

Love not the world

By Sandi Michon
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Our November devotional: This week was election week in America – a time of choices. As we look at the results, we see a polarization in our country that is largely “value” driven. As we researched the candidates, we see clear differences in issues like abortion, homosexuality, the role of government in personal lives, stem cell research, foreign policy and education.

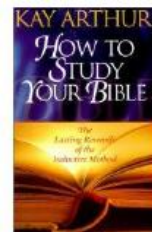
As Christians, we are in the world, but not of the world – so, what do we do? Our citizenship is in heaven, but we are called to be salt and light while we are waiting. I have been deeply burdened by the rapid, ungodly shift in values, because any person with godly wisdom easily sees the consequences that lie ahead.

In a country where so many profess to be Christians, how does this happen? I have no smug pride: it can happen to me and it can happen to you.

Proverbs 23:7 says that *“as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”* And Proverbs 4:23 says *to guard our hearts with all diligence, for out of it flows the issues of life. **Is my thinking formed by the world or the Word?***

John 3:16 says that “God so loved the world that he sent His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life... but **I John 2:15 tells us to “love not the world, neither the things of the world for he that loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”**

What’s up with that? I searched the matter out using the inductive Bible study methods of context, original languages, cross referencing – and of course – prayer. We explored a few of the treasures I found, did a quick worksheet together (that you can do with your kids at home) and finished with a powerful visual aid.



First, I found that God can do things in the world that I can’t because — He’s God and I’m not. With His capacity, He can love the world, judge the world, give life to the world, and take away the sins of the world. I am told to love not the world (I John 2:15), to hate life in this world (John 12:25), to not be conformed to this world (John 12:2), and if I gain the world, I lose my soul (Matt 16:26).

In the context of I John 2, it talks about relationship, obeying God – and choices. It speaks of battle and the conflict between Christ and the antichrist, between love and lust, and good and evil. Often, we don’t make good choices because we don’t look closely enough at a comparison of the ingredients. We only look at the surface. Voters often choose the one who speaks the best or looks the best without looking at the substance.

This devotion seeks to clarify your choices. Let's look at the different words used for "love." The word for "love" in "love not the world" is agapao, and it carries the connotation of friendship.

James 4:4 hit me with blunt clarity: ***Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever desires to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*** Yikes!



But, in the next two verses of I John 2, John tells us what is in the world: (v. 16-17) *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world."*

The first part of the worksheet asked what the world has to offer us. : Gal 1:4, II Peter 1:4 and I John 5:19 show the world offers evil and corruption. Gen 4:7 says, "Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you."

I found it interesting that the New Testament word for "world" was "kosmos", which means "orderly arrangement, decoration, inhabitants." The world is indeed a decoration filled with glitter and enticement. Sin is pleasurable for a season, and appeals to the lust of the eyes as we saw in I John 2:16. It draws us – especially in our increasingly visual society. (Ravi Zacharias has an excellent 3-part message called "Mind Games in a World of Images" – rzm.org. in which he describes how it messes with our thinking.)

When we think of decorations, they are usually attractive, but not all that useful.

The second question examined what happens when we are a friend to the world. In I John 2:15, James 4:4, Mark 4:19, Romans 12:2, II Timothy 4:10, we find that the love of the Father is not in us, we become an enemy of God, it chokes the Word and we become unfruitful, I don't know the will of God, and we desert the work of God and fellow Christians! How sobering to really look at the consequences.

I thought of Matthew 6:33 when it says to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. Kingdom can speak of country, but it specifically relates to dominion or rule. It was sobering to consider that what I love, I align myself to – I give it a measure of dominion. It comes down to the question: "Who am I governed by?"

The third section examines who has limited dominion over the physical world, In John 12:31, II Corinthians 4:4, Luke 4:5-6,8, and Ephesians 2:2,3, we see that Satan is the god of this world who blinds the eyes of unbelievers. The devil is the "prince and power of the air, in Ephesians, and he tempts Jesus with the world's authority in Luke 4. We also see a distinction between the physical world and spiritual world.

World is physical, God is spiritual... World is temporal, God is eternal. Scripture gives examples that God transcends both the physical and spiritual. He could cast out demons, but also calmed the sea, raised Lazarus from the dead and walked on water. When we align ourselves with God, like Peter, we can often transcend the physical and the spiritual. When Peter took his eyes off Christ, he sank. So do we.

When we look into the Word, it is surprisingly specific in so many areas.

Finally, what does the Word say about my relationship with the world? In James 1:27, Galatians 6:14, I John 2:15, I John 5:4, Titus 2:12, and Philippians 2:15, we are to keep ourselves unspotted by the world, we are crucified to the world, we overcome the world through faith, we are to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and live blameless and pure in a crooked and perverse nation.

This only scratches the surface of what the Word says about the world, but it helps us and our kids to list our definition. If this is what is behind the glitter of the world, do we want to play with it? What is the cost of compromise?

This short study tells us the world is toxic. We are in the world, but not of the world, so how do we live and breathe in this world without contamination. My military training has given me a great analogy:

Chemical warfare acknowledges the reality of toxic weaponry – and seeks to seal the soldier effectively so he can function and survive. That is our mission as Christians. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit, but how do we seal ourselves from the world and yet still live and breathe in it?

To don the chemical warfare ensemble, and discuss related training, brings out several parallel points:

1. Have to train to suit up correctly. You have to know how to wear the gear. In the same way, we have to train ourselves in godliness.

2 When deployed to a hostile area, you have to lug the bag of equipment everywhere you go. It can get tiring, but if you face an attack without it, the results are deadly. You build muscles by carrying it always.

3. The suit can be hot and stuffy — especially in the desert heat. When God brings us through desert experiences in this world, it gets hot and uncomfortable. We are tempted to throw off that which keeps us alive the toxic environment.

4. You need a buddy! In war exercises, you always have your buddy check your suit for hidden gaps that can allow toxic agents in. As Christians, we need to invite inspection regularly to uncover our blind spots that leave us vulnerable.

5. You need to regularly test the environment for deadly airborne agents. We also need to test the spirits and discern if they represent life or death.



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6. You need to heed the warnings. In a hostile base, chemical detection is broadcast over a giant voice system. As Christians, it's more subtle. We need to listen carefully for God's voice of warning.

7. You need to act fast. Once toxicity hits, seconds count. When encountering toxic temptations, act fast. It may save your life.

8. You need a good seal. Soldier's gas masks are regularly checked to see if they seal properly around the face. Do we have a good seal as Christians, or is stuff leaking around the edges that may kill us?

9. When breathing through a sealed mask, your filter is the barrier between you and a toxic world. Our filter, as Christians, is the Word of God. It is "God-breathed" so we can breathe through it to cleanse the atmosphere as we function in the world around us.

10. You also need to hydrate often because it gets very hot wearing the suit. Again, water speaks of the Word of God. How appropriate....

***WATCH FOR SIGNS OF TOXINS IN THE ENVIRONMENT
YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE IN.***

***TAKE ALL NECESSARY ACTION TO PROTECT
YOURSELVES.***

***WILL THE POISON IN OUR MIDST OVERTAKE YOU AND
YOURS...?***