

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” 1 John 2:15*

## Light from the Word

### The Faithful Church: Separated from the World - Part 1



*Writings based on God's Word*

As believers, we read much in the Bible about the dangers of “the world.” How do we recognize various aspects of worldliness (carnality, ungodliness, being spotted by the world) and protect ourselves from its influences? We can readily recognize forms of ungodliness such as pornography as being evil by their very nature. However, not all things that are temporal are inherently evil. They only become so when we overdo our affection for them, spend too much time in seeking after them, or misuse them. God’s Word tells us, “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 John 2:15). Satan, the master deceiver, loves to mix good and evil together and then tell us “it is not that bad” or regarding popular sins that “everyone is doing it.” Again, the Scriptures warn us “... a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6) and “*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil...*” (Ex. 23:2). Applying sound judgment in all these cases requires that we pray for discernment: “*Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart...that I may discern between good and bad.*” (1 Kings 3:9).

Various Scriptures describe worldliness as an entanglement with the ungodly and temporal affairs of this life (Matt. 6:19-21, 2 Cor. 4:18, 2 Tim. 2:4). Worldliness covers a broad area, and contains both inward and outward characteristics. The inward includes sins of the heart such as pride, envy, lust, etc. This article will address two examples of worldly entanglement: the misuse of wealth and abuse of technology. It is always wise to consider how the biblical principles related to the examples may apply to other areas where we struggle personally.

An aspect of ungodliness that receives a great deal of attention in God’s Word is our attitude about and our use of wealth (1 Tim. 6:6-11). Too much emphasis on material gain almost invariably results in our spending prolonged excessive time and attention on work and less with our family. This may cause us to neglect important priorities, such as family devotions or even church attendance. “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not*” (1 Cor. 10:23-24).

Trusting in riches arises from wrong desires of the heart, including selfishness, greed and pride, and may cause us to forget God who gives us our possessions. “*And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God...*” (Deut. 8:12-14). Jesus’ words make it very clear that trusting in riches is a hindrance to our entering heaven. “... *Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!*” (Mark 10:24).

Scripturally speaking, there are also many good uses of wealth. Without it, we could not properly care for our families, build churches nor provide for the poor through charitable giving. “... *let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*” (Eph. 4:28). With the possession of wealth comes unmistakable responsibility. “*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*” (1 Tim. 6:17-18). Jesus sums up the proper attitude regarding our wealth with the following principle: “*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Matt. 6:20-21).

Similar to wealth, technology also possesses both worthwhile and dangerous applications. Technology continues to advance at an astounding rate. As an illustration, the memory and processing capability of today’s average smartphone is greater than the computer used to land Apollo 11 on the moon. Unfortunately, its misuse is often a source of ungodliness in that which we see and hear. “*I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes*” (Psa. 101:3) is a clear biblical precept that should be applied by every believer, since church leaders cannot be expected to specifically address each new technology as soon as it appears. Honest answers to the following questions may be useful in providing discernment in our use of technology: “Do

I really need it?” “Am I using it wisely?” “Does it tempt me?”

Spending too much time with any technology, solely for purposes of entertainment and frivolous communication, borders on modern day idolatry. “*Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play*” (1 Cor. 10:7). In another Scripture, we are told to “*redeem (make the best use of) our time, because the days are evil*” (Eph. 5:16).

Many of the challenges we face seem to be continually changing and increasing in complexity. We might even find ourselves wondering if God’s Word still applies to every situation we face. Let us consider the account of Paul addressing a divisive question regarding worldliness: should believers purchase and eat meat previously offered in sacrifice to idols? The Apostle reminded the Corinthian church of two important scriptural principles: first, Christ shed His blood equally for each one of us. Second, charity towards our fellow believers (showing an active and sincere love) will prevent offense and judgmental attitudes (Rom. 14:15, 1 Cor. 8). Paul exhorts us to apply the principles of God’s Word, worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and out of a heart of humility and Christ-like love. In addition, he sets aside his personal feelings in order to set an example for the church. “*I will eat no flesh, lest I make my brother to offend*” (1 Cor. 8:13).

The timeless principles of God’s Word are relevant yet today when we humbly apply them to our lives. A church body is obligated to protect itself from the dangers of worldliness, but if we place more emphasis on man-made rules, however well-intended, than on the principles of God’s Word, we are relying on the “oldness of the letter” (the old law) rather than the “newness of the spirit” (Rom. 7:6). One purpose of the Holy Spirit within the heart of believers is the correct understanding and application of the Word of God. “*And take (use)...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Eph. 6:17).

The topic of Separation from the World continues in next month’s “Light from the Word.”