

Do not love the world or anything in the world (2:15). Oh man! The world?! That's where all my stuff is! How could you not love the world? Look around! Our church is in Chocolate City! Half the time it smells like brownies around here for crying out loud. What's not to love?

And anything in the world? I spent all day yesterday working in my yard, which is in the world. I finally get a PlayStation 5 and you tell me, "**Do not love the world or anything in the world (2:15)**"? Why would you do that?

Because, **if anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them (2:15)**. Hold on. That's just a straight up lie. The most popular passage in the Bible is John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." The love of the Father is love for the world!

What's going on? Am I not supposed to love my family? I'm not supposed to love my neighbor as myself? "**Do not love the world.**" Why would you say that? Because of what the world is.

Sometimes *world* means the planet God created. Sometimes it means the people God created to live on the planet he created. But John isn't talking about that. Listen to his definition: **For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world (2:16)**.

John is talking about our constant battle with temptation in this world. He's talking about loving the world more than the One who created the world. This is all about the First Commandment: "You shall have no other gods" (Exodus 20:3). In other words, who has first place in your heart?

Now don't get me wrong, the world God created and the people God created? Those are two good things, and because God loves his creation, we should too. Our stuff, our possessions, our hobbies? They are also good. The Bible even says, "Enjoy life" (Ecclesiastes 9:9). "Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 4:4). That comes from the Father.

However, everything and anything is sin when you love it more than you love God. When you fixate on the life you have, the things you buy, and the relationships you form? That **comes not from the Father but from the world (2:16)**. This temptation is literally all around you. You can't get away from it any more than you can get away from the world.

It starts on the inside. **The lust of the flesh (2:16)** are the sins your sinful nature wants to sin; sins the world is happy to provide. There's **the lust of the eyes (2:16)**, the desire for things that you see, and unless you're blind, your eyes will see all kinds of things. There's **the pride of life (2:16)**, your need to be recognized for what you have and what you've done.

The world woos you with distraction. Dollar signs light up your eyes. Images flash on your TV and phone. So mesmerizing. So appealing. So much vying for your attention, and not all of it is nasty.

Why do you think Jesus says, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:25)? Remember, everything and anything is sin when you love it more than you love God, and rich people have so much to love.

I'm going to level with you. I could carry on like this for hours, citing example after example, but at the end all I will have done is shared my temptations, and probably just scratched the surface of yours.

You know better than I do what is vying for your affection. You know what your pet sins are. John speaks in these broad, sweeping terms so that you have to make a self assessment: Who has first place in my heart?

But maybe you don't want to do that. Maybe right now the alarm is sounding in your head: "Danger! Danger! Another boring sermon about how the stuff I like is bad and how God is everything and how I'm bad for not liking God the most!"

Time to silence the alarm. Ridiculing the problem, ignoring the problem? That's the devil's trap. He wants you to think you can do both, that you can love God and the world at the same time. After all, love the world, and the world will love you back. Monday through Saturday the world gives you happiness, success, money, pleasure, prosperity and peace! And for an hour on Sunday, you can still love God all you want.

But your heart only has one first place. John makes that point twice: **if anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them**. This **comes not from the Father but from the world (2:15-16)**. You can love the world or you can love God, but you can't love both. They cannot exist side by side. When one of them makes his home in your heart, the other is driven out.

So which would you rather have in there? Think carefully before you answer. God is love; God is life (1 John 4:16; 5:20). If the love of the Father is not in you, how do you think things will end for you?

Here's a harsh dose of reality: **The world and its desires pass away (2:17)**. Everything you see, everything you want, is going away.

Does that make you sad? The home you spent years building is going away. The soccer you trained so hard for will be gone. The video games you want, the movies you can't wait to see, the toys you just have to have – they're all passing away.

A love affair with the world ends in death. This world and everything in it will pass away. So will you, if you continue in your sins. Your faith will die. You will die forever in hell. Why would you want to love the world any longer? **Do not love the world!**

Here's another harsh dose of reality: **But whoever does the will of God lives forever (2:17)**. John does more than warn us of the world's illusion; he also shows us the one thing that matters: the will of God.

But what is God's will? One time Jesus said, "My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). God's will is centered on Christ and focused on his cross. God's will is all about his Son. Believe in Jesus and you're doing the will of God.

That's how God loves us. Not the way the world does. The world packages itself to be pleasing to the eye, and we love eye candy. But once you get past the glitz and glamour, there's nothing there.

But God's love comes to us in a package covered with blood. A despised, rejected, tortured life that ends in a humiliating death – totally not what **the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes (2:16)** are looking for. But it's exactly what we need. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The greatest demonstration of love we will ever know is death.

God's delivers that love in the unattractive packages of words, water, wine, and bread. There are no loud commercials, flashing lights, or shiny packages. Just a Savior who says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

You have a Jesus who gave up everything to give you everything (2 Corinthians 8:9). You have a Jesus who lived in this world but never loved the world's sin. A Jesus who trounced temptation at every turn (Hebrews 4:15). A Jesus who loved you enough to bleed and die because you love the world more than him. A Jesus who rose from death and will raise you from death on the last day, even while this world and its desires are passing away.

So **do not love the world**. It promises a lot, but gives nothing that lasts. It is passing away. It will end. God has kicked it out of your heart. Your heart belongs to God, and God delivers everything he promises (2 Corinthians 1:20), and what he promises will never pass away.

He gives you a life that only gets better, a life that will never end. **The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever (2:17)**. Amen.