

# *“To All Levels of Spiritual Growth”*

## *1 John 2:12-17*

INTRO:

Someone told me years ago that the church is God’s Nursery. It is the place for God’s spiritual babies to grow and mature. While this is true, the church is also the place for the spiritually mature and the spiritually vigorous also. In fact, as the Apostle John surveys the church to which he is writing, he sees and addresses all strata of spiritual maturity in the body.

In our study today we will survey the positive identifiers of each strata of Christian growth and then meditate for a while on the warning he gives us.

*I. Who You Are (v.12-14)*

*II. What We Must Guard Against (v.15-17)*

*I. Who You Are (v.12-14)*

A. John’s transitions in this epistle are often abrupt. After the command to love our brothers and sister in the Lord, he launches without fanfare into vs. 12-14.

*“I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.”*

B. He wrote to the *“little children”* first because their sins are forgiven for His names sake, and because they had known the Father. These are most likely those who are just beginning their walk with God. They have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, so their sins are forgiven, and they have entered into a relationship and fellowship with the living God. The church should always have young believers in the faith. But they should not stay that way. They must grow and become young men in the faith and then mature believers.

C. Next, John addresses himself to the *“Fathers”* in the faith. These are those who have walked with the Lord Jesus for a long time. Like the children in the faith, they have come to know God, but they have grown and matured in that relationship over the years of walking with Him. In the words of **Ephesians 4**, they have *“grown up into Him who is the head.”* They exhibit the Christ likeness and theological stability that is described there in **Ephesians 4:13-15**.

*“[The church ministers the Word of God to one another] until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be*

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***children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.”***

At the very least this teaches us is that our relationship with Christ should not be static, but constantly growing in Him.

D. Third, John writes to the **“young men”** spiritually. The spiritual young men are those believers who exhibits spiritual strength and who win victories over the “evil one” in their lives. Growth comes as we win battle over sin in our lives and as we learn more and more about Jesus in His Word. But great victories can lay the ground work for spiritual pride and incredible defeats, remember Ai. That is why John warns us in **vs. 15-17**.

## ***II. What We Must Guard Against (v.15-17)***

A. In **Vs. 15-17** the Apostle John warns us,  
***“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 lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”***

B. There is one warning here and three reasons why we should heed the warning. First, the warning:

***“Do not love the world or the things in the world.”***

This is a command. John is very concerned that all believers and especially those who think that they are growing in the Lord beware of loving the world and not loving God. Many spend much time trying to define the term world here. It seems clear this is the sinful world system that Satan uses to seduce us away from our walk with God the Father and His Son.

C. Why should we not love the world? The first reason that John gives us is because of the principle of exclusive love.

***“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”***

If we are loving the world, we are not loving the Father. There are two examples of exclusive love on planet earth. The one created by God to be an object lesson to teach the other. These two examples are the love between a husband and a wife and the love between God and us. Remember the statement in **Ephesians 5:25**, ***“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”*** How much did the Lord Jesus love us who are the church? He loved us enough to die for us. He made us and us alone His bride, and pledged to love us through all eternity. That is exclusive love. Just like a person cannot love another in the same way he or she loves her mate and still be loving his or her mate, so we can’t love all that God hates and love God at the same time. Don’t believe Satan’s lie, we can’t love God and the world at the same time.

D. The second reason we should not love the world is because of what the world really is. ***“All that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”***

The world that looks so alluring and promises so much pleasure and happiness is really only a mass of desires. Fleshly desire is the want to satisfy the desires created by our bodies in ways the God forbids. Wants of the eyes, are things that appeal to our eyegate that may not be wholesome or what God really wants for us. Today this is paramount. The pride of life is the desire to see ourselves or our lifestyles as superior to others. While we believe the world is offering us so much it is really a vacuum. It provides no joy or lasting satisfaction only judgment, regret, guilt. The pattern of temptation Satan employed on Eve still works on us today. **(Genesis 3:4-7)**

***“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”***

E. The last reason we must not love the world instead of God is because where the world is heading. **(1 John 2:17)**

***“The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”***

The direction the world leads is to destruction. All the sinful world system is and will become will pass away. It will not last and it will ultimately bring separation from God. On the other hand, the one who chooses to love the Father continually and plugs his ears to the calls of the world will live forever.