

Walking in the Light: Refusing to Follow Worldliness



SABBATH—JULY 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 15:19; Colossians 1:14; Colossians 2:8, 13; 2 Peter 3:10–12; 1 John 2:12–17.

MEMORY VERSE: “Do not love the world or anything in it. If you love the world, love for the Father is not in you” (1 John 2:15, NIV).

IN 1933, FRENCH AUTHOR ANDRÉ MALRAUX PUBLISHED *MAN'S FATE*, a story about an unsuccessful rebellion (war) in Shanghai, China, in the 1920s. In the story, a terrorist, Ch'en, is walking down the street. His first teacher, a Christian minister, meets him and starts a conversation about Ch'en's loss of faith. Little does the teacher know that Ch'en, at the moment, is carrying a bomb. And Ch'en is on his way to a political assassination! Ch'en answers that he has not lost his faith. Instead, he has put it in politics, that is all.

“What political faith,” his former teacher asks with sadness, “will destroy death?”

In other words, political ideas or your dreams to create a better world will never defeat our great enemy: death.

This week's verses continue to show us what it means to walk in the Light. But they also point us to the beauty of the eternal (forever; without end) life found only in God.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: On what basis can we know our sins are forgiven? What does it mean to know God? What does it mean not to love the things of the world? What will be the final end of the world?

SUNDAY—JULY 26

**“FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE”
(1 John 2:12, NKJV)**

In 1 John 2:12–15, John speaks of “little children” and “fathers” and “young men” (NKJV). Many suggestions have been made about what he meant by these words. But we suggest that “children” means all church members. This is because John uses the word *children* to mean church members in his letter (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 1 John 3:7; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:21). The “fathers” probably would mean older church members. The “young men” would mean younger members. In short, John is writing to everyone.



When John speaks of “little children,” he means all church members.

In 1 John 2:12, John tells the church members their sins are forgiven. How is that forgiveness given? Why is it so important for Christians to know their sins are forgiven? Read also Acts 5:31; Romans 4:7; Ephesians 4:32;

Colossians 1:14; and Colossians 2:13.

John wants his readers, who are faithful church members, to trust that Jesus forgives and saves them. John points out that to be a Christian means to have this forgiveness. Christians do not deny their sinfulness but have accepted that they are saved by faith through Jesus Christ. So they can live with the sure knowledge they are forgiven.

The important point is for Christians to understand that the reason for their salvation¹ is because of Jesus and what He has done for them. That is why John says they have been forgiven. But it is not because of their good deeds, not because of their beliefs, and not because of their knowledge of God. Instead, they are forgiven for “His name’s sake.” This means they are forgiven because of what Jesus has done for them. So John talks about overcoming sin and about obedience. But he keeps the focus on the fact that salvation comes only because of Jesus.

How important is it to you to know you have forgiveness of your sins? Where would you be today if you were to doubt that forgiveness? Also, why must you always remember that forgiveness is found in Jesus, not in yourself?

MONDAY—JULY 27

**OVERCOMING THE WICKED ONE
(1 John 2:13, 14)**

1. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

What do the verses in 1 John 2:13, 14 mean to you? What positive message is coming from them? How can we make use of these messages for ourselves?

The children are reminded that they know the Father. And the fathers are reminded that they know Him who is from the beginning. Clearly this Person is Jesus. The wording “From the beginning” speaks of Jesus in 1 John 1:1. In our verses, the Father and He who is from the beginning (Jesus) are two different Persons.

John repeats the wording “you have overcome the evil one” (NIV) later in his letter. But the wording has a deeper meaning. The young men have overcome not just the evil but Satan himself too. They belong to Christ and claim His victory (win). The original language shows the young men have successfully overcome sin in the past but the results are still going on. The young men are also strong in faith. And the “word of God” (NIV) stays with them.

The Word of God points to its Author, the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:17; 2 Peter 1:21). So some Bible thinkers believe these verses clearly suggest the Trinity:² (1) God the Father, (2) Jesus as the One who is from the beginning, and (3) the Holy Spirit, made known through the Word of God. In the end, true believers have come to know God and continue to know Him. And they have a very close relationship with Him.

These verses (1 John 2:12–14) give us very important parts of the Christian life: forgiveness of sins, knowing the Godhead, victory over sin, and the Word of God living in us.

Believers know God and His Word (the Bible) live in them. For this reason, they are ready for the challenge given in verses 15 through 17. Verses 12 through 14 give advice and encouragement. But verse 15 begins with a command: “Do not love the world” (NKJV).



Four important parts of the Christian life are forgiveness of sins, knowing the Godhead, victory over sin, and the Word of God living in us.

Write down a paragraph in which you answer the question, What does it mean to know God? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your relationship to God? Work on your answer through the week. And be prepared (if you are willing) to share it in class on Sabbath.

2. Trinity—this word suggests the Three-in-One concept (idea) that means all Three Members of the Godhead are involved: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

TUESDAY—JULY 28

REFUSING TO ACCEPT ANY
LOVE OF THE WORLD
(1 John 2:15)

Christians are advised not to love the world. How does the Bible describe the word *world* in John 12:19; John 15:19; Acts 17:24; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:7; James 4:4; and Revelation 11:15?

The word *kosmos* (translated “world”) means the universe,³ the earth, people, and the way of life that does not follow God. The word is used more than 20 times in 1 John and 2 John. The world needs salvation (1 John 4:14). But it is an enemy of God and His people (1 John 3:13). The world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). False prophets, antichrists,⁴ and deceivers (cheaters; liars) are in the world (1 John 4:1, 3; 2 John 7). It is not wrong to own things of the world. But they should be shared with the needy (poor) (1 John 3:17). Finally, believers need to have victory over the temptations⁵ of the world (1 John 5:4, 5). In John’s letters, the word *world* is a negative word, because the world rebels (fights) against God.

An interesting struggle arises in the Bible about our relationship to the world. On the one hand, we are told not to love the world. But the Bible is

clear that God loves the world (John 3:16). Meanwhile, we are told not to love the things in the world. But the Bible encourages us to love people, and people are certainly in the world.

How do you understand the struggle here? How are we to love people but not love the world, when the world is full of people? Are there some things in the world, other than people, that we can love too? If so, what?

The end of 1 John 2:15 and the next verse help us to understand what John has in mind. He does not say we should hate people or dislike planet Earth. Rather, we should hate the things of the world that will keep us from knowing the love of God. So we need to stay away from the things of the world that keep us from having a saving relationship with God.



We must walk away from the things of the world that would keep us from loving God.

3. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

4. antichrists—people who work against God and Christ.

5. temptations—things that can turn us away from God and that try to get us to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

Lesson 5 WALKING IN THE LIGHT: REFUSING TO FOLLOW WORLDLINESS

Be very honest with yourself. What are some of the wrong things of the world that you love to do? Or are there things in the world that are not too bad but you love them more than God? What will it take to make you give them up?

WEDNESDAY—JULY 29

PROBLEMS WITH THE WORLD (1 John 2:16)

Verse 15 warns against loving the world. But verse 16 now gives some details. What does it mean to love the world? John names three things: (1) the lust (desire) of the flesh, (2) the lust (desire) of the eyes, and (3) the boastful pride of life. John says these three things do not come from the Father but from the world. But our flesh, our eyes, and our life all come from God. So, what is the problem? What is John warning us against?

Lust (desire) of the flesh comes with passions (emotions and desires). But it does not have to be limited to that alone (read Galatians 5:19–21).

Lust of the eyes is connected with the flesh. But it goes deeper. It goes to our thoughts, our desires, to the things that we see, hear, taste, touch, smell, and want for ourselves (read Exodus 20:17).

What does John mean about “the pride of life” (NKJV)? What is this? Why is it so bad? Read Job 12:10; Acts 17:28.

“The pride of life” suggests that a person thinks he or she does not need God. It is the same as thinking we created our lives. Really, we should understand that every breath, every heartbeat, everything comes only from God. Then pride will be the last thing in our hearts. And we know we are fully dependent upon Him. We are sinful humans who depend fully on God’s goodness and kindness. We really cannot save ourselves from eternal death and from being destroyed. So, we should be humble about our lives, not full of pride about them. It was pride that caused Lucifer’s fall from a perfect world. As humans (men, women, and children) in an imperfect world, we should avoid false pride as much as possible.



**Every breath, every heartbeat,
everything comes from God.**

Which of the three things John warns against do you struggle with the most? Lust of the flesh? Lust of the eyes? The pride of life? What is your only hope? What are you waiting for to make the changes that must come?

THURSDAY—JULY 30

**CHOOSING WHAT LASTS
(CONTINUES) OVER WHAT
PASSES AWAY (1 John 2:17)**

In verse 16 John gives us the first reason we should not love the world. The reason is that the love of the world and the love of the Father do not work together. In verse 17 John adds a second reason. It does not make sense to love the world because the world does not last (continue) forever. It is better and wiser to choose that which lasts. By doing so, we ourselves also will last. In this way, we will live forever.

Humans are tempted to live for the present. They like to be involved with worldly things. They love things that can be seen. So Paul joins John by saying we should love the things that are in heaven (Colossians 3:1–4). Read also 2 Corinthians 4:18.

What does the Bible teach in Daniel 2:35; 1 Corinthians 7:31; and 2 Peter 3:10–12 about the short-term nature of the world and planet Earth?

In 1 John 2:8, John already said that the darkness was passing away. Now he uses the same verb and says the world is passing away, including its lust. A new time period has come with Jesus as the human Light. The things of this world are passing away. That should be clear to everyone.

Political answers never can be the final answer in a world that is passing away.

If the world is passing away, how can we live? John answers, By doing the will of God. Correct religious education is important. But John tries to tell the false teachers that it also is important to live a life of obedience. Leading a pure Christian life cannot be separated from a study of religion. Holy words and correct doctrines (beliefs) are not enough. Our lives must be lived according to Christian principles.

Let us not get so comfortable here that we forget our eternal goal. Let us not weaken our love for God by being too interested in those things and attitudes (feelings) that do not follow God.

What examples of the short-term nature of things on earth do you see every day? What do they say to you? It is so clear that things here do not last. But why do we find it so easy to live our lives as if they last forever?

FRIDAY—JULY 31

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Worldliness in the Church,” pages 196, 197, in *Testimonies*⁶ for the Church, volume 2.

“People who claim to be Christians spend a lot of money on foolish things.

6. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

Lesson 5 WALKING IN THE LIGHT: REFUSING TO FOLLOW WORLDLINESS

This happens when souls are dying for the word of life. God is robbed in tithes and offerings, while these Christians spend more money on lust than they give to relieve the poor or for the support of the gospel. . . .

“The world is full of people who spend foolishly to satisfy themselves. ‘The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life’ control most of the people. But Christ’s followers have a more holy responsibility [duty]. . . . The Bible says that our spiritual lives cannot be true if we continue taking part in worldly things.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, page 475.

Positively speaking, John’s verses tell us: true Christians have a very close relationship with God, show loving obedience, have received strength to overcome evil, and have God’s Word (Bible) in them. Their sins have been forgiven. Negatively, they do not love the world. But they do not allow it to work against God and His cause.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Everything in our world lasts a short time. Nothing will last forever. Even science tells us that. But what hope does the Bible offer us that science does not?
- ② Some people listen to the call against loving the world. They separate themselves from the world as much as they can. They live in places and join groups of people that do not follow normal customs.⁷ Is this a good idea? Bad idea? Might it be good in some situations? Discuss.
- ③ In class, discuss your answer to Monday’s question about what it means to know God.
- ④ What are some things in the world that might not be bad but become bad because of how people use them?
- ⑤ Why is victory over sin such an important part of what it means to walk in the light? How can you have this victory?

⁷ customs—ways of doing things that have been done for a long time and so have become the accepted or common thing to do.