

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

Senior Pastor Titus Green

February 15, 2026

So That Your Joy May Be Complete – a study of First John

Do Not Love The World

1 John 2:15-17

[Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.]

In the classic work of Greek literature, the *Odyssey*, there are mysterious creatures known as “sirens.” The sirens lived on the cliffs of a flowery island and were said to be beautiful, woman-like creatures. But no one could describe what they looked like because any ship that sailed toward their island was wrecked on the rocks below the cliffs, killing all on board.

So, why would any sailor direct his ship toward that island? The sirens had a magical power. They were able to sing a song that was so beautiful and enchanting that it would cause any man who listened to fall under their spell and move in the direction of the sirens’ song.

German literature has a character named Mephistopheles who is a messenger from the devil. He lures a man named Faust into making a deal with the devil by reasoning with him and appealing to his dissatisfaction in this world. Faust falls under the spell of reason and the promise of greater knowledge and gives up his soul to get it, only to be destroyed in the end.

In his *Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis included a character known as the Green Witch. She holds a prince captive by placing him under a spell. First, she lured him into isolation by her sheer beauty. Once he was isolated from his family, she made up a lie that she repeated over and over again until he began to doubt what he knew to be true, then he began to firmly believe what had once only been a doubt. At that point, his love for the Green Witch was so strong that he no longer wanted to return home. He was a voluntary captive of a wicked queen.

And there are myriad examples of that same basic storyline throughout history and across cultures. Why does that storyline naturally strike a chord with us? Because it’s based on a true story.

- There is a real siren’s song that will lure you off course and into destruction.
- There is a real Mephistopheles who is constantly reasoning with you and promising greater satisfaction, all in an effort to convince you to give away your soul.
- There is a real Green Witch who is trying to isolate you and get you to doubt what you know to be true so that you will voluntarily become captive to something that will destroy you in the end.

It’s all true. And it’s what our next passage of Scripture is about in our verse-by-verse study of 1 John. Let me go ahead and give you today’s big idea so you can have it in mind as we read our text.

Big Idea: As we grow deeper in our love for God, we will fall out of love with this world.

1 John 2:15–17

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. 16 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. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Remember what we studied last week. When we place our faith and trust in Jesus, we are forgiven of all our sin and restored to a love relationship with God as our Father. We also saw that, like any good father, God desires for us to grow and mature in our relationship of love with Him.

And our text flows out of that truth. As we grow deeper in our love for God, things in our life begin to change as part of His gracious work in us. And one of those changes is that we fall out of love with this world and turn away from its efforts to lure us astray.

That's the main point of our study this morning. My prayer is that God will deepen our desire to grow in love with Him and deepen our resolve to turn away from the things of this world. So, let's dig into our text and see what there is to learn about falling out of love with this world. I think the clearest way to this passage is to ask and answer these four questions about this text:

- What is the world?
- Why should we not love the world?
- How is the world luring us into loving it?
- What should we do to not love the world?

WHAT IS THE WORLD?

Is John saying we shouldn't love the ocean or sunsets or food? Is he saying we should take a vow of poverty and give away all of our possessions? Even more, why would God say we shouldn't love the world when the most famous verse in the Bible says, "God so loved the world...?" What in the world is the world?

The Bible uses the word "world" in three distinct ways.

1. The world can mean the physical realm that is distinct from the heavenly realm. The word "world" translates the Greek word "kosmos." That's the physical universe that includes our planet.

1 John 4:1

...for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

John is saying that false prophets are spreading out all over the place...all over the world. When John talks about the world in our text, he says it isn't from God. And this earth is from God. It is His creation. It displays His glory. So, John isn't talking about the physical world.

2. The world can mean the people who inhabit the earth.

1 John 2:2

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

This is what Jesus was referring to in John 3:16 when He said, "God so loved the world." He loved the people of this world. And we are called to share His heart by loving the people of this world, too. So, when John says we shouldn't love the world, he isn't saying we shouldn't love the people of this world.

But there's a third way the bible uses the word "world."

3. The world can mean the system of this world that is opposed to God. The Bible teaches that this world has fallen under the influence of the powers of darkness and has adopted the agenda of God's enemy.

1 John 5:19

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

James 4:4

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

John 12:31

Jesus answered, "Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."

If you want to know how the great wickedness that is being unveiled in the Epstein files can occur, there is a biblical explanation: this world is under the influence of a system that is aligned with the agenda of God's enemy. He is seeking to destroy the people for whom Christ died and establish a kingdom that opposes the work and glory of God. This is what Colossians 1:13 refers to as the domain of darkness.

And that's the "world" John is warning us not to love. The satanic, sinful system that is being advanced by the enemy of God.

Make no mistake about it, brothers and sisters, there is a dark power at work in this world. Like the sirens in the Odyssey, it's playing a tune designed to attract our hearts and lure us off course from God's will for our lives. And John is saying, "Don't listen. Don't fall for the lures of the enemy. Don't give your heart to this world."

And John doesn't just tell us that we shouldn't love this world. He tells us why.

WHY SHOULD WE NOT LOVE THE WORLD?

Love for the World is Incompatible with Love for God.

1 John 2:15-16

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.

John says we can't love God and love the things that are aligned with the system of this world. Those two loves are incompatible because this world's system is diametrically opposed to the goodness and glory of God.

There are kinds of loves that are just not compatible.

- You can't love the Florida Gators while loving the Georgia Bulldogs. That's a bad example because I don't know if you should love either of those teams.
- You can't love eating filet mignon and love being on a vegan diet.
- Seriously though, you can't love truth while loving lies that deceive and distort the truth.
- You can't love justice while loving things that are corrupt and abuse justice.
- You can't love your kids while loving acts of violence against them and things that harm them.

There are kinds of love that are incompatible with each other. And John says it's that way with God and the system of this world. We shouldn't love this world because it's incompatible with loving God. Love for this world is a dead-end road.

1 John 2:17

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever

2 Peter 3:10

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

The world as it is will not last forever. One day, Jesus will return and destroy the works of darkness and recreate the heavens and the earth. He will bring the fullness of His eternal Kingdom and His people will reign with Him in the new heavens and earth. That's the glorious future God has in store for those who trust in Jesus.

But the enemy of God has designed the systems of this world to deceive us into believing this world is all there is, to forget eternity and live for the here and now. Satan doesn't care if you don't believe in Satan. Satan doesn't care if you say you believe in Jesus so long as you don't give Him your whole heart to him and align your life with his will for you. The agenda of God's enemy is to get us to live in this world as though this world is all there is.

And John is saying, "Don't fall for it. Don't give your heart to the fallenness of this world. You can't devote your heart to Jesus and stay in love with this world. You have to make a choice. And if you follow after the course of this world, it's a dead-end road and a sure-fire way to waste your life." And that brings us to another critical part of John's teaching.

HOW IS THE WORLD LURING US INTO LOVING IT?

1 John 2:16

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.

John says there are three characteristics of this world that act as entry points to our hearts and stir us to fall in love with this world. The desires of the flesh.

The word desire means "longing or craving." It's an appetite for something we want but don't have. The flesh is essentially a reference to our human nature. And our human nature has natural appetites and desires. God created us to have a natural desire for things like food and shelter and sexual pleasure and rest and leisure.

And those desires were created by God to be good gifts to our lives. The problem is that our natural appetites have been distorted by our sin. So, we no longer satisfy our God-given desires in ways that are good and healthy.

- Our hunger for food turns into gluttony or destructive eating habits.
- Our desire for sexual intimacy turns into lust and immorality.
- Our desire for rest turns into laziness.

The world captures our hearts through the desires of our flesh.

The desires of the eyes. Not all desires are aimed at satisfying our physical appetites. We also crave mental, or intellectual pleasure. The Romans and Greeks lived for things to look at that brought them pleasure. That's what the Colosseum was all about. It housed spectacles for people to look at that

provided mental stimulus. They just sat there and watched while their souls melted away in the distraction of it all.

And that's one of the ways the world seeks to capture the affections of our hearts. The desires of the eyes certainly include things like sexual lust, but there a plenty of other ways the world is going after our hearts through our desire to find pleasure in looking at things.

Just think about the amount of screen time that is part of the average person's day. Recent studies have shown that the average American adult spends just over 7 hours a day staring at a phone, computer, or television screen. Think about the amount of useless entertainment we consume. Think about the amount of godless content we take into our hearts. Over 7 hours a day. Recent studies also show that only 30% of people who regularly go to church read their bibles each day.

And I'm against having a phone or watching TV. That's not my point. My point is that we need to be on guard because the Bible says this world is attempting to use our desire to find pleasure in what we look at and use it to steal our hearts away from loving God.

The pride of life. John says the third way the world grabs hold of our heart is through pride. Self-centeredness. Self-exaltation. The system of this world is designed to put something at the center of your heart. And believe it or not, it isn't this world. It's you.

But it isn't just pride. It's the pride of life. That word translated "life" is often used to describe material possessions. The only other time it's found in 1 John is in chapter 3:17 - *But if anyone has the world's goods...*

So, John is saying that the love of this world is expressed through a self-centered pride in our possessions. This includes everything from the pursuit of bigger and better things that show how successful you are or what a hard worker you are to putting your things ahead God's purposes for your life. Valuing your money more than God's mission. Valuing your boat or your car or our house more than knowing and loving God.

The allure of this world is subtle and strong. So, what do we do to fight falling in love with this world? That's our last question for this text.

WHAT DO WE DO?

1 John 2:17

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

How do we resist the lure of this world? John makes it sound so simple. Do the will of God. As we close, let me give you three insights into doing God's will.

1. Doing God's will requires trusting God's Son

John 6:40

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

We can't overcome the world by our own power. That's why we need Jesus. And we don't just need Him, we have Him because God so loved us that He sent His Son Jesus to save us. And the will of

God is that we would place our faith and trust in Jesus. And when we trust in Jesus, He works in us with resurrection power.

2. Doing God's will requires knowing God's Word

Psalm 1:1–2

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

When Psalm 1 talks about the counsel of the wicked and the way of sinners, I take that to be synonymous with system of this world. And what does the Psalmist do that keeps him from following after the course of the world? He delights and meditates on the Word of God. The way we know the will of God is by spending meaningful time in the Word of God.

If you want to resist the lure of this world, then fill your heart with the word of God. Set aside time each day to read the Bible. Look for truths about God and promises to believe. Look for commands to obey. And take what you read and turn it into prayers.

3. Doing God's Will requires choosing God's Mission

1 John 2:17

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

And as I read verse 17, I find John making a compelling case to live right now on this earth as part of God's mission to establish His kingdom in the hearts of men. This is what Jesus was talking about Matthew when He said we are to live our lives now in a way that lays up treasure in Heaven and to seek His Kingdom above all other things. Listen to something John heard Jesus say

John 4:34-39

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. 35 Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. 36 Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37 For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." 39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."

Jesus has just changed the life of the woman at the well. She goes away and starts to tell everyone she knows about Jesus. And while she is God, Jesus' disciples come from the marketplace where they were buying food and offer some to Jesus. Jesus says His food is to do God's will. The hunger of His heart was strengthened and satisfied in doing God's will by living on God's mission. And then Jesus turns around and calls His followers to join Him in that mission. The fields are white for a spiritual harvest. This world is under the grip of darkness, and the world is running out of time, but the fields are ripe for harvest. And Jesus is calling us to join in. To be part of planting the seeds of the gospel by telling others about Jesus and to take part in reaping as people come to faith.

And I love the fact that while Jesus is calling His disciples to do God's will by living on His mission, the Samaritan woman was already doing it. And many were coming to believe by her testimony. That's God's will for all of our lives. That's His mission for every follower of Jesus. That's how you live a life on earth that will last forever and store up treasure in Heaven.

And it starts with a daily choice. The surrender of our will to God's agenda. To answer God's call to live our lives on a mission to let this world know the truth about Jesus...across the street and around the world. That's God's mission for our lives. It's His will. And, friend, you have to choose.

When I was in high school, my favorite teacher was Mrs. Masters. Throughout my high school years, she taught several classes that I was in...Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, and she had her hands full.

The year I had her for geometry, it became obvious that I was quite the distraction to the other students. I had some pretty funny comments about postulates that landed me in the hallway for the entire year. Seriously, every day in geometry I had to go in at the beginning of class and move a desk into the hallway at an angle where I could only see the chalkboard but no other students. It was like solitary confinement for educational purposes.

One of the other arrangements that I had with Mrs. Masters concerned my homework. Each semester, Mrs. Masters would average the grades of my tests and quizzes and tell me how many assignments I needed to do in order to get an A. If I got them done within a week, she'd write me down for an A.

That tradition carried through to my graduation. A week after graduation, I showed up to her room with my overdue trigonometry homework. We exchanged pleasantries. I told her how thankful I was to have her as a teacher. She told me that even with all the shenanigans, she enjoyed having me as a student...and that she genuinely believed in me...and as I turned to walk away, she stopped me and though I can't remember the exact quote, she said something like, "Titus, I need to tell you something. You may never want to speak to me again when you hear it, but I've got to say it. You can't straddle the fence with God. You can't have one foot in this world's way of doing things and have the other foot in with God. It doesn't work like that. You have to choose between God and the world? I have no doubt you'll be successful, but I'm afraid you'll throw your life away."

She was crying. I told her how sweet she was and how much I appreciated her concern. I told her that it meant a lot to me that she would care enough to say a really hard thing. Then, I walked away and feared that I had actually driven one of my teachers insane.

It wasn't until 6 months later, during my freshman year of college that something hit me. It was the Holy Spirit impressing me with something. Mrs. Masters was right. I was straddling the fence with the Lord. I was trying to love God and the world. And it doesn't work that way. You have to make a choice. And that changed the entire trajectory of my life. Every good and satisfying thing about my life is rooted in that choice. I laid my life down before the Lord and said, "It all belongs to you. I don't care how much money I make. I don't care where I live. I don't care what it means. I only want you and to live for your kingdom. It all belongs to you."