



Do You “Love the World?”

The Bible is full of caution lights warning us when we are about to head off course and into spiritual trouble. John issues one of those warnings to us, “*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 John 2:15).

It is quite interesting that John tells us to not love (*agape*) the world (*cosmos*) with the very same Greek words that Jesus used when He told us that “*God so loved (agape) the world (cosmos)...*” (John 3:16). So, since we know that God cannot contradict Himself, there must be a way in which we are to love the world and a way in which we are to not love the world. We can understand this apparent contradiction in the following way.

A spiritually healthy love for the world desires to give something to it [the gospel]. The rest of John 3:16 says, “*For God so loved the world that he gave.*”

A spiritually sick love for the world desires to get something from it I John 2:16 says, “*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.*”

What is troubling about John’s warning is that it doesn’t give us much guidance on how to identify whether we do in fact love the world and the things of the world. Is it enough that we say we love God and we don’t love the world or the things of the world? Is our profession enough? I don’t know about you, but my words have often betrayed me. I

have found on occasion that I am not really what I say I am. (What is on the outside is not what is on the inside.) So, it is necessary for us to look deeper than just our words. We must look at our hearts and observe our actions to determine if we are indeed in love with the world and the things of the world.

I have identified four, flashing, “caution lights” that should warn us that we might indeed have gotten into an illicit love affair with the world and the things of this world.

Caution Light #1

**We are falling in love with the world...
when we are never quite satisfied with what
we have.**

Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 5:10, “*Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.*” Are you truly satisfied with what you have right now? If you never got anything more for the rest of your life would that be ok with you?

Or, do you find yourself drawn to the newest technology gadget, a bigger or better car, another exotic travel destination, the latest fashion, a newer or bigger home, or another way to make more

money. Is your life characterized by wanting and getting more stuff?

Solomon again warns us in Ecclesiastes 6:7, *“All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.”* Is your appetite satisfied with what you have right now or will it take more?

If “more” is descriptive of the way you think about the things of the world and the way you live in the world, Caution Light #1 is flashing and you may indeed be involved in an illicit love affair with the world that can destroy your pure and holy relationship to your bride groom, Jesus.

Caution Light #2

**We are falling in love with the world...
when the things we own end up owning us.**

Jesus reminded us that we only have one throne and He wants to be on it. He tells us in Matthew 6:24, *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”*

Demas was one of Paul’s mission entourage. Paul is grieved to report to Timothy (II Timothy 4:10) that *“Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me...”* That is what happens when we love the world and the things of the world. You cannot have both on the same throne.

Jesus tells us in Luke 12:15, *“...Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”* We can own things, but things better not own us.

It is easy enough to get so emotionally attached to our things that we do not want to part with them or give them away. The greater our love for our things, the more tightly we grip them. The great holocaust survivor Corrie Ten Boom often spoke these words of wisdom, "Hold loosely to the things of this life, so that if God requires them of you, it will be easy to let them go."

What was the rich, young ruler’s obstacle to following Jesus? *“But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property (Matthew 19:22).”* He didn’t own his possessions. His possessions owned him. And they would not let go of him.

If you find that your things own and control you, Caution Light #2 is flashing and you may indeed be involved in an illicit love affair with the world that can destroy your pure and holy relationship to your bride groom, Jesus.

Caution Light #3

**We are falling in love with the world...
when worry about losing our things is
disrupting our inner peace.**

Recent times have certainly given us all ample opportunity to discern if worry about material loss has been disrupting our inner peace. When times are good, we may never even notice Caution Light #3, but when retirement funds plummet, the values of our real estate is in a free fall and our business revenues are off substantially, all this can reveal a love for the world and the things of the world that we may have never really noticed.

Paul reminds us that our financial condition should have nothing to do with our inner peace and contentment in life. He says in Philippians 4:11-12, *“Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.”*

Being content when you have a lot is quite easy, but being content with less or much less than we have grown comfortable with can be very unsettling and reveal the actual depth of our affection for the things of this world.

If you have placed your faith in your things instead of the One who has provided those things, you are in danger. Hebrews 13:5 points this out clearly, *“Make sure that your character is free from*

the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.'"

If we were stripped of all our worldly possessions and stood penniless, would we still be content and filled with inner peace, confident that our loving Father is still on the throne and will never, ever forsake us?

If you are struggling with a disquieted spirit as you worry over your "net worth" falling and your cash flow shrinking, Caution Light #3 is flashing and you may indeed be involved in an illicit love affair with the world that can destroy your pure and holy relationship to your bride groom, Jesus.

Caution Light #4

We are falling in love with the world... when our longing to be *there* is diminished by our affection for what we have *here*.

Mrs. Jones asked her eight year old Sunday school class, "How many of you would like to go to Heaven?" Every child in the class raised his hand except Billy. Mrs. Jones asked curiously, "Billy, don't you want to go to Heaven?" He replied, "Sure I do, I just thought you were taking up a bus load right now!" Billy was glad to go to Heaven, just not right now.

When I was a teenager my grandmother had a heart attack and fell into unconsciousness. Her four daughters (one was my mother) got together and made the decision for the doctors to insert a pacemaker to keep her alive. I remember to this day how furious my grandmother was when she awoke in the hospital and realized that she was still here. She so longed to go to be with the Lord that the life saving intervention of a pacemaker only prevented her from getting where she longed to go. My grandmother's unhappy reaction to still being here is etched permanently in my mind.

I am reminded of what Paul said in II Corinthians 5:8, "*prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*" If you were given the choice today, would you prefer to go

be with the Lord or would you prefer to stay here? Are you more like Billy or my grandmother?

If you have nothing more than a casual interest in being there, Caution Light #4 is flashing and you may indeed be involved in an illicit love affair with the world that can destroy your pure and holy relationship to your bride groom, Jesus.

The alluring appeal of the world and the things of the world are very subtle and can sneak up on any of us at any time and begin wrapping its insidious tentacles around us and before we even realize we are trapped, we are overcome. This is the very thing the parable of the seeds describes in Matthew 13:22, "*And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*"

As we continue to live in this materialistic culture of ours, may we all keep our eyes carefully peeled for these four caution lights so we might not unintentionally end up becoming an illicit lover of the world and the things of the world. Hebrews 12:1b-2a challenges us, "*Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of (our) faith....*" May this be so for all of us.



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