

## Be Christ's Disciple (2): Separate from the World

1 John 2:15-17 New American Standard Bible (1995)

<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Romans 12:2 New American Standard Bible (2020)

<sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

## Introduction

Greetings in Christ! Welcome back to our series, *Be Christ's Disciple*. Last Sunday, we looked at the first mark of a disciple: *Put Christ first*—a command to put Christ above all else, even family and self. Today, we dive into the second mark of a true follower of Jesus: *being separate (set apart) from the world*. While we live in the world, as disciples, we must remember that we do not belong to it. We are in the world, but not of the world.

## Content

**The Spiritual World:** Before we define what it means to be separate, let's understand the spiritual reality we inhabit. Our world is more than what we see. Beyond the visible world—the sun, mountains, and people—lies an invisible, spiritual realm. Most people focus only on the physical. But as disciples, we are called to live with an awareness of the spiritual world, where God and eternity truly matter.

**The Spiritual Warfare:** When God created the world, the original plan was for us to enjoy His creation and live in right relationship with Him through worship and service. But something went wrong. One of God's created angels rebelled against God. His name was Satan—Lucifer—the Evil one. He wanted to usurp God and take the place of God himself—to be worshiped by all.

So, this is what he did in the Garden of Eden. He deceived Adam and Eve to disobey God (that is, the Fall). After the Fall, the world became a mess as we know it. Right after the Fall, God Himself prophesied what's going to happen between the descendant of woman

and the tempter. “He (*referring to the woman’s descendant—Jesus*) shall **bruise** you (*the devil*) **on the head**, and you shall **bruise** him **on the heel**” (Genesis 3:15).

In order to fulfill this prophecy, two thousand years ago, God sent Jesus (born of virgin Mary) to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Jesus came to restore humanity back to the LORD God. Jesus completed His mission at the cross, where He fought the decisive battle—and triumphed over Satan. The devil (bruised His heel) by putting Him to death, but Jesus rose again and bruised him on the head!

Even now, in the spiritual world, we still face spiritual skirmishes with the devil’s followers until the Day of Judgment. The devil’s final defeat is coming. That day, God will throw Satan and his followers along with the fallen angels into Hell the eternal fire (Matthew 25:41, Revelation 20:10). In the meantime, Satan continues his campaign against God’s people through lies, fear, worry, and persecution.

**Jesus’ Prayer for His Disciples:** Jesus knew what kind of world His disciples would live in. On the night before He was crucified, He prayed for *them*—and for *us* (John 17).

He said in His prayers to God: “*The world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.* <sup>15</sup> *I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them away from the evil one.* <sup>16</sup> *They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.* <sup>17</sup> *Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.* <sup>18</sup> *Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world.* <sup>19</sup> *And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.* <sup>20</sup> *I am not asking on behalf of these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word*” (John 17:14-20).

Note here that Jesus didn’t pray for the escape. Instead, He prayed for the endurance.

In this powerful prayer, Jesus declares: *I am sending you into the world, not out of it, as holy (set apart) people of God. You will still live in the world. The Evil one will try to harm you, but God the Father will protect you from him. God will sanctify you with His word—to set you apart, protect you so that you may advance God’s Kingdom on earth.*

**What It Means to Be Separate from the World:** Let’s be clear. We live in the world, but we do not belong to it. We are in this worldly system, but we are not part of it. Jesus said we don’t belong to this world—we belong to God. God has set us apart for His holy mission.

Being of God means being united with Him—sharing in His nature, character, desires, and values. We are one with God. His values become our values. What aligns with God aligns with us. What doesn’t go well with God doesn’t go well with us, either. Because God is holy,

therefore, we are to be holy. Because God is the Light, we walk in the light, not in the darkness. Because God rejects sin, so do we. Because God loves justice, truth, and mercy, so must we. (E.g. 1 John 3:10—*The one who doesn't love his brother is not of God*).

Since God is not of the world, neither are we. We are separate from the world, therefore, what the world loves and promotes, we don't agree or accept. We don't adopt its values. Yet, sadly, the worldly way of thinking infiltrates the church today. Listen to God's Word: *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Romans 12:2, NASB 1995).

This is precisely what the Apostle John emphasizes in our core passage, 1 John 2:15-17. Let's break down his words:

**Verse 15:** *"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

The Message Bible puts this way: *"Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father."* Imagine two cups. One is filled with God's Spirit. The other fills with worldly cravings. You can't drink from both. If you chase two rabbits, you will lose them both (Native American saying).

Jesus said, *"You cannot serve both God and money"* (Matthew 6:24). Some Christians try to love God and the world at the same time. But you cannot love both. You must choose either God or the world, not both.

For those who chase both, there will be a rude awakening one day. I'd rather choose God over the world because I know what would happen to me when I love the world and fill my heart with the love of the world. In the end, it will turn me into a monster who loves nothing but money/ loves no one but myself and I would die miserably with no hope in Heaven.

A former CEO of LG once said with his dying breath: *"Money, money, money."* He had everything—except the one thing that mattered eternally—faith in Christ.

**Verse 16:** *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."* The Message Bible puts this way: *"Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him."*

John accurately highlights these three dominant worldly desires. These are constantly marketed to us through entertainment and media. For instance, consider 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' promoting the love of money, or programs like 'The Chew' appealing to the desire for eating pleasure. Hours spent watching TV, movies, or browse the internet inevitably expose us to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Please get this: the reason why God commands us to be separate from the world is not to deprive us of the fun in the world, but to spare us from sins that easily entangle us in unnecessary troubles (Hebrews 12:1). It is for our own good and profit (Hebrews 12:10). When we follow His command, we will grow in His likeness and holiness (Hebrews 12:10). We will bear the fruit of righteousness before our heavenly Father (Hebrews 12:12) and will glorify His name.

**Verse 17:** *“<sup>17</sup> The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”* Choosing God over the world is no brainer for me for the following three reasons: First, God is eternal. He matters eternally; the world doesn't. It passes away. Like a house built on sand, the world may offer beautiful rooms—but the foundation will collapse.

Next, everything from God is good. He gives me the very best that matters eternally. The world doesn't.

Thirdly, over time, you become what you love and pursue. If you pursue the world, you'll reflect the world. If you pursue Christ, you'll reflect Christ. Consider the mirror effect. A mirror becomes what it faces. If it faces the sun, it reflects light. If it faces darkness, it shows nothing. You and I are like that mirror. What are you facing each day, ask yourself—God's glory, or the world's glare? Your reflection will be shaped by your direction. Make your choice with the end in mind.

**Consequences of Separation:** Jesus warns us, since we are of God and not of the world, the ruler of the world, the Evil one, will hate us. He hated Jesus first. He will hate His disciples, us. Here's an example. The persecution against Christianity becomes more and more intense. This is becoming increasingly evident. For instance,

A kindergartner was banned from bringing his children's Bible for show-and-tell. Gideons are not allowed to distribute Bibles in schools. That's the world we live in. Jesus says, the world will hate us and persecute us when we don't follow what it promotes. But take heart—we are not alone. God protects us from the Evil one. He watches over us.

## Conclusion

Someone might ask: *Didn't God love the world (John 3:16), so shouldn't we also love the world? Why, then, John the Apostle says not to love the world?* Here's my answer: Yes, God loved the people in the world, but not the world or its values. We are commanded to love people but stay away from the ways of the world—its desires, its pursuits, and its false promises. God separates us from the world so that we may stay in the Light. So that we may bring people to Christ. We are not saved to blend in—we are saved to shine.

Once again, being separate from the world is not about rules and regulations. It's about identity—knowing who we are. It's about calling—embracing what God has called us to do. It's about holiness—choosing to walk with the Holy One daily. The result? Eternal life in the presence of God.

One thing is certain: The choice you make today, through your values and character, determines your eternal harvest. There is no middle ground: either eternal life with God, or eternal separation from Him.

So, I ask again: Are you a disciple of Jesus? Then, don't follow the world. Do not love the world. You are not of the world. You are set apart by God. Stay pure and blameless until the Day of the Lord.

### Action Points:

- Limit Distractions: Cut back on media pushing worldly values this week.
- Show Love: Share God's love with a neighbor instead of chasing trends.
- Choose Eternity: Pursue prayer and scripture over temporary pleasures.

Let us pray.