

Steve Whitacre
SESSION 1 | What is Worldliness?

I. INTRODUCTION

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15)

"Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea." (Revelation 12:17)

"Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived." (Revelation 13:11–14)

II. WORLDLINESS: WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

"Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas." (Colossians 4:14)

"Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers." (Philemon 23–24)

"For Demas, *in love with this present world*, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia." (2 Timothy 4:10)

"A love for the world begins in the soul. It's subtle, not always immediately obvious to others, and often undetected by the people who are slowly succumbing to its lies." CJ Mahaney, *Worldliness*, 20.

III. WHAT IS WORLDLINESS?

"Worldliness, then, is a love for this fallen world. It's loving the values and pursuits of the world that stand opposed to God. More specifically, it is *to gratify and exalt oneself to the exclusion of God*. It rejects God's rule and replaces it with our own. It exalts our opinions above God's truth. It elevates our sinful desires for the things of this fallen world above God's commands and promises." CJ Mahaney, *Worldliness*, 27.

“Worldliness is departing from God. It is a man-centered way of thinking: it proposes objectives which demand no radical breach with man’s fallen nature; it judges the importance of things by the present and material results; it weighs success by numbers; it covets human esteem and wants no unpopularity; it knows no truth for which it is worth suffering; it declines to be ‘fools for Christ’s sake.’ Worldliness is the mind-set of the unregenerate. It adopts idols and is at war with God.” Iain Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, 255.

IV. PLAYING DEFENSE: DISCERNING & RESISTING WORLDLINESS

“If you give in to temptation, it will be because desire has overcome reason in the struggle to influence your will.” Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, 62–63.

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” (1 John 2:15–17)

“In this way [let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me; Luke 9:23], self-denial guards us from worldliness. The apostle John exhorts Christians, “Do not love the world or the things in the world” (1 John 2:15). By “world,” he means creation and culture as bent toward sin and ungodliness. The things in the world—the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life—do not come to us directly from the Father but have been twisted and broken by sin. **“The desires of the flesh”** refers to bodily desires that have been corrupted and distorted by sin. **“Desires of the eyes”** refers to beautiful things that have become a spectacle to distract us from God. And the **“pride of life”** refers to all of the pomp, glory, and splendor of the world that we treasure and trust in instead of the Lord. That’s why the love for the world and love for the Father are mutually exclusive. To love the world is to so esteem and value it that we covetously desire and crave the things of the world.” Joe Rigney, *Strangely Bright*, 77–78.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **Do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1–2)

Four questions for evaluation:

1. *Is it helpful—physically, spiritually, and mentally?*

“‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful.” (1 Corinthians 6:12a)

2. *Does it bring me under its power?*

“All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be dominated by anything.” (1 Corinthians 6:12a)

3. *Does it hurt others?*

“Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.” (1 Corinthians 8:13)

4. *Does it glorify God?*

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, 88.

“Repeated acts of the consent of the will unto sin may beget a disposition and inclineableness of the will unto a proneness and readiness to consent to sin upon easy solicitation.” John Owen, in Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, 131.

V. PLAYING OFFENSE: GROWING IN GODLINESS

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that *by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*” (Romans 12:1–2)

“Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God’s judgment, hating what He hates, loving what He loves, and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word.” J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*, 34.

“but test everything; hold fast what is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:18–20)

“Puritanism was impelled by the insight that all of life is God’s. The Puritans lived simultaneously in two worlds—the invisible spiritual world and the physical world of earthly existence. For the Puritans, both worlds were equally real, and there was no cleavage of life into sacred and secular. All of life was sacred... Godliness in every phase of a person’s life was the Puritan goal. One Puritan spoke of Christianity as a

"universal habit of grace" in which "the whole creature is resigned. ... to the obedience and glory of its maker." "If God be God over us," wrote Peter Bulkeley, "we must yield him universal obedience in all things. He must not be over us in one thing, and under us in another, but he must be over us in everything." Lelan Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 208.

VI. CONCLUSION

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." (James 4:7–8)

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30–31)