

When the World Wins Your Heart

Introduction. We don't often think of ourselves as "worldly." That word feels reserved for someone else — someone louder, more obvious, more rebellious. But worldliness is rarely that obvious. It doesn't always shout; sometimes it whispers. It blends in. It looks normal. It even looks successful.

Worldliness isn't just about what we do — it's about what shapes what we love (James 4:4). It's when the values of the world quietly begin to set the priorities of our hearts. And here's the danger: you can follow Jesus publicly while slowly drifting toward the world privately. You can sing worship songs on Sunday and still let the culture instruct your thinking Monday through Saturday.

Therefore, we're going to ask a hard but necessary question: Has the world begun to shape us more than the Word? We'll ask what worldliness is, then explore our relationship to the world, observe why worldliness is forbidden, and finish with what each of us can do about worldliness.

I. What Is Worldliness?

- A. Worldliness is the overemphasis of the world, which are riches, advantages, pleasures, etc., that stir desires, seduce from God, and are obstacles to the cause of Christ. It's the sin of being too concerned about material possessions and temporal interests.
 - 1. While we're discussing the general attitude of worldliness in our lesson, it produces real sins. In fact, virtually all sin is related to worldliness, such as addictions, recreational drinking and drug use, fornication, pornography, ungodly and immoral dress, dancing, profanity and crude language, etc.
 - 2. But some actions and attitudes are also worldliness, even though they may be morally right within themselves (i.e. work, entertainment, recreation, etc.), whenever they occupy more of our interest and time than serving God.
- B. Additionally, worldliness isn't contingent on a place. A person might be in the most worldly atmosphere and not feel at home (cp. Lot in 2 Peter 2:7). On the other hand, someone may be in a spiritual atmosphere (i.e. in a church building) where New Testament worship is taking place, and yet not be in harmony with the spirit of what's happening, but they're far away in their heart.

II. What's My Relationship to the World?

- A. I shouldn't love the world (1 John 2:15-16). The "things" in the world" consist of three elements: the lust of the flesh (Romans 8:5-9; Galatians 5:16-24; Ephesians 2:3); the lust of the eyes (Joshua 7:20-21; Matthew 5:27-28; James 1:13-14); and, the pride of life, which is trusting in the world's own power and resources, while despising and violating divine laws (James 4:16). These three elements summarize all types of possible sins, and were exemplified in other Bible temptations (Genesis 3:1-6; Matthew 4:1-11).
- B. I shouldn't conform to the world (Romans 12:1-2). Conforming means to act in harmony with the world. Christians should be different from the world, yet many aren't (Philippians 2:15). Excuses are given: "Everybody's doing it;" "I'm doing

what makes me happy;” “I’m trying to get along with everybody;” “It doesn’t hurt anyone;” and, “It’s really not so bad.”

- C. I shouldn’t be soiled from the world (James 1:27). The world will put its mark on you with language, dress, priorities, etc. If we blemish the body of Christ, we won’t be a part of the body presented to God (Ephesians 5:27; cp. Revelation 3:4, 18). Godly living has never been easy, but others have done it (Noah, Lot, Moses, Joseph, etc.), and so can we (Titus 2:11-12; cp. Philippians 4:13).
- D. I shouldn’t care for the world (Matthew 13:22). There’s a great danger in materialism. We have to be careful not to covet after, nor trust in riches, but in God (1 Timothy 6:7, 10, 17). There’s nothing wrong with working hard. But don’t work so hard that you fail to live first for God and second for your family!

III. Why Is Worldliness Forbidden?

- A. It’s forbidden because it’s incompatible with the love of God (Matthew 6:24). We have to love something; and if we don’t love God, then we’ll love the world.
- B. It’s forbidden because the world and its lusts are fleeting (1 John 2:17). Both the world and its power to excite unrighteous desires won’t last forever.
- C. It’s forbidden because God knows how to best enjoy life (Revelation 22:14). The Bible was given, not only to get us to heaven, but to teach us how to enjoy life, receiving true fulfillment (John 10:10). All fun isn’t sin!
- D. It’s forbidden because God’s perspective is better than ours (Proverbs 3:5-6). He knows that sin ensnares and destroys. Sin is “for a season” but Christ is enduring. Without Christ, people never know what life’s really for.

IV. What Can I Do About Worldliness?

- A. Biblical steps:
 - 1. Fix your attention on Jesus and not on worldly desires.
 - 2. Choose God’s will over temporary pleasure.
 - 3. Guard your eyes, choices, and relationships carefully.
 - 4. Repent quickly when you notice pride, selfishness, or compromise.
- B. Practical habits:
 - 1. Prioritize prayer and Bible reading over checking your phone or social media.
 - 2. Limit entertainment, conversations, and content that pull you from God.
 - 3. Spend time with saints who encourage holiness and accountability.
 - 4. Practice regular self-examination, since self-focused living feeds worldliness.

Conclusion. Character is judged by the trend of someone’s life, and it’ll determine destiny. When people are engrossed by the material (and sinful) actions, they’re worldly. But when they take seriously the teaching of Jesus, they’re spiritual.

When you pull away from worldly people, they won’t understand. They’ll hate you and speak evil of you; they’ll think you strange, fanatical, and cult-like (Matthew 5:10-12; 1 Peter 4:4; 1 John 3:13). The world will try to pressure you to do as it does. Don’t compromise with worldliness — expose it!