. The Christian faith is concerned with what we desire. Do we desire God and the things of God or do we desire things contrary to God? Wouldn't it have been nice if God had saved us and immediately ended our struggles with temptations? While that may sound ideal to you, it's not. We don't want God to cauterize our desires like some doctor who just numbs our pain because our back can't be fixed. We want our Great Physician to heal and change our desires so we can be restored to full function. Thus, God lets believers continue to face temptations, no longer on our own, but with the aid of His indwelling Spirit. Slowly we learn to desire God and to choose godliness while staring at real opportunities not to. I mean, anyone can pick God in the absence of other options, right? That's today's...

BIG IDEA: God wants us to want what He wants.

Let's consider some key ideas and applications in our text.

15 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.

Christians exist within two worlds.

- When John wrote about "*the world*", sometimes he meant "*the universe*" (cf. John 1:10) or "*life on earth*" (cf. John 3:17; 1 John 4:17), but most often he meant "*the world system--a way of living where sin determines how we relate with God's creation.*" A plain reading of **verse 16** proves John meant sinful *desires*, not *the world* in general. God's good creation is designed to point us to God and His glory, and He invites us to enjoy all He created. Sadly, our sin nature turns created things into objects of worship--gods or idols we think we need to be satisfied or fulfilled (cf. **Isaiah 46:3-7**; Romans 1:18-32). Pastor Paul Tripp said, "*Everybody worships; it's*

just a matter of what, or whom, we serve...the question is not if we worship, but what we give our hearts to worship.” This leads into our next point...

We must be careful how we love creation.

- The Apostle who wrote, “*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son*” now says ***do not love the world or the things in the world***. How are we to reconcile these thoughts? Professor John Stott concluded, “*Viewed as people, the world must be loved. Viewed as an evil system, organized under the dominion of Satan and not of God, it is not to be loved.*” **Verse 15** implies there’s a way to ***love the world*** that’s incompatible with the way God ***the Father*** loves it. His is always a “*holy love of redemption*”, while ours is often a “*selfish love of participation.*” This seems obvious, doesn’t it? So, why do believers need regular reminders ***not to*** fall in ***love*** with this evil ***world*** system? Because we’ve become conditioned and attached to how things are. We have assigned value to things in ways God never intended. Again, I find Paul Tripp’s words to be clarifying, “*You and I place more importance on things than they truly possess, so God ordains for us to experience that physical things get old and break....this is meant to teach us these things are beautiful and enjoyable, but cannot give us what we all long for--LIFE...so, in love, God lets pieces of creation die in our hands so that increasingly we are freed from asking earth to give us what only he can give. He works through loss to protect us from giving our allegiance to things that will never, ever deliver what our hearts seek. This is all designed to deepen our love and worship of him.*”

In **verse 16**, John mentioned ***3 ways we love creation that’s incompatible with the Father’s love. 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.***

The desires of the flesh.

- We are born with these sinful cravings. While the term “***flesh***” can refer to our physical body (not necessarily good or evil; cf. **2Corinthians 4:10-11**), John used it here like Paul often did to mean, “*rebellious thinking and living that reveres a perverted system hatched in the Garden of Eden.*” In this sense, ***the flesh*** is the fallen part of believers that keeps kicking up conflict with God’s indwelling Spirit as He works to change our views and interactions with God’s creation. Pastor Chuck Swindoll said, “*This includes selfish ambitions and self-serving objectives...It finds focus in self: my comfort, my possessions, my money, my future, my career, my hopes. The lust of the flesh starts with me, ends with me, and keeps me in the middle of it all.*”

The desires of the eyes. (James 1:15; 4:1-2)

- These sinful cravings occur as we see a creation and think, “*I must have that to be fulfilled or satisfied.*” They are why Adam and Eve were tempted by a piece of fruit; and why Achan was tempted by stuff God said to forsake; and why David was tempted by a bathing Bathsheba (cf. Genesis 3:6; Joshua 7:21; 2Samuel 11:2). One writer called this, “*the love of beauty divorced from the love of goodness.*” We become captivated by how people or things appear, without considering God’s value and purpose for them. Again, Pastor Chuck Swindoll said, “*We may be perfectly content with what we have, but then we see what somebody else has. Suddenly our own house, car, spouse, family, job, clothes, or church just isn’t enough anymore. The lust of the eyes can also be our symbols of success: titles, positions, degrees, or additions to our résumé. It suddenly makes us desperately “need” something we never knew we didn’t have!*”

The pride of life. (cf. Proverbs 16:18)

- This sinful craving is our desire to impress others by turning God-given gifts into brags or a competition--all to prop up a false sense of importance or value. It’s a failure to realize we are valuable simply because God created us and loves us. Once more, I’ll leave it to Pastor Chuck Swindoll to color in our picture, “*The lust of the flesh comes from our sinful hearts. The lust of the eyes comes from the sinful world around us. And the boastful pride of life comes from our lips. The arrogant words. The prideful claims. The exaggerated tales that make us look greater than we are, usually at the cost of tearing other people down.*”

In *verse 17*, John offered one more reason ***to not love the world*** system. He said, “***And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.***”

- How do we learn to desire God and choose godliness instead of a ***world that’s passing away?*** By constantly weighing the temporal against the eternal like the Apostle Paul in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**. He wrote, “*We do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen...the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*” Paul wasn’t minimizing; he was providing a scale to measure. Through eyes of faith, we can lay our temporal pains and pleasures on one side of the scale and watch as the gravity of the opposite side puts them in eternal perspective.

- Are you seeing John’s big idea? God wants us to want what He wants. Christians should be devoted to God and His people, not the sinful *world* and its delights. Embracing the wicked *world* system with the same boundless *love* (pleasure, esteem, satisfaction) we should have for God indicates *the love of the Father is not in us*
 - Are you more committed to the world than the God who created it? What evidence is there that the love of the Father is really in you?
 - All of us should regularly be discovering parts of us that aren’t as dedicated to God as they should be. What have you discovered lately? Are you willing to repent and change?
 - This isn’t just about us! It’s about God so loving the world--and you and I so loving the world--that we give all we have, like God gave Jesus, with a “*holy love of redemption*” instead of a “*selfish love of participation.*” How does your use of created things help those around you know and desire God?

Let’s pray...Good Father, fulfill your promise to transform us into people who share your heart for saving sinners rather than sharing in their sin or celebrating humanity in ways that are wrong. Please increase our ability to find our value, satisfaction, and purposes in you. Help us show the lost world the value of your new world, so they desire it and turn to you in repentance and faith. Amen.

Let’s sing a song that echoes what we just learned, “I Exalt You”

So, what’s your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

Quotes/Additional thoughts:

- **Ongoing temptations:** “The characteristic tense of this paragraph is not the perfect indicative but the present imperative: do not love the world. Christian people have entered into a great inheritance in the forgiveness of sins, fellowship with God and the conquest of the evil one, but their temptations have not come to an end.” Professor John Stott
- **Remind the young and old:** “John needed to impart to them strong warnings about the real world... I’ve learned that some are so young in age and so new to the faith that they have no idea how dangerous the world can be to their spiritual lives. On the other hand, some are so old and mature in the faith that they begin to believe they’ve outgrown the power of temptation...“Let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). The truth is, we all need these warnings about the world...This world is led by Satan, who works

against Christ and His people. It's therefore hostile to righteousness. The world magnifies humanity, celebrates depravity, and rejects God's word." Pastor Chuck Swindoll

- **Glory Seeking:** "Whenever you name something in creation as the thing that will satisfy you, you are asking that thing to be your personal savior. This means that, in a very practical, street-level way, you are looking horizontally for what will only ever be yours vertically. In other words, you are asking something in creation to do for you what only God can do. Now, the physical, created world was designed to be glorious, and it is. It is a sight-sound-touch-taste-feel symphony of multifaceted physical glories, but these glories cannot satisfy your heart. If you ask them to, your heart will be empty, and you will be frustrated and discouraged. No, the earthly glories that God created are to be like signposts that point us to the one glory that will ever satisfy our hearts. So here's the bottom line. If you seek satisfaction, satisfaction will escape your grasp. But if you seek God, rest in his presence and grace, and put your heart in his most capable hands, he will satisfy your heart as nothing else can. You were made for him. Your heart was designed to be controlled by worship of him. Your inner security is meant to come from rest in him. Your sense of well-being is intended to come from a reliance on his wisdom, power, and love. The reality is this—God is the peace that you're looking for. He is the satisfaction that your heart seeks. He is the rest that you crave, the joy you long for, and the comfort your heart desires. All those things that you and I say we need we don't really need. All those things that we think will bring us contentment and joy will fail to deliver. What we need in life is him, and by grace, he is with us, in us, and for us. Our hearts can rest because, by grace, we have been given everything we could ever need, in him." Paul David Tripp, *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional*
- **Dualism:** "Perhaps, they think, 'the world' – this world of space, time and matter – is actually evil! Perhaps we should try to live as though we were pure spirits? No: that's not what John has in mind... The world remains God's good creation, and as such is to be enjoyed with thanksgiving, as Paul says (1 Corinthians 10.25–26; 1 Timothy 4.4–5). Do not collapse into what we sometimes call 'dualism', the idea that God is good and creation is bad! ...Indeed, that (as we shall see) is part of the problem with the people who are denying that Jesus can truly be God's son. How can he have come, they think, in human flesh? So demeaning. So degrading. Not at all, replies John. This is at the heart of it all... The flesh, the eyes, life itself – all can become idols, and like all idols they demand more and more from those who worship them... We must celebrate all the goodness of the world, all God's goodness to us within his creation. But we must not worship it." Professor NT Wright
- **Extreme responses:** "Some Christians respond to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life by resorting to radical isolation—'HIDE YOURSELF!' Their list of 'don'ts' would include things like: Don't own a television! Don't go to the movies! No computer! No smart phone! Stay away from worldly people! Don't watch sports! Don't ever dress up or drive a decent car! ...But Jesus clearly stated in John 17:15, 'I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.' God's will for believers is not isolation, but insulation—to be living in the world but not as part of the world. We're to be salt and light, witnesses in the world. How are we to do that if we completely disengage, hide ourselves, or seek shelter in what amounts to a Christianized ghetto? ...some Christians may engage in radical provocation—'ASSERT YOURSELF!' Their rules of engagement would include things like: Everywhere you go, openly insult those who embrace 'the things of the

world.’ Broadcast your moral convictions in ways that not only shame sinners but also anger them. Be obnoxious about your displeasure with the world. Go out of your way to insult people who disagree with you. Put down those who are more liberal than you or less faithful than you. In short, openly judge them! ...But Paul said, ‘I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world’ (1 Cor. 5:9-10). In fact, he takes it much further: ‘What have I to do with judging outsiders? . . . Those who are outside, God judges’ (1 Cor. 5:12-13). Our presence in this wicked world should be winsome and gracious. We stand firm on our convictions, but we respond to outsiders with kindness, not condescension. Peter puts it best: ‘Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence’ (1 Pet. 3:15).” Pastor Chuck Swindoll

- **Love:** “Love is a fit subject for such commandment and prohibition because it is not an uncontrollable emotion but the steady devotion of the will...If we are engrossed in the outlook and pursuits of the world which rejects Christ, it is evident that we have no love for the Father. ‘Friendship with the world is hatred towards God’ (Jas 4:4). ‘No-one can serve two masters’ (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13).” Professor John Stott

Articles:

Songs/Videos:

Helpful thoughts for discussion leaders:

1. Go for a single, not a home run...don’t drag the night out; realize more people = less deep sharing.
2. Keep discussion around 30mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.

Challenge Questions

Review the BIG IDEA: God wants us to want what He wants.

-Simple questions...What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Preparation questions for 1John 2:15-17.

- What distinction is John making about love? (2:15)
- What is this “world” and what sorts of desires come from it? (2:16)
- What must we keep in mind about the world and our new mission in Christ? (2:17)
- How might we reconcile John 3:16-18 with this passage?

Application questions from 1John 2:15-17.

- How might we tell if we’re more committed to the world than the God who created it?
- What evidence is there that the love of the Father is really in you?
- What have you discovered lately in yourself that doesn’t line up with the love of the Father?
- Are you willing to repent and change? Who should you ask for help?
- Is yours a “*holy love of redemption*” or a “*selfish love of participation*”?
- How is your use of created things helping those around you know and desire God? Share some examples.

Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://tod dengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://tod dengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>