
OUR BATTLE WITH WORLDLINESS

It is a fact of life that we live in this world (**John 17:11-18**). Jesus was about to leave the world when He was preparing the apostles for the time He would no longer be with them in the world. While He was in the world, He was not of the world. This is how He could be the light of the world (**John 8:12**). Likewise, Jesus sends us into the world, not to be of the world, but to be the light of the world (**Matthew 5:14-16**). I liken this to the purpose for a boat. It is to go out into the water, but it cannot succeed in its mission if the water gets into the boat. The church is to go out into the world and evangelize, but if the world gets into the church, we are spiritually sunk.

The problem with being in the world while not being of the world is the struggle we have not to become worldly. There are strong temptations in the world, and there is the temptation to be like the world in order to relate to it.

When we talk about worldliness, we are talking about more than immorality. We are talking about more than materialism. There are things in this life that may be right in and of themselves but become a snare by overwhelming our spiritual life. Andy Dieselkamp preached about this in Conway last week, and here are some points that he made on this subject.

Even the person who is married has an additional responsibility in this world that will ordinarily limit his ability to be that much more spiritually focused. Look at **1 Corinthians 7:32-35**. The passage says that the married person cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife, and that the married woman likewise cares about the things of this world—how she may please her husband. Of course, this doesn't mean that marriage is wrong. This chapter requires men and women to fulfill responsibilities in their marriages. But we must understand that this passage also illustrates the cares of the world are not necessarily evil.

What is it that makes worldliness evil? In the case of the cares of the world, the problem arises when we allow the cares of this world to take priority over the will of God in our lives. This is the lesson in **Matthew 6:31-33**. God made us with the physical needs of food, clothing, and shelter. However, we must not be so worried about them that we neglect God's will and God's kingdom. We should put our faith in God's power and willingness to provide for our needs, and we should put God's will and kingdom as our top priority. The failure to do so is worldliness in the form of materialism—looking to the acquisition of physical things as the object of our security and trust instead of God.

Jesus also confronted the problem of materialism in **Matthew 6:19-24**, where the temptation is to look to financial and physical abundance as the source of our esteem and purpose in life. We cannot serve God if our heart is with an earthly treasure. Our heart is wherever our treasure is.

That means that the value system that we have will determine what we consider important. Therefore, we have to be careful not to be seduced into the vain philosophy of the world. **Colossians 2:8** warns us not to be cheated through empty deceit and philosophy according to the basic principles of the world. Our worldview must be to see what really matters—what is eternal, the spiritual. Most worldly philosophies focus on the world—the here and now, the physical. The worldly concept is very short-sighted and produces much spiritual harm because of spiritual neglect.

The New Testament also warns the Christian not to seek friendship with the world (**James 4:4**). It is not wrong to have friends that are in the world, but friendship with the world means wanting to please the world, almost always by compromise and being like the world. If we prefer worldly company to spiritual company, then we are begging for trouble (**1 Cor. 15:33**). If we refuse to do what the worldly do, then our worldly friends will hate us (**John 15:18-19**). We must seek those people and things that will encourage our spirituality and avoid those that would hinder our walk with God.