



COMMITMENT TO GOD AND HIS WORD

**Not Loving the World**

As followers of Christ, we are called to live for the next world, not this world. This is a truth that often is avoided by Christians. But it is vital that we not love the world if we are to be true lovers of God. Take time to pray that God will speak to your heart as you read the following article by Rick Whitney.





## Not Loving the World

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### Worldliness: What is it? How do we fight it?

How do you write a paper on worldliness? I have procrastinated for a long time in writing this one. Why? Because no one wakes up in the morning wanting to read about worldliness. Or think about how worldly they might be. Or how worldly they might have become, without recognizing it. It is an unpleasant subject to dwell on.

The topic convicts us. And conviction stops us and causes us to reflect and search our heart and look at our life. When a Christian is asked to think about whether he has become worldly, often he resists and is defensive. We do not appreciate the question or the questioner. As I said, worldliness is an unpleasant topic.

All of us would rather be positively encouraged. “God truly, deeply loves us.” This is a truth we can all appreciate. “Jesus loves me, this I know.” We treasure the thought. “Our Lord is merciful.” Amen!

But what about, “God calls us to guard our heart, lest we unconsciously drift into worldliness.” Who wants to hear that! Yet, this is the warning of 1 John and many other portions of the New Testament and so we are going to talk about it.

*“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15–17).*

First off, worldliness is a little hard to define. So let’s look at some definitions, beginning from Webster’s. The “world” is:

- The earth with its inhabitants and all things upon it.
- People in general; humanity.

But “world” also has other definitions for the Christian:

- Those among mankind who are caught up with their concerns for this present life, without regard to any life to come.

***“The sin of worldliness is a preoccupation with the things of this temporal life. It’s accepting and going along with the views and practices of society around us without discerning if they are biblical. I believe that the key to our tendencies toward worldliness lies primarily in the two words ‘going along’. We simply go along with the values and practices of society.”***

***-Jerry Bridges***

- All values, entertainments, teachings and philosophies, which only seem to care about this world and never think about the world to come.

Webster's also defines the rather archaic term "*worldling*" as:

- A person engrossed in the concerns of this present world.

Webster's continues with "worldly" and defines it:

- Devoted to this world and its pursuits rather than to spiritual affairs.

We agree with Webster's. When we talk about being worldly, we are talking about a personal value system that embraces this world's values, that accepts this world's philosophy of life, that goes along with this world's morals. Worldliness is anything that is causing war against your soul.

This paper is written to help Christians recognize how this world can deeply harm us; to help us identify these worldly values, philosophies and morals - and to judge them rightly.

We are not writing to help you judge others. Our desire is to encourage you to judge yourself and to do it rightly. Not with a spirit of self-condemnation, but hopefully with a good spirit of self-correction. The Lord asks every Christian to correct himself and to come back to His ways, over and over, every day and every week, throughout every season of our life - until we have "finished our course."

*"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12).*

For the serious disciple of Jesus Christ, this self-evaluation of how worldly we might be, can be a tremendously liberating exercise. His grace helps us to not just deny worldly desires, but also helps us to live sensibly, righteously, in real and true freedom. For the serious disciple this is not a fear of man exercise. We do not work to put away worldliness because we fear men. Of course, we are not trying to work our way to Heaven. What we are striving for as serious disciples is finding our Savior, day by day. What we want is to enjoy His presence, and vibrant communion with Him. But to gain this communion, we must understand how worldliness hurts it.

There is a part of us, deep down, that longs to be rid of this world and all its temptations and all its lusts. There is a part of us that, "*longs for glory*," that longs for freedom. But our world is loud and insistent and brassy and constant and has this great, big voice. This world also speaks effectively with a subtle, quiet whisper. With either voice it continues, day and night, lulling us to sleep, beckoning us to gaze, or loudly clamoring for us to pay attention - inviting us always to follow it in the constant pursuit of one thrill after another.

***"The Christian is the most contented man in the world, but he is the least contented with the world. He is like a traveler in an inn, perfectly satisfied with the inn and its accommodation, considering it as an inn, but putting quite out of all consideration the idea of making it his home."***

***-C.H. Spurgeon***

## A Choice is Needed

The Apostle tells us in 1 John 2:15 that we must not love this world. Then John gets even more intense. In what sounds extreme he concludes that if we love this world, the love of the Father is not in us! Shocking thought, isn't it?

We do not want to hear that. We would much rather believe that we can have this world and also have our faith; that we can have our Savior and have our pleasures and why not? Don't we deserve almost anything we could ever dream about? The New Testament answers, "No".

James is painfully honest and direct in laying out this struggle within. Here is how he puts it:

*"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4).*

There is only room in our heart to be a friend of one camp or the other. We do not want to admit this, but it is true nevertheless. These verses set up a pretty clear choice. It is either the world or closeness to God.

So what does the Christian first need to do? He needs to decide which voice is right. Is it our culture which teaches us to enjoy everything we see and somehow also fit God into our back pocket? Or is God's Word right when it warns us we cannot have it both ways? We must choose.

Have you ever just felt miserable spiritually? Where you just do not feel comfortable being a denizen of this earth? Have you ever wished you did not always have to fight against your flesh, this world and its values? That you could just fly away from it all?

We know that worldliness and being worldly and acting like a "worldling" are the constant pulls and dangers we fight against while walking on this planet. When we shut off the voices and quiet our hearts and get alone with God – we long for Heaven. If we are relaxed here and at ease, and have no spiritual anxiety, God through His Spirit can bring us back to our senses and to a proper, spiritual, eternal view. He can help get our eyes up off our immediate pleasures and remind us that we are eternal and we can then begin to sort things out with a clearer head.

That is if God is gracious to us.

But the choice is still ours.

There are many Christians who seem to have one foot on a moving train and one foot on the ground. They want both, but they are headed for some pain and a choice. May it not be so with us!

God help us to choose You and choose You today, Lord.

***"The ways, and fashions, and amusements, and recreations of the world have a continually decreasing place in the heart of a growing Christian. He does not condemn them as downright sinful, nor say that those who have anything to do with them are going to Hell. He only feels they have a constantly diminishing hold on his own affections and gradually seem smaller and more trifling in his eyes."***

***-J.C. Ryle***

## The Paradox

*“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ephesians 5:3–5).*

*“The Christian is different not only because he has experienced the new birth, but also because he experiences a new estrangement. Before becoming a Christian he was the enemy of God; he loved the world and the world loved him. But once reconciled to God he becomes estranged from the world. Formerly the world loved him, whereas now it hates him (John 15:18). So man, whether saved or lost, experiences alienation in this life either from God or from the world. Jesus said that every disciple is “not of the world” (John 15:19), but he also said that the Christian is in the world. Had he been removed at salvation there would be no further estrangement. But it doesn’t happen this way. Jesus said that as the Father sent Him into the world, so He has sent His disciples into the world (John 17:18). This is the great paradox of the Christian life; we live in the world but are not of the world.” - Harold Lindsell, The World, the Flesh and the Devil.*

*“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy” (1 Peter 1:13–16).*

If we are going to try to warn ourselves, guard our soul, protect our spirit from this world and its values; we first need to recognize that there is something to be scared of, something that can hurt us; that we live in a hostile environment.

*“We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the power and control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19).*

Everything, and I mean everything, is under the control of the evil one who was given mastery over everything from the mountaintops on down. This is where he lives and this is where we live. So there will be struggle. Are we prepared to struggle?

Quoting Harold Lindsell again, “There is little need for the Christian to wrestle with the implications involved in the struggle against the world if he does not intend to struggle.” So are we going to struggle?

Do we recognize that we must struggle? And that this struggle is part of the Christian fight of faith? That it is a good struggle? That it is part and parcel of our walking about this earth?

***“The chief danger of the Church today is that it is trying to get on the same side as the world, instead of turning the world upside down.”***

**-A.B. Simpson**

## Materialism and Wealth and Worldliness

Constantly day and night, even in our churches, the constant drumbeat is that we should have more money and that we should expect to make more money and that we will become wealthier and wealthier and that somehow this is our God-given right. *God forbid that there would ever be a recession. Don't you understand that I have a huge mortgage and a big car payment?*

This kind of thinking is everywhere and strong in the American church. We are weaned on a culture that tells us that we inherently have the right to more and more possessions and in addition, we have the right to live in more ease and more comfort. It would be the odd Christian who ever thought of, much less actually instituted, any personal standards of sacrificial living.

And what do we often do with our ever increasing wealth? We spend it on our pleasures! We sure don't give it away. On any given Sunday, the giving that occurs in the churches of America has, over the last twenty years, hovered at the abysmal two to three percent range of our weekly incomes.

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 2:10, *"And all that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure."* Thankfully Solomon also concludes in his book that it was, "Vanity and striving after wind."

So too, we Christians must conclude that this world and its values and entertainments are at best suspect, and often diametrically opposed to the health and well-being of our souls. As an example, do we ever pray before we go shopping? It seems a little odd to even ask the question. But maybe we should. And if we do not pray, at least ask a few of these kinds of questions, "How would the Lord have me spend my money? What would the Lord think of this CD? That new outfit? This bracelet? That purse? This movie ticket?" If we do not ask ourselves these simple questions - do not be deceived dear Christian - there is coming a time when our Lord will ask these kind of questions.

*"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ."*  
(Romans 12:2).

For a believer, the life that displeases our Lord is termed worldly. Paul warned the believers of Rome not to be pressed into this worldly mold. Not to let this world get its hooks into them. That if we are imitating this world, we are not imitating God. That if we are concerned about the fashions and the values of this world, we have missed our true spiritual target, our real calling.

### On Saying "No!"

Here is how one Christian mom wrote to her boy and warned him about this kind of pressure, this kind of worldly conformation:

*Whatever weakens your reason  
Whatever impairs the tenderness of your conscience  
Whatever obscures your sense of God  
Whatever increases the authority of your body over your mind  
Whatever takes away your relish for spiritual things...that to you is sin, no matter how innocent it is in itself.*

*- Susannah Wesley in a letter to her son, John.*

*"If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ."*

*-Martin Luther*

Susannah sounds like Thomas Watson. In his book, *A Godly Man's Picture*, he writes: "A godly man will not go as far as he may, lest he go further than he should." For many years, this was the way my wife and I taught our children this same truth. When our kids asked, "Why can't we do it? All our friends are doing it?" We responded, "Others may, we may not." Simple. To the point. We really did not care what others were saying.

There are many, many decisions that we are called upon to make every day. And almost every one of these same decisions deal with whether we will think like this world, talk like this world, value what this world values, believe as this world believes. Or whether we will go a different direction. Obviously, we cannot just follow along quietly with this world. We need to fight and resist this world. In this fight the Bible gives us help and direction.

Here are seven suggested guidelines that have been helpful to many Christians when called upon to make decisions such as, "Should I do this?" "Should I watch this?" "Should I listen to this?" "Lord, help me!"

1. Is there any clear teaching about the area in the Bible?
  2. What would Jesus do in this area?
  3. Is my heart attached to it?
  4. What is the spirit or the atmosphere of the thing?
  5. Will this help or harm my Christian life and walk?
  6. How will this influence and affect others?
  7. And if there is doubt, "Don't."
- Please don't!

Lord, when will some brave brother, some brave sister, just say, "No!"

When Neva and I were young Christians and finishing up college, we were a part of a dear, young church in Ames, Iowa. The average age was probably only 21. And I remember very specifically, during one winter, how that fervent young Bible study debated among ourselves on whether we should go see a particular movie. It had just come out and it was a good one. However there was a scene in the movie where the guy invited his new girlfriend to lay on his bed with him. The couple did not actually do anything immoral on the screen. They were clothed and just laying there, side by side. We did not know if it was proper to support the movie or recommend it, given that one scene.

Today it will seem silly when I mention the title. It is also silly and embarrassing to think of all the movies I have watched in the intervening 30 years since that winter. The movie was "Rocky" and it won the Academy Award for best picture. I still love the movie and sometimes I laugh to think we debated it. Then at other times I wonder if I have lost something in my heart and in my soul. I know one thing. I have been too concerned about being "culturally relevant."

I am so culturally relevant that I can speak all kinds of silly People magazine talk, or Entertainment Tonight trivia. All of us can. And it truly is silly. Often shameful. In our desire to be culturally relevant we opened the door to all kinds of worldly messages, worldly trivia, worldly gossip – just plain worldliness.

***"A wife who is 85% faithful to her husband is not faithful at all. There is no such thing as part-time loyalty to Jesus Christ."***

***-Vance Havner***



*“Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them, for this world and all it contains will pass away” (1 Corinthians 7:31).*

*The expression “will pass away” is borrowed from theater, and refers to the changing of scenes. It speaks of the transience of life. “All the worlds a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances...” - William Shakespeare*

Sound advice from William. This world is passing away and we should not act like this is all there is. We must not fall into the trap of thinking that we are living here on this earth forever and ever, and that there is nothing “up ahead”. We need to force ourselves to remember the up ahead.

***“Neutral men are the devil’s allies.”***

***-Edwin Hubbel Chapin***

### **The Media and Worldliness**

Specifically, any Christian who is serious about pleasing his Savior, needs to be vigilant about what he watches, reads or listens to. Because almost everything he watches, reads and listens to, comes from this world. Music, movies, magazines, the internet, radio and television. Even downloads, ring tones and images on our little, tiny cell phones. They all carry this worldly message. Just walk through a mall. All the clothes, the shoes, the handbags, all the accessories, all say that if you buy me you will have pleasure and the promise has absolutely nothing to do with God.

When driving down the highway - billboards and advertisements, mile after mile - the world’s message never ceases. The bombardment seems endless. And it is. Because the world is all around us, and it has a very specific value system and that value system is hostile to God. Since we live in this world we will hear its message easily and often. We must be vigilant and evaluate and screen and judge this world lest we think like a worldling.

Following are a few thoughts on the media and its worldly message, taken from a paper written by the pastors of Covenant Life Church located in Maryland:

#### John Piper’s Television Advice

*“Turn it off! It isn’t necessary for relevance. It is a deadly place to rest the mind. You are least capable of critical interaction. Its pervasive banality, sexual innuendo and God-ignoring values have no ennobling effect upon the human soul. It kills the Spirit. It drives away God. It quenches prayer. It blanks out the Bible. It cheapens the soul. It destroys spiritual power. It defiles almost everything.” - John Piper from a sermon*

(On shutting off the TV or actually throwing it out - a thought: Does this sound silly? Are we beyond even stopping and evaluating our time watching it? In Revelations that church in chapter 3 thought they were fine, but God thought they had big problems. Are we actually blind and naked? We often think it would be way too legalistic to throw out our TV all together, but are we just justifying our silly habits? This is the language and thinking of an alcoholic. Alcoholics do this all the time. They say that another drink is no big deal. Just a little drink. And eventually their life is wasted.)

### Straight for the Heart

*“Media rarely if ever attempts to reason with us and convince us to love the world. Instead it stirs up feelings and emotions that bypass our minds and grips our affections. The incredibly wicked power of media is that it can make something evil look good or exciting. It can make sin seem harmless and enjoyable. It can sway our hearts to think that we deserve what we crave, that what we see is all that matters.” - Josh Harris*

***“If all other variables are equal, your capacity to know God deeply will probably diminish in direct proportion to how much television you watch.”***

**- John Piper**

### Poison Pills

*“Trying to figure out how much sinful content from media you can handle and still be “okay” is like a person who takes half a poison pill every day because “only half” won’t kill you. When it comes to what we watch or read or listen to we shouldn’t ask how many halves of poison pills we can take. We need to examine the cumulative effect of our media habits on our attitude toward God and sin and the world.” - Josh Harris*

(Television is not a gray area. Not in 2007. Maybe twenty years ago the Bill Cosby show was innocent and fun, but where is one, half-hour comedy, that is clean today? The medium has changed dramatically from twenty years ago. And changed for the worse.)

### Easily Bored

*“[The] increasingly rapid pace of television’s images makes careful evaluation impossible and undesirable for the viewer, thus rendering determinations of truth and falsity difficult if not impossible. The pace of television’s agenda disallows edification, understanding and reflection. Boredom always threatens and must be defended against at all costs. The over-stuffed and over-stimulated soul becomes out-of-sync with God, others and itself. It cannot discern truth; it does not want to.” - Truth Decay by Douglas Groothuis*

### For Self-Evaluation

*“Cravings of sinful man: Are my media habits encouraging me to want my own way? Is what I’m watching, reading or listening to whispering the lie that these desires are natural, good, harmless when God’s Word says they will destroy my soul? Lust of the eyes: Are my media habits stirring up a covetous desire for more of what this world offers? Is it making me want everything for myself — a beautiful companion, a beautiful home, a beautiful car? Is it leading me to feast my eyes on unlawful sights for the sake of sinful pleasure? Is it causing me to be captivated by the outward and visible with no regard to goodness and virtue?” - Josh Harris*

### **All Sports. All the Time.**

I often get tripped up in this area. It starts with my love for sports. I love almost all sports, I really do. And many times I justify a lot of hours watching sports because I say to myself, “Self, at least you are not watching garbage.” But that’s not the issue, is it? The issue is all the hours and hours spent just watching - even watching my Broncos.

***“Grace will save a man but it will not save him and his idol.”***

***-A. W. Tozer***

A disciple has to ask himself about all those many, many hours. Comparing sports to some stupid movie is not the comparison. The comparison is the hours spent watching, versus the hours that could be spent doing something much more productive.

I hope the Lord would not be against watching a great game of football even if it lasts three hours. And when it comes to basketball, at least in the NBA, you only need to watch the last few minutes anyway. What’s the harm of watching your favorite baseball or hockey team, even if it eats up another three hours? God surely is not against a guy watching his sports, for hours on end? Or is He? Well, maybe God would be against watching three hours of soccer.

The serious Christian disciple must evaluate the amount of time he spends doing anything. We only have one life and God asks us to remember eternity. Not to take away our joy, but to help us fill our life with genuine, joyful purpose. That our weeks and months and years can be looked back on with a sense of genuine accomplishment.

### **What’s the Harm?**

I want to share a very current warning by a dear Christian author, written over 100 years ago. His thoughts are as true today as when they were written in the late 1800’s. The author is J.C. Ryle and the book is his classic, Holiness. Mr. Ryle has also spoken in a timely, eloquent, simple way on raising children. We have used his notes in our parenting seminar for over a decade. So we appreciate J.C. Ryle when he speaks.

*“You may see this deceitfulness [of sin] in the wonderful proneness of men to regard sin as less sinful and dangerous than it is in the sight of God and in their readiness to extenuate it, make excuses for it and minimize its guilt. ‘It is but a little one! God is merciful! God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss! We mean well! One cannot be so particular! Where is the mighty harm? We only do as others!’ Who is not familiar with this kind of language? You may see it in the long string of smooth words and phrases which men have coined in order to designate things which God calls downright wicked and ruinous to the soul. We are too apt to forget that temptation to sin will rarely present itself to us in its true colors, saying, ‘I am your deadly enemy and I want to ruin you for ever in Hell.’ Oh, no! Sin comes to us, like Judas, with a kiss, and like Joab, with an outstretched hand and flattering words. The forbidden fruit seemed good and desirable to Eve, yet it cast her out of Eden. The walking idly on his palace roof seemed harmless enough to David, yet it ended in adultery and murder. Sin rarely seems sin at its first beginnings. Let us then watch and pray, lest we fall into temptation. We may give wickedness smooth names, but we cannot alter its nature and character in the sight of God. Let us remember St Paul’s words: ‘Exhort one another daily ...lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin’ (Hebrews 3:13). It is a wise prayer in our Litany; ‘From the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil, good Lord, deliver us.’” - Holiness by J. C. Ryle*

*“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:7-9).*

Here it how John Stott has looked at this Galatians Scripture in the book, *The Message of Galatians*:

*“To ‘sow to the flesh’ is to pander to it, to cosset, cuddle and stroke it, instead of crucifying it. The seeds we sow are largely thoughts and deeds. Every time we allow our minds to harbor a grudge, nurse a grievance, entertain an impure fantasy, or wallow in self-pity, we are sowing to the flesh. Every time we linger in bad company whose insidious influence we know we cannot resist, every time we lie in bed when we ought to be up and praying, every time we read pornographic literature, every time we take a risk which strains our self-control, we are sowing, sowing, sowing to the flesh. Some Christians sow to the flesh every day and wonder why they do not reap holiness. Holiness is a harvest; whether we reap it or not depends almost entirely on what and where we sow.”*

***“Christians should live in the world, but not be filled with it. A ship lives in the water; but if the water gets into the ship, she goes to the bottom. So Christians may live in the world; but if the world gets into them, they sink.”***

**-D. L. Moody**

## The Questions

What we must do is ask ourselves some hard, unpleasant questions. My goodness, our Lord asked some hard questions of His men when He walked this earth. He made some very strong statements to them. Remember where He said in Matthew, “And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell.” Kind of shocking, isn’t it? He intended to shock. It got their attention. And ours.

Here are a few strong questions and clear Scriptures to help us determine whether or not a certain activity is glorifying to God and whether it might be worldly. These are again, from the pastors of Covenant Life Church. They are good, straightforward questions, which I took the liberty to edit a little bit. With these seven questions we don’t tell you where all the lines are, where all the borders are. But if you want to be right with God you need to ask yourself these kinds of questions. Chew on the Scriptures and understand the spirit of what Paul is trying to help us with. Navigating in this crazy world is a hard job! My purpose is to get you thinking.

### 1. Does it tempt you to sin?

*“Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Romans 13:14).*

*“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).*

### 2. Is it good for you or bad for you?

*“Everything is permissible for me” - but not everything is beneficial” (1 Corinthians 6:12).*

*“‘Everything is permissible’ - but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible’ - but not everything is constructive” (1 Corinthians 10:23).*

### 3. Does it enslave you?

*“Everything is permissible for me” - but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me” - but I will not be mastered by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12).*

### 4. Does it honor and glorify God?

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

### 5. Does it encourage others? Would you do it or watch it if you had company?

*“Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved” (1 Corinthians 10:33).*

### 6. Does it cause your brother to stumble?

*“Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God” (1 Corinthians 10:32).*

### 7. Are your motives pure when you are involved in it?

*“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it” (Jeremiah 17:9)?*

Here is a litmus test; a kind of spiritual thermometer where you can take your own temperature. *How about a media fast?* Every fast is for a purpose—either to get closer to God or to increase our prayer life. How about a media fast for a week so that we can be more devoted to the Gospel? More sensitive to the Gospel opportunities He might place in our path. Thinking about these seven questions, a media fast would show you whether a part of your heart has already been overtaken by this world. And a fast would help show us how to get out of the problem. Do you think you could do it?

Actually give up:

- Radios
- TV
- Newspapers
- Movies
- Magazines
- MP3's
- iPods
- Video games
- Cell Phones
- Texting
- Computer usage
- Instant messaging
- Internet use
- Email
- Facebook
- Twitter

My goodness! How would we survive? Maybe we would find out some things about our heart and our soul and our spirit and truly find out some things about our love relationship with our Savior. We did this at a recent HSLT and it was great! 400 Christians (teens and older) heard from God in a special way and we accomplished some things in His Gospel.

A lot of this hand-to-hand combat that God calls us to engage in is defensive and reactive and that's okay. We are to recognize that we live in a hostile world--hostile to God, hostile to our Savior, and hostile to His value system. It will always be a fight to live here. It is the naïve Christian who thinks it is a rose garden here on earth.

***“I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church.”***

***-C.H. Spurgeon***

## Madly In Love

Paul also gives us simple instruction on what to do pro-actively. He tells us to fill our minds with truth. This could be another whole paper, but here are his words from Philippians 4:

*“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).*

This is so clear from Paul. Just chew on what is right! But it is so hard to do. We need to work at it. May we never let the things we can't have, or don't have, or shouldn't have, spoil our enjoyment of the things we do have and can have.

At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned that it would be easier to just talk about God's love, rather than to write about worldliness. But actually, the two topics are probably closely related. As Paul instructs, when we meditate on what is lovely (and God's love is definitely lovely), we begin to understand some things. Understanding God's love helps us to resist this world.

### Tom Brown, one of our pastors, wrote the following:

*“This worldliness stuff is not about religion, but relationship with God. When I think of the admonition to not love the world I think of God's love for me and His intense and jealous desire for my heart. God wants our hearts! So much so that He sacrificed terribly to win them. He loves us! And He wants our hearts to be fully His. In this teaching against worldliness, I hear God's loving voice: “My son, give me your heart.” In my life it is this loving call that motivates me to leave the world behind. The heart behind the negative exhortation is a positive one. You mentioned in the intro that it is easy to talk about (or hear about) God's love, but that this topic of worldliness is hard. Rick, I think the whole point of this topic is God's love for me. The call to this struggle is not impersonal and judgmental and religious, but very personal and loving. It is the plea of a husband madly in love with his wife fighting for her heart. And God is fighting for our heart.”*

Here are two good Scriptures from 2 Timothy. They speak to whether we have cleansed ourselves from certain things. Whether our “house” is in order.

*“Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Timothy 2:20-21).*

Tom went on to mention: “I constantly think about the degree that the world has a hold of my heart. I am afraid that worldliness will creep in and dull my senses and distance me from God. I am afraid that I will not “see God”. I want to experience the power of God in this world. I want to see His kingdom come in my home, in my church. So I fight to remove the world from my heart so that I can be a noble instrument. A clear vision for what I could have with God drives me and gives me persistence in this struggle against worldliness.”

*“I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me.”*

*-Psalm 101:3*

*“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”*

-C.S. Lewis

Amen, brother.

God bless you, Christian, in this struggle.

This is “Sanctification 101”. You and I are called to be separate. To be distinct. To be different. You and I are called to be holy - in all we think and in all we do. May you win! And win every day and every month, and win more than lose. And keep up the struggle until we see each other on the other side. And only then cease fighting! Remember, the goal is to be like Jesus. If we want to be like Jesus – we cannot be like this world.

## **Addendum**

In this paper I have used a source that was a blessing to Neva and I when we were just beginning as younger Christians. Many years ago, Billy Graham recognized that a lot of the new converts in those early crusades were being crushed by this world. So Billy asked a good friend to write a book on the topic of worldliness. To help Christians make good decisions. Graham turned to Harold Lindsell, the editor of *The Harper Study Bible*. And Harold Lindsell wrote a simple, straightforward book entitled, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*. Although some of the examples in this book written in 1973 sound a little dated, the truths taught are timeless and were a blessing to my life when I first got saved, and still are today.

[Editor’s Note: This article is based on the booklet, *The War Against Your Soul*, written by Pastor Rick Whitney. Copies of this booklet are available for order for individual or group study through the GCC website (<http://gccweb.org/media-resources/publications>).]







NOT LOVING THE WORLD

**Exercise**

1. What was the main thing you learned from this article? What is God telling you, or even whispering to you?

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2. Rick defines worldliness as “anything that is causing war against our soul.” By this definition, how do you see worldliness manifest itself in your own life? What are areas in our life that creep in and lead us to think like this world? What are areas where you believe that the world may have crept into the church in America?

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NOT LOVING THE WORLD

**Exercise**

3. Take some time to reflect on activities in your daily life. Here are seven questions from a group of pastors who are attempting to help their Christians battle worldliness everyday.
- Does this activity tempt you to sin?
  - Is this activity good for me or bad for me?
  - Does it tend to enslave me?
  - Does this activity honor and glorify God?
  - Does it encourage others (Christians or the lost)? Would you do it or watch it if you had company with you?
  - Could this personal activity cause your Christian brother to stumble?
  - Are your motives pure when you are involved in it?

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4. What are some practical steps we can take this week to help ourselves battle worldliness? Is there anything we can do to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ in this battle against worldliness?

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