

LOVE NOT THE WORLD,

neither the things that are in the world. If any man love 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 passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

I John 2:15-17

LOVE NOT THE WORLD

Foundations

(Jan. 6)

What will we study?

Definition of “the world” in its evil sense

Excerpt from the longer, theological definition:

The world...corrupts the various aspects of God's earthly creation into avenues for the gratification of self instead of the glory of God.

A simple, more functional definition:

*“The bad part of culture” (John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*).*

The world: “The bad part of culture”

Culture: General patterns of thinking and behavior, both good and bad.

The world: Ungodly thinking and behavior, all bad.

Culture

The World

What are the conditions for success?

Honesty with ourselves before the Lord

Humility before the Lord

Desire to learn of our failures before the Lord

Willingness to accept correction from the Lord

Willingness to pursue change through the Lord's power

Willingness to persevere, through the Lord's power, in mortal combat with the world, the flesh, and the devil

LOVE NOT THE WORLD

Core Biblical Teachings

(Jan. 13)

Review

Both Testaments teach that:

God has chosen His people to be

- A special people
- Bound to Him by covenant
- Different—not only in destiny but also in lifestyle—from those who do not know Him.

Our Big Challenge

How do we know which aspects of our culture are “the world” to which we must not conform?



How do we reliably locate this boundary?

Summary

1. Biblical teaching about the world and worldliness begins with OT teaching about Israel's relationship to God and to the nations.
2. The NT extends that teaching to believers of the church age.
3. Both Testaments assure us that the ultimate destiny of God's people is deliverance from, not conformity to, the world.
4. Our big challenge is to discern the boundaries of worldliness accurately amid ever-changing culture.
 - Scripture deals explicitly with many issues.
 - Scripture leaves many issues to mature discernment.
 - The world's opposition to the knowledge of God provides a valuable diagnostic key.
 - Mature discernment is impossible apart from selfless love.

LOVE NOT THE WORLD

Application
(Jan. 20)

Review

Anchor Points for Application

1. Our ability to discern absolutely depends upon our setting aside personal preference and self-interest in pursuit of accurate assessment of moral character (Phil. 1:9-11).
 - Glorifying God requires the fruit of righteousness.
 - Righteousness requires sincerity and blamelessness.
 - Sincerity and blamelessness require preference for the excellent.
 - Preference for the excellent requires knowledge and discernment.
 - Love (a self-giving disposition to serve the true interests others) is the starting point of the whole process.

Whether I like or dislike an aspect of my culture has no bearing whatsoever on the question of whether or not it is worldly.

Anchor Points for Application

2. The first question is always, “Does the Bible establish the moral character of the matter at issue?”
 - By explicit statement?
 - By obviously applicable principle?

Only when the Bible does not speak directly do the remaining anchor points come fully into play.

Anchor Points for Application

3. No physical objects in their natural state are intrinsically evil.
 - The original creation was all very good.
 - The physical creation “groans and travails” under the curse for man’s sin, but neither sin nor the curse morally corrupted the physical world.
 - Satan has no ability to create evil physical substances.
 - Satan has no power to corrupt the physical substances God has created.

The world does misuse such objects for disobedient self-gratification.

Anchor Points for Application

4. No basic human capacity, bodily function, or aspiration is intrinsically evil.

The world does misuse and misdirect these good gifts of God for disobedient self-gratification.

5. It does seem that the world can fashion God's good substances into objects which, in that fashioned state, are inherently evil.
 - E.g., immoral or blasphemous art.
 - Most humanly crafted objects, though, are not intrinsically evil.

The world does misuse humanly crafted objects for disobedient self-gratification.

Anchor Points for Application

6. Human thoughts and behavior, when misdirected toward wrong objects or purposes, *are* intrinsically evil.
 - “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders” (Matt. 15:19).
 - Human nature readily imitates the behavior of others.

Therefore, believers must maintain great vigilance in their personal relationships with the world.

Anchor Points for Application

7. The world communicates, and communications are often intrinsically evil (note I John 4:5).

- content
- form (to the extent that form conveys meaning)

The intrinsic evil of some humanly crafted objects (see earlier slide) lies in the fact that they communicate evil.

Anchor Points for Application

8. Various forms of communication are among the most important means by which the world
- identifies itself.
 - maintains itself.
 - expresses itself.
 - modifies itself.
 - propagates itself.

Therefore, believers must maintain great vigilance regarding participation in their culture's communications.

Anchor Points for Application

9. All of us, without exception, are disposed toward some form of worldliness.

Therefore, mutually seeking the mind of God in Scripture about challenging issues of worldliness befits us much better than fighting over our disagreements.

10. Any earthly thing or activity—as far as I know, without exception—can become worldly when used in rebellion against God, for selfish purposes.

So worldliness vs. godliness is not *merely* a question of externals.

Anchor Points for Application

11. True holiness—the opposite of worldliness—proceeds from the inside out.

“First clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also” (Matt. 23:26).

Diagnostic Questions

1. Diagnostic questions related to how the issue in question (X) relates to **knowing God**:
 - Does (X) reflect ignorance of God's true character?
Would my culture do (X) if we really knew God as He is?
 - Is (X) something that our culture uses to suppress the knowledge of God as He really is?
 - Would (X) help or hinder my own growth in knowing God as He really is?
 - Would (X) help or hinder my ability to make God known to others as He really is?

Diagnostic Questions

2. Diagnostic questions related to the **moral character** of (X):

- Does Scripture say anything about (X), either directly or in principle?

(If so, the remaining questions on this slide may be interesting, but the issue is already settled.)

- What kind of people originated (X)?
- What was (X)'s original function within its culture?
- Has that function changed? / Does (X) still function similarly?

Diagnostic Questions

3. Diagnostic questions related to the **cultural function** of the issue in question (X):

- When (X) is functioning within its cultural setting, how would that setting be affected if (X) were removed or exchanged for something else?

Observing how the setting changes when (X) is modified helps us recognize how (X) is functioning.

- If the cultural function of (X) has changed over time, *what* has changed? The character of (X), or the character of the culture? Is any relevant change moral in nature?

Diagnostic Questions

4. Diagnostic questions related to the **cultural associations** of (X):
 - Is the moral character of (X) inherent, or does it derive from its association with some culture or subculture?
 - How strong is the association?
 - How evil is the (sub)culture with which (X) is associated?

Diagnostic Questions

These diagnostic questions are not simple. They require of us

- Honesty before the Lord
- Humility before the Lord
- Desire to learn of our failures before the Lord
- Willingness to accept correction from the Lord
- Willingness to pursue change through the Lord's power
- Willingness to persevere, through the Lord's power, in mortal combat with the world, the flesh, and the devil

Specific Points of Application

– My goatee (as an example of personal grooming)

1. Anchor points

- I will not be able to evaluate the issue of facial hair accurately apart from a disposition of self-sacrificing love.
- Does the Bible identify facial hair as good or evil?
- Facial hair as part of the created order not evil.
- Facial hair (and its styling) can become evil when used for disobedient self-gratification rather than the glory of God.
- Facial hair (and its styling) may communicate, therefore requiring me to concern myself over it.
- I am prone to embrace whatever worldliness may be present in a style of facial hair, so I must be cautious.

Specific Points of Application

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1. Diagnostic questions related to how the issue in question (X) relates to **knowing God**:

- Does (X) reflect ignorance of God's true character?
Would my culture do (X) if we really knew God as He is?
- Is (X) something that our culture uses to suppress the knowledge of God as He really is?
- Would (X) help or hinder my own growth in knowing God as He really is?
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- Does Scripture say anything about (X), either directly or in principle?

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Specific Points of Application

– My goatee (as an example of personal grooming)

Does my goatee associate me with cultural evil and hinder my ability to minister a fuller knowledge of God, as He really is?

If even one regular attender of this church, after considering these diagnostic questions, still considers my goatee worldly, I will gladly shave it off.

Call or email me this week!

But let's not impose on every man with facial hair. (;-<)>

Specific Points of Application

– Music (in general)

1. Anchor points

- We will not be able to evaluate music accurately apart from a disposition of self-giving service to God and others.
- Does the Bible identify any styles of music as good or evil?
 - Not explicitly (that I know of).
 - It does speak of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
 - It also speaks of a song of a harlot and a song of a drunkard.
 - It indicates that what goes into the heart has power to defile.

Specific Points of Application

– Music (in general)

1. Anchor points

- Music as a basic human capacity is one of God's good gifts.
- Music can become evil when used for disobedient self-gratification rather than the glory of God.
- If the music is immoral or blasphemous, it is evil, regardless of style.

Specific Points of Application

– Music (in general)

1. Anchor points

- Music is a powerful form of communication, in both content and form (style), therefore requiring great vigilance.
- All of us are prone to embrace whatever worldliness may be present in styles of music that we find attractive.

Specific Points of Application

– Music (Secular music of any kind, then Rock in particular)

1. Diagnostic questions related to how the issue in question (X) relates to **knowing God**:
 - Does (X) reflect ignorance of God's true character?
Would my culture do (X) if we really knew God as He is?
 - Is (X) something that our culture uses to suppress the knowledge of God as He really is?
 - Would (X) help or hinder my own growth in knowing God as He really is?
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Specific Points of Application

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 - What kind of people originated (X)?
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Specific Points of Application

– Rock as a style of Christian music

- If the previous tests identify secular Rock (the style, not merely the lyrics) as an element of the world, then Christians must reject it, not adopt it (Eph. 5:11).
- But where do we draw the line?
- A better question is, “How do we discern where the line *is*?”
- Come back next week for a discussion of the value of lines of separation that are imperfectly perceived and drawn.
- Establishing and respecting such lines is part of overcoming the world.

Coming up:

February 3: More Application, then Overcoming.

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I John 2:15-17