

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV) Psalm 19 call to worship

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.

16 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.

17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

What is our answer to this question- **Do I love the world or the things in the world?**

Do I love the world?

Well we are told not to. So we better not. And if we are loving the world, we must stop. But it is crucial for us to understand what this really means.

We will start with what it **does not** mean.

How about God's Creation?

Does this mean we should not love and appreciate our planet? Should we not fully enjoy the beauty of a flower or a sunset or watching animals or viewing beautiful scenery? We would be hard pressed to find any scripture that tells us not to do such a thing. But there are many scriptures telling us that we **learn about God** by looking at, and appreciating his creation.

Our Call to Worship in Psalm 19 tells us much about how God displays a bit of Himself in creation. The heavens tell us of the glory of God and the work of His hands. When God created the world He called it good. So appreciating and enjoying what God created is not the problem.

OK then, how about the world of humanity?

Well we would be hard pressed to go to scripture to find verses that tell us not to love people. We are to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to love our enemies. That pretty well covers both extremes. We will not find anything commanding us to hate people, especially in the New Testament. God might hate some. But that is not our job. We leave that to Him.

OK then what is it that we are **forbidden to love**, that will **destroy us** if we love it?

The word for world is kosmos.

This word can be used different ways. John 3:16 uses the same word, but it is obviously referring to something different. It says that for God so **loved the Cosmos** that he gave His Son. Christ did not die for that which is **forbidden to us**. So we must interpret the meaning of the word based on its context.

The **world** we are to **not love** is often referred to by John in his writings.

1 John 5:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole **world** lies *under the sway* of the wicked one. (*we shouldn't love that world*)

John 12:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. (*we shouldn't love those aspects of this world.*)

John 14:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

Do you see what I mean. Often the world is referred to as a mutiny against God that is led by the devil.

In fact, Robert Yarbrough has an excellent explanation based **solely** on quotes from 1 John.

“As a whole (the world) it is a realm that does not (or will not) recognize Christ (3:1) and that despises people who follow Christ (3:13). It is shot through with the influence of dangerous deceivers like false prophets (4:1) and antichrist himself (4:3), the evil one “who is in the world” (4:4). “The world” is conceived of as the stronghold of those who ignore the apostolic testimony (4:5; cf. 4:6). While “the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world” (4:14 NIV), this saving work consists in equipping believers to “overcome the world” (5:4-5), not benignly acquiesce to its ways. In the end, in a sense “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (5:19 NIV). In the light of such numerous and pervasive negative associations, the κόσμος is a sinister sphere indeed; it is an image “of life where God does not rule” *Reformed Expository Commentary -*

Reformed Expository Commentary - 1-3 John.

The world is a world that has run **from** God to **whatever it wants most apart from him**. It is the Babylon referred to in Revelation that we must overcome.

Martin Lloyd Jones says

Quite simply, “the world” means “worldliness,” and quite sadly, it means “the typical kind of life that is being lived by the average person today.”*[*

Reformed Expository Commentary - Reformed Expository Commentary - 1-3 John.

C. J. Mahaney says worldliness is

“a love for this fallen world.” He clarifies: “It’s loving the values and pursuits of the world that stand opposed to God. More specifically, it is to *gratify and exalt oneself to the exclusion of God*. It rejects God’s rule and replaces it with our own.” To that definition he adds self-evaluating questions, such as:

- **Does outward prosperity appeal to you more than growth in godliness?**
- **Do you esteem and crave the approval of those around you?**
- **Do you go to great lengths to avoid looking foolish or being rejected for your Christian faith?**
- **Do you consider present and material results more important than eternal reward?**
- **Have you departed from God and adopted idols instead?]**

Reformed Expository Commentary - Reformed Expository Commentary - 1-3 John.

If we are **breathing** this morning, and we evidently are because we all got here and none of us were carried, the world is **continually** and **consistently** trying to squeeze you into the world. It is trying to make you live like a common world-ling, seeking **first**, with your **most time** and **best energy**, those things that **please our flesh**.

If you want to know what the bad sense of world is, watch normal tv shows. What do the characters live for? What do they allow themselves to do? What is the driving force in their lives? AW Tozer said that the media is the devil's spokes piece. That is not to say that media cannot be used for a spiritual purpose. But as a whole, what comes to us in terms of entertainment is the devil's propaganda for how **life is to be lived apart from God**.

Now with the world trying to squeeze you into its mold, think about it. Is there anything in **your life** that a non believer would not understand because it is so different than anything **they do or think**? Are any of your reactions to life's events so **different from theirs** that it gets the world's attention? Are you so **truthful** that it makes the world uncomfortable? Is your trust in God **so great** that the things that would destroy them do not send you in a tailspin? What about us can they simply not understand because we don't love the world?

Well how invasive is this world influence? Can we avoid it like some of our Amish brothers try to, by setting rules on what is worldly and then avoiding those things? Oh, if only it were that easy.

I read an interesting story that serves as a great illustration.

A senior student in a Christian college was known for his excellent grades and his effective Christian service. He was out preaching each weekend and God was using him to win the souls and challenge Christians.

Then something happened: his testimony was no longer effective, his grades began to drop, and even his personality seemed to change. The president called him in.

"There's been a change in your life and your work," the president said, "and I wish you'd tell me what's wrong."

The student was evasive for a time, but then he told the story. He was engaged to a lovely Christian girl and was planning to get married after graduation. He had been called to a fine church and was anxious to move his new bride into the parsonage and get started in the pastorate.

"I've been so excited about it that I've even come to the place where I don't want the Lord to come back!" he confessed. "And then the power dropped out of my life."

His plans—good and beautiful as they were—came between him and the Father. He lost his enjoyment of the Father's love. He was worldly!

Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - New Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament, Volume 2.

This young man kept everything inside of the boundaries of what God allows. He was marrying a Christian girl. He was limiting sex to the boundaries of marriage. He was following the Lord's lead in his occupation. But even in all this, he began to allow that which the world offers, even that gift that God gave Him, to seduce him from setting his heart and mind on Christ and those things that are eternal. See how seductive the world is. It is far more than a list of do's and don'ts. It takes into consideration all the "why's". Isaiah taught us that our idolatry is not always directed toward those things that are forbidden. Sometimes it is by allowing a gift that God has graciously given us to take a place in our lives that is reserved for Christ alone.

So what are the elements of worldliness? Why is its appeal so great?

16 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.

In verse 15 we were told not to love the world or the things in the world. Here John tells us what he means. He does not leave us guessing. Although we might wish he might.

the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life

Do you notice that none of these three influences lay **outside** of us. They are all on the **inside**. And they are the forces that the devil always tries to exploit when he is trying to destroy us.

Scripture has provided us with 2 wonderful examples of all three of these forces in action. The first is a **bad** example. The second is a **good** example. Can you guess what they are?

The first is an example where the devil appealed to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life and **succeeded** in getting someone to do something evil.

The second example is where he tried to do that and he **failed**.

You have probably guessed by now.

The first is his temptation of **Eve** in the Garden of Eden.

The second is his temptation of **Christ** in the wilderness.

It is no coincidence that he tried all three avenues. If you want to know how the devil will attack you, your family, your church, just watch this. His attack plan is effective enough that he does not need to change it. He knows how we are wired. If we do not have the resurrection power operational in our lives, he knows his attacks will be successful.

Genesis 3:1-7 (NKJV)

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

3 but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5 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."

6 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.

7 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.

Do you see the three fold appeal the Devil makes, after he gets some obstacles out of his way?

First he prepares his hearer by casting doubt on the goodness of God. This is in preparation for the attack. He says "**Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"**

The devil knew full well that this is not what God said. But Satan, in his typical conniving fashion, knew how to use **suggestion** to make a point. Satan comes in acting like he knows God very well and how it would be just like God to deprive his children of good things.

I think the clearest example of this type of influence in our world today is in regard to what the world says about sex. It permeates our world. Could a good God possibly deprive people, especially young people who are very driven, of this wonderful activity? And would he deprive such a wonderful

thing to people who have same sex attractions for the rest of their lives? Is that not robbing them of meaningful loving relationships they could have? Could God possibly be good and loving to do such a thing they say? Guess where that is coming from? It is coming from the same source that says, Has God indeed said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?.

Is there a single area where you are looking at a **circumstance** or **unmet desire** and it is causing you to **doubt God's love for you** or His kindness toward you? Watch out. Flashing red lights and emergency buzzers should be going off in your head. You should be hearing a **danger** warning over and over again. Getting you to question **God's love for you** or **His intentions toward you** is the spearhead of the devil's attack. If he can get you to doubt God's love, he can then seduce you into every kind of evil. If you give in at that point, you will be easy prey for the rest.

Next the devil attacks and counters what God has clearly said, although Eve may not have heard or remembered exactly what God said. God did not forbid touching the fruit. Those may have been Adam's words. But He did forbid **eating** of it.

And what was the Devil's response? God is lying to you. What God said is not true.

Do you see how first the devil attacked **God's intentions** toward His children. Now he attacks the **trustworthiness** of what God says.

Let me ask you, how often do you trust what someone says when you don't believe they have your best intentions in mind? When you receive a call on your telephone that tells you that the social security administration has an issue with you and you must call them back at this phone number in India, do you trust what that person says?

No. If we do not trust that our **God is good** with every circumstance He provides in our lives, especially the hard ones, we then think we have good reason to **not do** what He says. And somehow we believe that we are entitled to disobey because, well, if God is going to be like that to me, I am not going to trust any demands he places on me.

So our ideas of the **intentions of God** are eroded.

Then our trust in **God's word** is eroded.

Now we are ripe for the devil's appeal. Our primary obstacles have been removed. And what does he appeal to? The **triad of travail**. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Those are our trigger points. If you were to go back to a sinful period of your life and look closely at why you chose as you did, these are the things you would find. Maybe the appeal would focus more on one area than the other two, but there was something in

you that was powerfully appealed to. And the most strong temptations appeal to all three.

Here comes the **terrible trio**.

⁵ 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."

⁶ 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.

Here is the temptation in all its glorious evil.

The woman looked at this fruit that the devil was touting.

For us it could be any number of temptations. Maybe it is a porn site. Maybe it is a forbidden relationship. Maybe it is a forbidden attitude. Maybe it is a faithless response. Maybe it is escape from our reality in all its various forms. Maybe it is a denial to fulfill our obligations. They are all cut from the same cloth. They are that fruit that Eve was looking at. They are all temptations to sin, to go against that which God has clearly said.

So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food

Hey, this is what my body wants. I can eat it and it will taste good. It will give me physical pleasure and satisfaction. I am hungry after all. Surely God would not deprive me of this. My flesh wants it.

that it *was* pleasant to the eyes,

Sometimes looking at something is utilitarian. Like when I prepare of this sermon I am using my eyes to see the words. There is nothing pleasant about the words. They are just lines on paper. But that is not always true of things we see. Sometimes what we see has an effect on our souls.

It would be interesting to know how many extramarital affairs began with a man gazing too long on another woman. Some things have an effect on us just by looking. David gazed on Bathsheba and an evil plan emerged. That evil plan probably did not exist until David laid eyes on Bathsheba. Aichen saw the forbidden loot and made a plan to have it. He probably did not walk into that tent with the intent to sin. But when his eyes saw it, he had to have it. Sales flyers are designed with that knowledge. They are as effective as they are because of the lust of the eyes. For Eve, this fruit was appealing to her. It was a fruit that, once her eyes lingered on it, she wanted to have it.

And then the main event.

⁵ 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."

And she saw that it was

a tree desirable to make *one* wise

We were born into a human condition that, if given the choice, we would prefer to **Be** God than to **Trust** God. God already knew what was good and evil. And He could be perfectly trusted to tell them the difference when Adam or Eve **needed to know it**. But that just wouldn't do. Oh no. Eve had a pride of existence. It was a core problem **then** and it is a core problem **now**. And when she heard she could be so much greater than she was at this moment, it was too difficult to turn down. How can **being like God** be a bad thing, she may have thought.

Isn't being wise about right and wrong a **good thing**? Isn't that **worth having**?

We all have things that appeal to our egos. If you get old, you will have many of those things tested. I am losing my hair and my teeth and my hearing and my physical usefulness and my eye sight. I still think my thinking is sharp as a tack, but you may know better. Anyway, loosing that stuff is a good way of finding out how much pride of life you have. We all have things we take a wrongful pride in. We might say I have **always** done this or I would **never** do that... Those statements are often revealing. We all have exploitable spots that the devil will attack. We need to realize that those things are **danger points**. And we will never realize that if we keep denying that they exist. So Eve fell and took us with her. She allowed herself to distrust God's motives, to distrust His word. Then she fell prey to an attack on the lust of her flesh, a lust of her eyes, and the pride of life.

Now let's look at our perfect example for standing up to the devil's attack on our weaknesses.

Matthew 4:1-11 (NKJV)

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, '*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*' "

5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,

6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: '*He shall give His angels charge over you,*' and, '*In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*' "

7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, '*You shall not tempt the LORD*' "

your God.' "

⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, '*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.*' "

¹¹ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Now we have a contrast right off the bat. Between Eve and Christ, who do you think was **hungrier**? Eve was in a garden full of food. Christ was on the verge of dying of starvation. Do you ever think your temptations are just too big to say no to? Think again. I doubt you and I have ever had a temptation this strong.

So Christ's body wants food desperately. And He **was**, in many ways, **just like we are**. So his hunger was like our hunger.

And the devil approaches Christ and says, your flesh does not need to suffer like it is suffering. Just take it upon yourself to do this thing that God has not clearly forbidden. Just do it and you will be out of your desperate craving for food. Just do it Jesus. Think how good that will taste, how good it will be.

How could God withhold something that you need from you?

he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

Now look at how Christ responded. Did He wait for God to zap away his hunger so he would no longer be tempted? Did he pray that the temptation be taken away and if it wasn't He would succumb? What is it that **we tell people** to do when faced with temptation? This is what Jesus thought the solution was.

⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, '*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*' "

Jesus first had a very clear understanding of what God wanted. He had not allowed His trust in His Father's intentions be questioned. Remember that it was the Spirit of God that drove Jesus to be in these conditions. If that was us, we might see that as a reason to balk, to whine and complain about how hard God was making our lives and that we simply can't handle these hard circumstances. But Jesus displays none of that. He simply says **God has said this and this is what I will do**. Having bread is not as important as having fellowship with God. And I will not give up the **most** important for the **less**

important. I will live by doing what God says, not by depending upon eating what I can drum up in rebellion against God.

Strike one for the lust of the flesh

Then the pride of life.

"If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

⁷ Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.' "

The devil was saying, you are great. Your father cannot help but doing this for you. Do it and show off just how special you are, how holy you are, how selected for greatness you are. Do this for you Jesus. Show off a little bit.

Prove to everyone who you are.

And how did Christ respond? A prayer for a miracle to make things easier for Him? Waiting for God to zap Him with some special power He needed? No. He quotes the words of His Father again.

It is written. Don't tempt God. The devil was asking Jesus to play a game with God that His children are not allowed to play. That is the end of it. Whether God **would** or **would not** save Christ if Christ jumped, Christ will never display. Because Christ will not go against God's will for His own advantage.

So, for the pride of the life temptation, strike 2.

Now for the lust of the eyes.

⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

You know that you and I sing, **I'd rather have Jesus than anything**, and we mean it. But then the next day we are deprived of some penny ante thing we want desperately and we act like ungrateful spoiled brats. I think it is safe to say that **none of us** would be able to stand up against the temptation offered to Christ. So it is a good thing none of us are getting this offer.

Imagine this. He was being offered everything this life on planet earth could provide. He would have had all the money, sex and power that this world offers. He could have anyone or anything.

Now it would have cost Him fellowship with His father. And He could not have carried out His mission on earth. But He could have had instant gratification in life without the pain. This was a huge offer. And the devil could have provided everything that God has placed under his control. But Christ responded, again, by quoting what **His Father wanted**. Only Christ's Father **deserved** worship and His father **required** worship. Christ was not shopping for two paths. Christ was not a double minded man, wanting the world and His Father at the same time. No. A temptation only has power when we are **open to wanting something more than we want God**. Jesus never lost His focus. He had perfect fellowship with His Father and nothing the devil offered would provide anything that was worth as much, long term, as what Christ already had.

There is the secret to standing up to temptation. It is believing that the things **we have in Christ** give us a **better payoff forever** than that which **the devil will offer us**. That is what the Bible writers appeal to. We have a rich reward. We need to become addicted to that thought, that truth, that reality. So when the devil appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, we can know we are being offered an inferior proposition that would only rip us off forever. That **is**, after all, **what sin does**.

And we can affirm it as we quote back to the devil, and to ourselves, what our loving Father says.

I hope this week we take a hard look at the question we first asked. Do I love the world. And the series of questions

- **Does outward prosperity appeal to you more than growth in godliness?**
- **Do you esteem and crave the approval of those around you?**
- **Do you go to great lengths to avoid looking foolish or being rejected for your Christian faith?**
- **Do you consider present and material results more important than eternal reward?**

Have you departed from God and adopted idols instead?

We should also ask, where is the devil appealing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life in me? Then we should track back to make sure we have a rock solid confidence in the loving character of God, and that we trust both Him and His word. Then we can powerfully use God's word as fuel to withstand the attacks of the devil on our worldly weaknesses.