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## 1 JOHN 2:12-17

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### Part 4 of Epistles of John

Pastor Mark Driscoll | 1 John 2:12-17 | July 18, 2004

Well, if you're new, we generally go right through books of the Bible, and we're in the book of 1 John, and so if you've got a Bible, you can go to 1 John 2:12. That's where we'll be in this evening, and I can give you one prayer request, too. In the fall, we're starting the book of Genesis, and I think it could be perhaps the most important teaching series we've ever had as a church. Amazing book, and I've been spending just a lot of time getting ready for it. Just be praying because with the fall coming, and we've had a good summer.

The summer's going really well. I think 1 John is really good for building community and getting us all to know each other and walk with God and make some good steps practically, and then, Genesis takes us into creation and flood and gender roles and marriage and sex and homosexuality and – oh, it will be great. At least I'll have a great time, and whatever your position is on Genesis 1 and 2, whatever your position, I promise you I have one that you've never heard of, and it's in the book. So I'll show it to you when we get there.

So that's the sneak preview. It will be really, really great, but you can pray. I've been spending so much time in the Hebrew text trying to put this all together, and I'm really excited for that time as a church. So we will do 1 John this summer. We'll finish Chapter 2 up tonight. We'll get partway through Chapter 2, and I'll pray for our time together, and we'll see how it goes.

Lord God, we thank you for nice sunny day, nice place to meet. Thank you for the event today where a lot of people got to gather together and develop friendships and get a bite to eat and be encouraged and have some fun. God, thank you, as well, that as a church we have this opportunity to study the Bible together, that we don't have to guess about who you are or what you've done or what you want or how we're to respond to you, that you've spoken to us very clearly in your word and given us an opportunity to read it for ourselves.

So we do that tonight, Lord God. We take you up on your kind offer to study Scripture and to hear from you, and we ask, Holy Spirit, that you would come and lead and guide and convict and instruct each of us as you know that we need. Each of us need something and specific. We ask that you would provide that for us, Holy Spirit, anything from faith to repentance to encouragement, and God, as we study, I pray we be able to soberly assess ourselves, figure out where we're at and how we're doing and how we can make some forward progress spiritually in our life.

We do love you, Lord God, and I pray as we study that in the end, we love Jesus. We pursue him with deep passion and by his grace, we look more like him than ever before. Amen.

As we get into 1 John, I'll set the situation here for you. John's a pastor writing to a church, and he's going to compare and contrast two things. He's going to compare and contrast the church and the world, and he's going to denote three aspects of each. He will say in the church that there are three types of Christians, and in the world, there are three types of temptation. Obviously, this lends us to examining ourselves and saying, "Well, am I in the church or am I in the world? Am I a Christian or am I a non-Christian, and where am I at in my Christianity as far as maturity goes and where are my greatest options for temptation to come into my life?"

So that's what he's wanting us to do. So as I get into this tonight, you'll need to sort of look at your own life and say, "Where am I? Am I a non-Christian or a Christian? Am I in the world or am I in the church, and if I'm in the church, where am I in my maturity level?" And he's going to denote three different levels of spiritual maturity, and we'll deal with these in just a minute, but first, he talks about people that are newer Christians.

I would say there is a difference between an immature Christian and a new Christian. An immature Christian is a person that's been a Christian for a while, but hasn't grown up. They haven't learned. They haven't made progress. They're not very motivated to make forward progress. A new Christian is someone that may not know a ton, but they love the Lord, and their intentions are good, and they're making forward progress, and the difference is this: One person we expect to have moved on, and the other person, we understand that that's their stage.

In the same way, if you saw a five-year-old with a diaper and a nooky in their mouth and maybe juice all over their face, you would say, "Well, you know, they need to get out of that stage, but we understand it." If you saw a 37-year-old guy with a diaper and a nooky in his mouth and Kool-Aid stains all over his face, you'd tell that guy, "It's probably time to move on to the next phase," and that's kind of what happens.

Some people think that because they've been Christians for a long time, they're really mature, but not necessarily, not necessarily. He talks about people that are new Christians. These aren't immature people that are not growing up and not making spiritual progress. They're brand new Christians. The interesting thing about a child, as well as a person that's just been born into the faith, is that what is their homework is they need someone to look after them.

I got an eight-month-old daughter, a two-year-old son. I never leave them alone, though my son would love it because if you leave a kid alone, terrible things happen. They need oversight. They need some help. Now you move onto another phase of life, both physically and spiritually where you become an adult. You take care of yourself. You get your own place. You work your own job. You pay your own bills. You cook your own food.

You're self-sufficient. You looked after yourself. This is where your Mom doesn't wake you up anymore. "Johnny, go to school." You know, nobody makes you go to school. Nobody makes you do anything. You have to just sort of take responsibility for yourself, and what he's gonna say, what John's gonna say is that when we become a Christian, we're in this infancy stage, but we should, as quickly as possible, move on to a maturing stage of spiritual adulthood where we could take care of ourselves, and once we've lived in that season for a while, we come to this other phase of parenting where we're mature.

A child needs to be looked after. An adult looks after themselves, and a parent looks after spiritual and physical children, and so your goal is to get to the place where you're mature. You could teach a Bible study, mentor people, encourage them, instruct them. You could take the people that are new Christians and help them grow along and help look after them, and what John is gonna say is this: You got to look at your life and figure out where am I if I'm in the church.

Am I a young, new Christian? Am I maturing, growing Christian or am I matured and strong and Godly and doing well, and I'm not saying that out of pride, but I'm saying that there are some people that are very mature. They love the Lord, and they have a good measure of insight and wisdom, and then, as we look at that, you'll be able to assess where you are, and then, we'll look at the temptations that come to those kinds of people through the world.

So we'll jump right in. We'll look at these three types of people, and he mentions each of them twice and tells us a little bit about them. He says, "I write to you first, dear children." These are the new Christians. These are new Christians. How many of you are newer Christians, last year or two? Some of you are, right? Newer Christians, you're figuring it out. I remember when I was a brand new Christian, age 19, in college.

I didn't know much, man. I went to the first Bible study, got my Bible. Whoo hoo, Bible study. They say, "Go to Romans." Everybody goes there like a pro. I'm just going, "Romans? Where's that? I don't know where." I didn't know where it was. I'm looking through the Bible for a picture of a Roman guy, can't find any pictures. There's no pictures at all. You know, I don't know where it's at. So I finally went to the bookstore.

I got cheat tabs that have all the names of the Bible books, so that when I go to the Bible study, I'm just like an old pro. Hosea, bingo, I'm there first. I win. You know, because I knew where I was going, and when you're a new Christian sometimes, you get a little embarrassed. Like I went to my first prayer meeting as a brand new Christian and walked in the prayer meeting. They said, "Mark, would you like to open in prayer?" I'm like, "I would love to, but I don't know how to pray. You know, that sounds like a great idea, praying, but I don't know. God, yay. That's all I got. You know, I don't – I've never done this. This is all new to me. I'm learning here."

And I'll tell you what. If you're a new Christian here, if you're just starting to read the Bible and walk with Jesus, don't be shy. Don't be embarrassed. Just say, "It's all new to me. I'm learning," and seek out people who have been with Christ for a while and can say, "Well, here's how the Bible is put together, and here's how you pray." They can help you kind of get your feet under you, and that's the kind of people he's talking to.

New Christians are the best because they've got all kinds of questions. They're motivated. Their intentions are good. They're wanting to make progress, but they just don't know a ton, but they will very shortly if their attitude is good. He says, "I wrote to you, dear children, you new Christians because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name," and really, that's the thing that every new Christian needs to be anchored on is how do I get my sins forgiven? That's really the issue, okay? "God is holy. I sin. I'm unholy. I've sinned against God. How do I get my sins forgiven? Oh, Jesus is God, became a man, lived without sin, died for my sin, rose. If I give him my sin, he'll forgive me. I can have my sins forgiven," and this is what fires up a new Christian.

This is the booster rocket that gets them going. You know, you meet a new Christian. They'll say, "God forgave all my sins. You wouldn't believe all the stuff I've done. I mean, I'm – whoa, what a great deal. I tell you, man. I – the commandments, I would blow them by a long shot. I really have done some – but Jesus died, and he forgives me. He loves me. Do you believe that? Did you know the tomb's empty? Wow." You say, "Great going. How's it going? Do you have a Bible?"

"We have a book? You're kidding? We have a book." "Yeah, I'll get you a book. You know, you could talk to" – "You're kidding. What's his number?" I mean, you know, there's some things they're just starting to figure out, and that's what's so great. He says, "You're new Christians. You know that Jesus has forgiven your sin. You're fired up about that. You're motivated. That's the perfect place to start." He moves from these new Christians to very mature Christians in the next verse.

He says, "I write to you, fathers. These are people that are in the church, and they're like Moms and Dads." How many of you know somebody in your life that they love God? They're really mature. They know the Bible, and they're kind of like a Mom or Dad spiritually to you. You can ask them a question. They give you good counsel. They're really helpful. You really admire and respect them. I mean they're not perfect, but they're really at a place of maturity that you hope to get to one day.

He says, "I write to you, fathers, you mature Christians because you have known him, who is from the beginning." What he says about these people is that they know God. Ever met somebody that knows God? Not just knows about God. When I was a brand new Christian, I remember reading the New Testament in a couple weeks, reading the whole Bible in a couple months, reading a book a day for years, reading voraciously, studying, studying, studying, and I knew a lot about God, and then, I would meet people who would walk with God faithfully for 20, 30, 40, 50 years, and they knew a lot

about God, but they knew God.

Not just about God. They knew God, and when they talked about God, it was very personal. It was very heartfelt. It was very practical, and they'd seen God involved and invested in their life and how good he was to them and all that he'd done for them. He says, "You know, you people that are mature, you've been walking with God for a long time. You're such a huge blessing to the church because you know him from the beginning. You've known him for a long time." Now, some of you walk into Mars Hill because you're older, and you've been a Christian for a long time.

Maybe you feel old. I hear this all the time. People come in. They say, "I feel really, really old in here. I mean I'm 28. I just feel old. I just feel so old." It's okay. Do we love people that are old? If you love Jesus and you're 70 with a doily on your head and a King James Bible and you're somebody's grandma, are you welcome here? Bring your friends. Bring your grandkids. Bring your grandkids' grandparents. Bring their friends. All get on a bus. We would love to see nothing but ladies who like the Grandma's cookie lady pouring in here, just cute, gray hair, King James Bible, and the love of the Lord Jesus.

We'll take them by the million. We could use many of them. We are a church that greatly values, greatly welcomes people that have known the Lord for a long time. I can still remember meeting my first older Christian as a new Christian in college. I was going to this young church, and this guy came in to speak. He wasn't a great preacher. I don't remember what he said, but at the very beginning, he did say something. He said, "Now I remember when I became a Christian," and he said, "Forty-some years ago." I remember just going, "Wow." I was 19. I hadn't done anything for more than a couple years, and I thought, "40-some years," and this guy really loved the Lord.

He had great stories. He walked with the Lord, and I just thought, "You know, I want to walk with the Lord for 40 years. I know somebody that's done that." Some of you don't know anybody that's walked with the Lord for a long time or raised their kids and their grandkids and their great-grandkids and studied the Bible and helped people and taught people for a long time. Those people, if you're here tonight and you're older, which doesn't take a lot here. "I can drive." Well, you're old. It doesn't take a lot, but if you're older and you've walked with God faithfully for a lot of years, you are an enormous and a tremendous blessing to the church, and I would just encourage you – us as a church – to be praying for more Godly older people.

Okay, now some people say, "Why is the church young?" Because the city's young, and the city itself does not have a large number of Godly older people. If it did, we wouldn't be the least church city in the United States of America. They would have got a little more done, okay? So we don't have a ton. Now the Godly older people tend to move way, way away because they don't want to be near us, right? So we got to encourage them to shuttle on in, and we got to encourage those Godly people that live in the area to come and to invest themselves in the newer Christians because we got all kinds of newer Christians, and there's nothing better than if you're a new Christian meeting somebody who's loved Jesus for 40 or 50 years.

That's the coolest thing in the world because they have learned and grown in their affection for Jesus, and they are a source of great wisdom and encouragement. So if you're older, welcome. Bring your friends. If it's too loud, we have literally ear plugs – thank you – over at the information desk. Plug them in and praise the Lord at half the volume. You're welcome to be here, but please don't leave, and our goal should be, those of you who are young, to start maybe as a person who's a new Christian to move through a maturing phase, and then one day, to be that Godly older person who takes the new Christian and loves them and encourages them and pours into them.

That should be all of our goal. Honestly, to tell you the truth, I look forward to the day when I'm older. I look forward to the age of 60, 65 so that I can just grow a long beard and stroke it, and then, when I'm grumpy or stubborn, you'll just let me get away with it because I'm old. Now I don't have any excuse. It's just young pretention. Then, he writes to this other group in the Middle East, talked about the new Christians, the old, mature Godly people that are awesome. They're the pillars of the church, and everybody needs them, and he says, "I write to you young men."

These are the maturing Christians. They're not immature. They're not mature yet. They're maturing. They're in the middle because you have overcome the evil one. Let me ask you this. The majority of people at Mars Hill, do you think they're in the immature, maturing, or mature phase? How many of you think that the majority of Mars Hill is in the mature phase? No, they're not. How many of you think that the majority of Mars Hill is in the immature phase? Really, they're not. How many of you think really the majority of our church is in the maturing phase?

They're growing, making progress, learning, fighting for Godliness and holiness and Bible knowledge. I believe that the vast majority of our church is in the middle, and they're overcoming the evil one. He says, "I write to you young men because you've overcome the evil one." Maturing Christians are ones who are seeing change in the life. How many of you, if you look back, you say, "This time last year or two years ago, compare where I was at spiritually then and where I'm at spiritually now." Have you seen progress?

Were there sins that you've stopped and put death like Paul says in Romans? Have you increased your Bible knowledge, your love for Jesus, your ministry service, your confidence in Jesus' resurrection and him being your God? Most people that I talk to in the church, and I want to encourage you, okay? Usually, I'm pretty intense, and I'm good at making you feel bad, but let me say one thing that is really from my heart.

I think some of you are far too intense and critical on yourself. I think that you need to ask yourself, "Have I been overcoming the evil one? Am I growing in my love for God? Am I growing in my knowledge of Bible? Am I growing in my cessation of certain habitual sins in my life?" And the vast majority of people in this church that I talk to, their heart is to grow. Their efforts are to grow. Their hope is maturity, and if they compare themselves to a year or two ago, they actually see pretty good progress, and they should be encouraged.

If you're making progress, I really want you to be encouraged. None of us is perfect, but we all have the opportunity for progress. Now if you're immature, and you say, "Well, I'm where I was a year or two or three or seven ago," you should be convicted by that, and you should make some progress spiritually, but if you're maturing and overcoming the evil one and you're getting some momentum in your life and you're feeling excited, you

should be encouraged. You should be encouraged, and I think many of you in the room are in a season where you should be very encouraged.

He goes then back to this new Christian phase. He says, "I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father." New Christians, these are the people who just figured out who the Father is. God's my Dad. God loves me. God made me. I sinned against him, but he sent Jesus to take away my sin through his death and resurrection. I can now know God or can I? I can still remember talking to a brand new Christian not too long ago. Brand new Christian, didn't grow up in the church, didn't know anything.

They came in. He says, "My first day going to church and I'm so excited. Did you know Jesus is alive?" He said it just like that. I was like, "Yeah, I heard something like that. He's not dead. He rose." He's like, "Can you believe that?" I was like, "Yep." "You know, did you know Jesus – that makes Jesus God." I'm like, "Yeah." You know, at this point, he didn't know I was a preacher. I was like, "Yeah, I know," and then, I walked away going, "Man, that guy's more excited than me."

I mean I feel convicted that maybe sometimes I move on so much of my life that I just forget who the Father is. It's that fresh, new, "God's my Dad. He loves me. I can have a relationship with my heavenly Father. He adores me. He cares for me. He's with me. Do you know he's been involved in my life? Do you know he's taken away my sin?" The new Christian is in that phase, and he's told us two things about a new Christian.

They know who God is, and they know how their sins were forgiven. Those are the two most important things. Of all the important things to start your special relationship with, how do you deal with your sin and who's God? You get that figured out. Man, then you're on a forward track toward spiritual momentum of progress. These people love God. They're fired up. They're motivated. They know their sins are forgiven. They know who God is, and they're excited to move to the next level.

He goes on. He says, "I write to you fathers. These are the spiritually mature because you have known him who is from the beginning." He repeats himself, and again, if you want to know anything, know who the Father is. Know who God is. Now I remember as a new Christian, all I wanted to study was religions, cult, philosophy, morality, politics, none of which is necessarily bad, but I didn't know a ton about God, and I've seen this pattern as I read.

Most great authors and Bible teachers and leaders, early on in their life, they read about culture or morality or philosophy or politics or something, and as they mature and they grow and they head into the season of maturity, most of their books and their writings and their teachings is about God. Do you know who God is? Do you know how great God is? It's like they get such a big picture of God and such joy in God that everything else becomes a distant second in their affections and in their instructions.

He goes on to say, "I write to you young men because you're strong." These are the maturing Christians, the people that aren't brand new Christians, but they're not at the place yet where Billy Graham's calling them because he needs advice. They're not there yet. They're in the middle. He says, "I write to you because you're strong, because the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

Two things he says. Maturing Christians are marked by two effects in their life that is caused by one thing. One effect is they're strong. Now maybe they used to be weak. They used to give in to sin and temptation and folly, and they'd get pushed around by the enemy and false teachers. They weren't very strong, but now they're weak. They have strong convictions. Their strength has come. They know who God is. They know what God's done. They love Jesus. They trust the Bible.

You know, they're strong in their convictions. They're strong in their commitment, and they're really devoted, and they have, as well here, he says, "overcome the evil one." They've got some victory in their life over Satan. They've resisted sin and temptation and folly. Because of that, their confidence is growing, not in themselves, but in their Bible and in Jesus and how true God is, and the way that these people grow in their strength and their ability to overcome sin is through what?

What has happened to cause these two effects? The word of God lives in them. I love how he summarizes this. He says, "In the church, there's three kinds of people: The spiritually immature, the spiritual maturing, and the spiritually mature." You say, "Well, I would like to make progress. How do I make progress?" Well, you need to overcome the evil one. You'll need to know who God is. You'll need to know how to get rid of your sin.

"Well, how do I do that?" "You got to read your Bible. You got to read your Bible. Do you read your Bible? Are you reading your Bible?" Mars Hill is a church that is voraciously committed to the Scriptures. I mean we try with everything we have to be accurate to the Bible. That is – I mean that is just job one here at the church, and so I teach, taking you right through books of the Bible.

We have curriculum that I write that will help you study the Bible with yourself and with your kids if you have them, with your family. So that you can be studying the Bible, we do community groups, which are Bible studies spread all over the city. You can get into a Bible study with other people and study the Bible so that the word of God can live in you. Beginning this fall on Wednesday nights and Sundays, between the two services, we will be having classes called Capstone classes: Old Testament, New Testament, books of the Bible, how to study the Bible, cults, language studies, different world religions, the essentials of the Christian faith.

There will be a huge number of classes. The majority of them will be taught by people with Bachelor's, Master's degrees. Some pastors in this church, some pastors outside of this church, some people with just good teaching gifts in this church, and those classes are gonna run a quarter at a time. They'll be open to men and women and young and old, and everybody's welcome to take as many as they like, and we're gonna make them all free.

It's basically gonna be a free Bible college. If you want to learn, you can learn. You can learn religions, philosophy, culture, Bible. You can learn everything taken back to the Scriptures, connected to the person of Jesus, and that's our hope. Our hope is to get as many of you trained in how to

study the Bible so that you can teach other people and teach community groups and make decisions in your life and run your family and just be a person who works from the Bible, who's a Bible-believing, Jesus-loving person, and this is how we want to help you get the word of God in you.

It's really good for people to be in the Scriptures, but it's far more important that those Scriptures are in the people, and so to do this, you're gonna need to study. You're gonna need to read your Bible. You got to be reading the Scriptures, but the one thing that I would submit to you that is as important as anything is meditation. Joshua says that we should meditate on God's word, and we should.

Meditation is where we take a section of the Scripture that we're reading. We memorize it, and we think about it. Think about it. Driving to work, think about it. Brushing your teeth, washing your dishes, it's Scripture on your mind. Are you contemplating Scripture, asking the Holy Spirit, "Please help me understand this. Please help this affect my life. Please help me integrate this into my day. Please make this a part of me so it's in me."

Okay, that is how people grow. If you want to go from immature to maturing to mature, the key is to be in the Scriptures and have the Scriptures in you, to be a person who's reading the Bible and studying the Bible and discussing the Bible and meditating on the Bible and just being shaped and formed and encouraged through Scripture, and I don't want to just lift this up as a value. I want to tell you this: Read your Bible.

Okay, if you don't know how to do that, I've got a book out there. I put together a little booklet, and it's just on the New Testament, how we got it, why you can trust it, how it was put together, and it will give you each book of the New Testament with the main idea is. So that as you're reading the Bible, you can see what it's trying to say. If you have any questions about the authority of the Bible, just read that. It will answer your questions.

If you have any question about how to read the New Testament, pick it up. I mean our whole goal is to put free resources in your hands so that you can read the Bible for yourself, and you can grow, and that the word of God can live in you, and then, we want to see this great thing happen in your life. We are strong, not weak, and where the word of God enables you to overcome the evil one, so then you can walk with God faithfully.

I mean I can't overemphasize just what a joy it is, honestly, to be a teaching pastor of this church. People come here to learn. You have no idea how great that is. A lot of places, people don't come to learn. People come here to learn, and we're doing all we can as pastors to do everything in our power and in our budget to make sure that you have opportunities to learn, and I'm asking you to avail yourself to them so that the word of God can live in you as well, personally, practically.

Okay, that's the church. The church is filled with three kinds of Christians: Immature, maturing, and mature. The main thing that causes the maturity is the amount of time in the Scriptures and the amount of Scriptures in the Christian. He then juxtaposes that with the world. There's the church and the world, and as there are three types of Christians in the church, there are three sources of temptation in the world, and so he jumps right in.

"Do not love the world or anything in the world," and I got to unpack all this for you. How many of you grew up in a fundamentalist church? I don't where they got that name. They're not fun. I always say, "Mars Hill, we're putting the fun back in fundamentalism." You know, if you go to a fundamentalist church, what they tell you is culture equals worldliness. I got a book coming out, and I got a whole chapter on this issue. It's an important theological matter.

I'll try to boil it quickly for you, but culture and worldliness are different. People that are misunderstanding of this, what they say is everything a non-Christian does, that's worldliness. All right, so if you grew up in one of these churches, they say, "Don't listen to rock music. That's what the non-Christians do. You know, don't watch movies. That's what the non-Christians do. Don't wear pants. That's what the non-Christians do. Right, don't eat carrots. Non-Christians love carrots. Put that carrot down."

I mean we need to be very careful, right, because the non-Christians, they drink water and breathe air. I mean, you know, not everything they're doing is a bad idea. Some of it, pretty important. They brush their teeth. They don't even have a verse. You know, you got to be very careful on this. Now in culture, culture is not bad or good. Culture is what people do. We were made as image bearers of God to create culture.

God said in Genesis, "Be fruitful, multiply, increase the number, fill the earth, subdue it." Out of that comes languages and nations and food and entertainment and sense of humor and style and dress. That's all culture. Some of the things in culture are bad. Some of the things in culture are good. Some of the things in culture are neutral. It depends on who's using them for what purpose.

We see this as well in the book of Revelation. "At the end of time, all of the nations, tribes, languages, and cultures of the earth will be in heaven," the Bible says. Well, if all the cultures are gonna be there, culture can't be in and of itself necessarily evil. So you have to go into culture, and we have to extract that which is needing to be redeemed and that which is unredeemable.

There are some things in culture that we can't do. We don't have Christian strippers. We don't have Christian porno. We don't have Christian drug dealers. We just don't. It's like maybe you do, but God doesn't. So there's some things in the culture. You go, "We just don't have any way of redeeming that. It's not – that's not right," but much of what's in culture, music, food, friendship, laughter, work needs to be redeemed, brought back into relationship with God, but here's what the Bible means by world.

The Bible means living without God by the term "world." Sometimes, the word world "cosmos" means the whole planet where all the people on the earth God loves the whole world. He loves everybody on the earth, but here, it's referring to a system that's opposed to God. These are people, nations, cultures, communities, organizations that totally neglect God. They never read the Bible. They don't honor Jesus. They don't factor God into any of their decision making or their values. There's just no God involvement at all, basically just live as if God didn't have anything to do with your life and you're worldly.

That's what it means. I was thinking about it this week. Worldly practically means – I'll juxtapose these two things. People in the church believe that, one day, we will die and go to heaven. Yes, thank you for the rousing encouraging, and then, people who don't know God or don't believe in heaven or don't know what's gonna happen, they still want heaven, but they make their own right here. They make their own heaven.

They think of, "What would be the ideal world for me?" And then, they try and create that world, but that world doesn't have Jesus, Bible, God, forgiveness of sin, nothing. It's their own little heaven that they build apart from God. I'll give you some examples. I went. I was down in Portland in a class for grad school this week, and I was studying Genesis with an Old Testament scholar, and I went to the magazine week in a Safeway, and I pulled out a bunch of magazines, and it dawned on me while I was meditating on this.

That for a lot of people, their magazine is their Bible that tells them how to achieve their heaven. Go with me on this. I got this teeny girl magazine. Here's the teeny girl. "Heaven: you can look sexy with a hot body and get him." Right, so that sounds like hell to me, but that's apparently some teen girl heaven, right? "Oh, you can have a nice body and nice wardrobe and a 15-year-old boy treat you like trash." You know, that's teeny girl heaven.

That's teeny girl heaven, teeny girls to look pretty, and then, have a teenage boy give you attention. That's teeny girl, but that's just worldly. That's just worldly. Dress like this. Act like this. So that what? So that some boy who doesn't have any affection for you can take advantage of you. That's worldly.

I'll give you another one. This one's good. Hunting magazine, just every page of this thing is a crazy looking redneck with a dead animal in front of him and a big smile with no teeth, and you're going, "why are those guys so happy? There's not a woman for 200 miles, and there's two of them in the woods together." It's just a weird – these two guys killed a 400-pound elk, right, 400-pound elk, and you read the thing. It's got all this how to camouflage your truck, how to get a four-wheeler to take you up the mountain.

You know, it's interesting because every one of these magazines I read, the one thing it doesn't say anything about is God, nothing about God, Bible, Jesus. Nothing, no, "Hey, Jesus, thanks for the boom. I killed it." Nothing, just hunter heaven. Just two guys in the woods with a six-pack of Pabst Blue Ribbon and a firearm. That's redneck heaven. That's all good.

Here's low-rider heaven, a '64 Impala with a Hispanic woman. We all know that women love to lay in front of vehicles. Where else would you be? "Oh, that's a car. I'm gonna – this is a good place." You open it up. It's all these heavysset guys working on their cars with big guts and white t-shirts. You're like, "You know, they make that in black or brown, something that wouldn't show." Here is just – this is paintball heaven. It's like redneck version of terrorism, right?

Paintball heaven, you get into this thing, and it's all new masks, new shields, new chest protectors, new guns, how to get a pit crew. A pit crew, like if you're life is so bad that for friends, you got to be out in the woods filling up some other guy's paintball gun, you're not even allowed to shoot. I mean get a dog. Get some companionship elsewhere. That's paintball heaven. There's nothing here about getting a job or being literate or anything like that.

It's just about living in your truck and quitting your job and going in the woods and shooting all your friends with paint. You know its like – here's another one. Here's computer heaven, right? You read the magazine. It's pretty funny. Computer heaven is first an ergonomic chair. Second thing is tech heaven is a huge screen the size of a drive-in movie theater screen. That's what you want, and then, you want good speakers, and you want – and the big thing is the whole thing is on tech support.

Apparently, in tech heaven, if your computer crashes, someone will answer the phone when you call them because right now, it seems like nobody does that. So this is tech heaven, and if you get tech heaven, you get a nice chair, a big monitor. You get a high speed modem. You get to sit there all day in geekdom and if the thing crashes, you can call somebody who knows what they're talking about.

My last, and arguably most favorite, is log home heaven here. They have log home heaven, which is weird because your whole goal is to be surrounded with wood. "Look, its all wood. It's a – just big wood. Love that big wood. Love to paint it, clean it. Gets dirty, you just sand it, big wood." It's just big wood heaven, man, how to plan, build, and live the dream. That's what it says.

I got other dreams. You know, there's nobody in. You flip through log home heaven. There's nobody in any of the pictures of the homes. The only picture of any living being in the home is the dog. Apparently, this dog built log heaven. You know, it – but it's weird. Is it a sin to have a log home and to leave your log home and go shoot animals, and then, come back and log on to the internet and go for a drive in your Impala and shoot the neighbor's cat with a paintball gun and wax your eyebrows and – it's not a sin, but so much of what is in the world is just – has nothing to do with God.

These are people who take all their time, their energy, their money, their focus. "Yes, they're zealous. We're gonna build our heaven. We're gonna have a good life. It's gonna be awesome for us, but no Jesus, no God, no church, no repentance of sin, no eternal life, nothing, nothing, nothing." Not one of these magazines had a word to say about God, nothing because their worlds and realities. They don't have room for God.

Okay, so that's what it means to be worldly, just living your life with something other than heaven, making your own, something that is your God other than Jesus. It can be a '64 Impala or a teenage boy, making that your God. All your time, your energy, your money, your focus, your passion goes to that thing. That's your God. That's what the Bible means by worldly, and he says, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

What he says is this: You're in the world or you're in the church, and you either love the world or you love the Lord, and you can't be duplicate. It's double-minded. You got to determine, "Do I love the world or do I love the Lord? Do I live for this heaven or this heaven? Do I adore this God or this God? Where's my heart? Where's my life going? Is it toward the Lord or not?" And he goes on, talking a little more about the world in the next verse.

“For everything in the world, cravings of the 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.” He breaks down here the three sources of temptation. As I told you, there’s three types of Christians, three sources of temptation, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, boastful pride of life. The first thing that we see about this is this is a common pattern in how Satan works.

When he came to Adam and Even in the garden, he tempted their flesh, that the fruit would be good for taste. He tempted their eyes. It was pleasing to the eye and the boastful pride of life. It would make them as smart as God. Same thing when Satan comes to tempt the Lord Jesus. He had been fasting for 40 days. First thing he does is he tempts the lust of the flesh, his body.

You know, “Make some bread.” It’s not a sin to make bread, but it is a sin to obey Satan. So when Satan gives you an order, even if it’s not a bad thing to do, it’s the wrong thing to do. He then tempts him with his eyes. He takes Jesus up and shows him the whole earth and says all of this can be yours. You can have all this. You see all this. You can have it, and then, he tempts Jesus in the boastful pride of life.

“You can rule over the whole world, and you don’t have to go to the cross. I’ll give you a shortcut. Just bow down to me.” You and I are gonna be continually tempted through these three portals: Our desires of our physical body, our eyes, and our pride. We’ll deal with each of those. First thing, I’ll say is this: Is it a sin to be tempted? No. Will you ever reach the point where you’re not tempted anymore? Yeah, it’s called heaven. Until then, you’ll be tempted. You and I will continually be tempted.

Some people think that if they’re tempted, they’re already in sin. So why not go ahead and do it anyways? That’s a lie from Satan. You want to overcome him. He will tempt you, and you want to overcome him. It says in the Bible in the book of Hebrews that Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. He was tempted like we are, yet without sin. So it can’t be a sin to be tempted because Jesus was tempted. You and I will be tempted, but when tempted, we can’t say God is tempting me, the Bible says, because God doesn’t tempt us and God doesn’t sin, but Paul says that every time we are tempted, God gives us a means of escape.

There’s an exit somewhere, and we can get out of our temptation. We don’t have to give in to our temptation. So you’re gonna be tempted through your desires of your body, your eyes, and your pride. The first one is the lust of the flesh. These are the physical yearnings and desires. Is physical pleasure a sin? No, it’s not. God made our bodies to enjoy things. That’s why food tastes good. That’s why kissing a loved one is enjoyable. That’s why hugging your kids is joy because God made our bodies to enjoy certain things, and that pleasure is not bad.

I’m not anti-pleasure, but if you make all your decisions solely based out of the desires of your physical body, you will end up being a glutton who eats way too much food, being a drunkard who drinks way too much alcohol, being a drug addict, being a person who is a sexual addict and a pervert, being a person who is addicted to extreme sports and euphoric highs through competition. You’d be a person who just lives from high to high or experience to experience or from euphoria to euphoria. That’s the lust of your flesh. There’s something in your fallen sinful nature that wants to take the pleasure ability that God has given you and take it so far that it leads to death, and it’s now \_\_\_\_\_ from God, and it’s not just having a glass of wine.

It’s having a case of beer. It’s not getting married and enjoying your spouse. It’s being a sexual predator or a pervert. It’s not just dealing with life through prayer and faith. It’s self-medicating through alcohol or drugs. So you got to watch the lust, the cravings of your flesh, and you need to know this, too. The whole world is set up to give you what your flesh desires, which means you’re gonna need to practice the discipline of self-control.

The second thing he says is our portal and opportunity for temptation is the lust of the eyes. We see things. We see things. I love people watching. You watch guys. Guys would be walking down the street. You know, an attractive woman would walk by. That’s what guys do. “Hey, like what are you doing? She has a can of mace and an IQ. This isn’t gonna work.” I mean – but some people are just so drawn by the visual.

They have to – I mean it’s not a sin to look good, but they want everybody to lust after them. That’s why they dress a certain way, particularly some ladies. They love the attention. So they dress in such a way to tempt the lust of the eyes. “Whoo, everybody looks at me. I get attention.” Yeah, but it’s not good attention. It’s not holy attention. It’s not Godly attention. It’s not going anywhere. You know, too, this is written before there were advertising, marketing, pop-up ads, mail-in brochures, before there were television commercials, billboards.

You think about it. How much of your world is filled with visual stimuli that is intended to get you to commit to something that you shouldn’t? We deal with this every minute of every day, bombarded with messages. Through the eye portal, we see something and all of a sudden, we’re into it, and this is where coveting comes into as well. Some of you are coveters. You see somebody with something. You think, “I need that. What is that?” And we just – you know, we get – some of you go the store, right? You’re not even looking for anything, just the lust of the eyes.

“Where are you going?” “To the store.” “What do you need?” “I don’t know. I’m gonna get this huge cart,” which is basically like a little pickup truck, which is an indication that they’re gonna get you to go, “Oh, look, chocolate. Oh, look, cereal. Oh, look, chocolate cereal. Oh.” You know, I mean just starting putting stuff in the cart. How many are sitting home and a TV commercial comes on? “Do you want ice cream?” “Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I do.”

I just – you see it, and then, you’re sitting in bed thinking, “Ice cream. We need ice cream, man.” I mean now you’re like a junkie with twins. You know, you just you need it now. It’s just mad, and you ever notice this, too. This is how they – somebody read this verse and set up the grocery store. You know, when you go to the grocery store, take me up on this. Everything you need to eat is on the outer edge of the grocery store, fruits, vegetables, right? Meat, if you’re a vegetarian, tofu’s out there, too. So it all works.

Everything you need basically is on the outside. So when you go in the middle, that’s where all the foods that end in “itos” are. Cheetos, Fritos, Doritos are all in the middle, chocolates, sweets, Ding-Dongs, Ho Hos, cupcakes, you know, anything that if you eat all the buttons will come flying off your clothes. That’s all in the middle, but they put it in the middle because then, they know you got to walk around the whole store, and they know you’re

gonna be doing this: Lust of the eyes, oh.

Because at the end of the aisle, they put what? A big display with chips, ooh, and dip. "Oh, I got to have dip." "No, you don't. It's not even on the periodic chart. Don't even know what that stuff is. Don't put that in there." You know, dip is for dips. It just is, you know, and but they set up the end, and the end is never like need more veggies. The end is always chips and pop and sugar and junk, and it's amazing because if you just stay to the outside, you'll be healthy.

You shop in the middle, but some of you go up and down the aisles. "I don't want to miss anything, all right? I don't have any fuzzy dice. Chia Pet, I don't have a Chia Pet. I need a Chia." Then, you get to the counter, and they go, if you bring that stuff home, you know, if anybody loves it, they go, "What'd you get all that for?" You go, "I saw it, and I was just oh. I got sucked in, and the next thing I know, I'm spending money I don't have to buy stuff I don't need for people I don't like. I don't understand," but that's the lust of the eyes.

How many of you have looked at something and just lusted after it? Okay, I'll confess. Here's what I do. I got a 1975 Chevy pickup truck. It has no air conditioning, no cruise, no tilt, no carpet, no headliner, no odometer. So I don't know how far I've gone and has no speedometer so I don't know how fast I'm getting there, which in some ways, is good because then, I drive and I don't feel guilty because I don't know. So this week, I had to go in class in Portland. It was 80-some degrees.

So I'm driving to Portland, right? It gets eight miles a gallon, eight miles a gallon, right? So I'm driving, and I'm thinking, and then, this guy flies by me in a Jeep. Then, I thought, "I need a Jeep." That guy, he's got it wide open, nice breeze. He looks really cool. He looks pretty cool. He's got these big sunglasses. I can't ever find any that fit my head because my head is huge. He's got sunglasses and a big Jeep, and he's getting his tan, and he's rocking out, and he just looks at me and drives me, and I'm thinking, "I love the Lord. I need a Jeep. We all should have Jeeps."

So I'm all the way down. I'm just – I'm Jeep lusting, Jeep coveting, just – and, you know, I never saw Jeeps on the road before. Now I see every Jeep. "Honey, that's a Jeep. That's a Jeep. That's a Jeep. That's a Jeep. Lord Jesus, there's no justice. I have no Jeep, and they're everywhere. I've been overlooked. You got to make this wrong right," and I was thinking, "I need a" – so then, I'm Jeep lusting. Next thing I know, I'm pulling into my class, and I'm looking for a Jeep dealership.

"Maybe I can test drive a Jeep." You know, and I'm thinking, "No." I'm meditating on this for a second. "If I test drive a Jeep, guess what I'm driving home? A Jeep with a car payment that I don't have money for because it's the lust of the eyes." Now I'm not saying I won't get a Jeep, okay, because I probably will, but I'm gonna work on my motives first, at least that's what I tell myself.

I did it yesterday, too. Me and my two-year-old son are at Home Depot looking at stuff, and I'm walking down the aisle, and I see a portable air conditioning unit. That's hot, and I'm hot, and when you're this furry, it's really hot. It's like I'm half Wookiee. It's summer. I'm hot, and I'm looking at the thing going, "Air conditioning, I never – I need one. I don't know how I lived to this point." I'm sitting there looking at this thing for so long.

My two-year-old son goes, "Dad, what are we doing?" I said, "We're coveting. We're coveting." He just looks at me like, "What the?" You know, you know what I'm talking about, and then, all day I'm just sort of air conditioning coveting. I saw it, and the next thing I know, I can't live without it. I'll die if I don't get – I didn't get one yet, but this is what happens. Your eyes see it, and you got to have it. You just got to have it right now or – and you didn't even know it existed until you saw it.

Lust of your flesh, pleasure, lust of your eyes, and this is the desire to get more. "Just give me more, more, more, more, more. I need a credit card. I'm out of money, more." We just get more, and then, what happens when we get it? The boasting of what he has and does. The main reason why so many people have so much stuff is because they want to boast about what they have and what they do. "I work here. I'm this smart. I read all these books. I have this thing. You want to see my car? Right, want to see my other car? Want to see my crib? I got rims on my car. They spin, whoo, sparkly. I got a nice crib, plasma screen. Yes, I got" – is it a sin to have a plasma screen?

Is it a sin to drive a Jeep? No, obviously not. Is it a sin to make money? Is it a sin to have a good job? Is it a sin to be successful? Is it a sin to do something? No, it's not, but it is a sin to take credit for all of God's grace in their life, to boast. "Thank you, me. Yes." That's the problem. We have old television shows dedicated to the boastful pride of life. We just watch people and how they spin their – "Oh, they got a crib. They got this. They got that. They got this."

You ever walk into somebody's home. They go, "This is the plasma screen. Thank you, Jesus. This is my four vehicles. Thank you, Jesus." None of that, no verse, no prayer to God, no thanks to God. James says, "Every good and perfect gift comes from God." People who boast are taking credit for something. Even if they work for it, ultimately, the skills and opportunities that provided that thing were given them by the Lord and they've forgotten him altogether. Boasting is a terrible sin. Pride is a terrible sin.

Our culture pitches it as a virtue. "You need to have pride." No, you need to have worship, which is glory be to God. Pride is glory be to me. See in this worldly kingdom, you're God. You want to get everything you see. You want to do and have everything that feels good so that you can brag about all your conquests and your stuff and your success and your achievement. In this other kingdom, the one not built by human hands, in this kingdom, God gets glory, not us, and in this, we enjoy and appreciate all the things that God has given, but we thank him rather than thanking ourselves for all that we have and all we've done.

And it's a humility that dominates God kingdom, and it's an arrogance that dominates this false kingdom. That's why he says, "You can't love both. You can't love this and this because they are in complete antinomy." They're in opposition. There's no congruence there, and these things, this boasting

and bragging, this continual competitiveness to have a better car or a nicer wardrobe or a hotter body or a promotion over someone else because you just can't enjoy the fact that some people have a good life, too.

These sort of posturings come not from the Father, but from the world, okay? There's nothing in the world that is going to help build this other kingdom that the church is a part of. So he says, "You know, you got to investigate yourself." First say, "Am I a Christian or non-Christian, and is my decision making guided by Scripture or by my eyes, my pleasures, and my arrogance, and am I making spiritual progress or am I remaining greatly immature because I claim to be in the church, but I live according to the world?"

Then, he closes on a positive note in Verse 17. "The world and its desires pass away." Isn't that good? You know, there will be a day when there's no more porno, no more strip clubs. There will be no more debt, no more gossip. There will be no more coveting. There will be no more jealousy. There will be no more competitive bantering to where you did something. So now I have to one up you because I'm insecure. There will be none of that.

All of this world, this fallen, crooked, messed up world is just passing away. It's cursed. It's under judgment. It's falling apart. What John is saying is, "Don't put your heart there. Don't attach yourself to that world. Don't affix yourself to that world because it's just vacuous, and it's in the process of total collapse. So don't put yourself into that collapsing world." He says, "Instead, the man or the person who does the will of God lives forever." The person who lives by the Biblical virtues, not the world's virtues, and here's the sad thing.

Some of you are not Christians or some of you had been living as if you were not. The sad thing is that many people live according to the values of the world, and they don't know there is any alternative. That's what breaks my heart. They don't know that you don't have to be proud. Humility is better. They don't know that you don't need to be a sexual predator. You can love your spouse. They don't know that you don't need to get your identity out of what you have and do. You can get your identity out of God and what he's done for you and the Lord Jesus.

They don't know that there is this parallel reality of grace and love and hope and faith and kindness with God that's available. They don't know. The more you read the Bible, the more you will be aware that that is indeed available to all who turn from sin and trust in Jesus, and don't hear me on this. I'll be very clear on this. I am not saying that what the world does, the church should not do. What I am saying is what the world does, the church should do Biblically.

Am I against drinking? No, but we should not drink as people who don't know God. We should drink to feast and celebrate the goodness of God rather than to drown our miseries and our sorrows, and we should drink in moderation, not in addiction. Am I against sex? We're not against sex. We believe that people should get married and love each other and make the Song of Solomon sing again. So we enjoy our intimacy different than those who don't know God.

Am I against working hard and making money? I am not. I hope and pray that God blesses you; particularly you head of households so that you can take care of your family and your responsibilities. Absolutely, I'm not against that at all, but we don't work in the way that people don't know God were, and we don't spend and save money in the way that people who don't know God spend and save money. We don't. What we do, however, is we take everything that God made good and that has been corrupted in this worldly system, and we redeem it.

~~We then why do we're so bold in redemption on this creation.~~ We say this all the time. We redeem love. We redeem marriage. We redeem sex. We redeem alcohol. We redeem money. We redeem food. We redeem laughter and joy and friendship. We redeem all that God made good and very good and that has been lost and made bad and very bad, and as it's brought back under the teaching of the Bible and reconnected to God, we can overcome the temptations of the evil one. We can be strong, and then, we can do the will of God. We can do the will of God, and then, we can live forever with this pattern of joy and life and love and hope and faith with God, all things being redeemed and made new, and eventually, him destroying this cursed aspect of our creation, this fallen world.

So that then all we have is just the continual progress in our spiritual maturity in relationship with him together as the church. Your choice is very simple: World or church. There's really only two options if you boil it down. You live by the prevailing temptations that lead to monkey see, monkey do. That's what everybody does. That's what I do. Isn't that the way it's supposed to be? No, have you read the Bible?

Has your imagination been awakened to this great God with another way of living and another way of being and another way of valuing and experiencing and redeeming all things so that you can live a life that is congruent with the God who made everything, the God who made pleasure, the God who made joy, the God who made life so that the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life are seen as folly needing to be resisted by strong people who have their Bible open so they can move forward in spiritual progress doing the will of God, going from worldly to new Christian to maturing Christian to mature Christian, who is then able to encourage worldly people to become Christians?

That's what we want for all of you, but to do that, you're gonna need to avail yourself to do it, Bible open, assessing yourself, and then, going forward in your relationship with God through the Bible in varying levels of maturity. For some, it is becoming a Christian today saying, "I've been living a worldly life. I want to become a person who loves Jesus as a church person." You do that by turning from sin, trusting in him. He died for your sin. He will love and forgive you.

Jesus is God. That's how you get your sin forgiven. Some of you are immature. You need to apologize to God and repent, and you need to keep your Bible open, and you need to grow up, take responsibility for yourself and stop expecting everyone else to keep an eye on you, and some of you are mature and you're growing, and you should just spend some time thanking God because you're seeing progress and fruit, and you're doing the will of God, and life is going better than it ever has, and you're pretty fired up, and you're an excitement to the rest of us, and some of you are at the place of maturity.

We encourage you to let the leaders in the church know so you can be teaching and leading and encouraging and shaping and building because you're a huge asset to the church, and we're all somewhere on this continuum up. We hope it's not a continuum up. Give you time and pray and sort that out with God. We'll partake of communion, which is remembering and celebrating Jesus' body and blood shed for our sin. It is only for those who are Christians or become a Christian today.

It's the remembering of his body and blood. We practice through intention and partaking. You can partake when you're ready. We'll give our tithes and offerings. If you're not a Christian, don't give. If you're a first time visitor, don't give. We're not just trying to take your money. We'll pick up the tab, and then, we're gonna sing, and we're gonna celebrate because guess what? Here's the great news.

We don't need to live in the world. We can live as the church. We don't need to taste death. We can have life. We don't need to be slaves to sin. We can be friends of God. We don't need to live in the darkness. We can live in the light. We don't need to be marked by folly. We can be guided by wisdom. We don't have to go with the prevailing attitudes of an ever shifting decaying culture. We can open the Bible and hear directly from God.

We don't have to live in ignorance, not knowing who God is. We can know who God is, and we don't have to wonder how in the world we're gonna deal with our sin. We know that Jesus took care of it, and we know that if we give it to him, he will forgive us. This is a complete possibility, and we sing and celebrate because God has made this great possibility available to us all, and we extend it tonight to you as well.

Lord Jesus, we do love you. We thank you for an opportunity to study. God, some of us are just worldly. We're not Christians. We have values and attitudes and actions and reactions that are just not wise. They're not Biblical. They're not right. God, some of us are immature. Maybe we're people that should know better, but we just don't have any discipline or we don't have any consistency.

Pray you give us the grace to make some progress. Some of us, God, are brand new Christians. We're fired up. We're excited. We're hopeful. We just got to keep learning, keep growing. We pray, Lord God, that you who have begun that good work in us would just continue and see it through to completion. God, there's a lot of people in this room that I know personally that are growing. They're maturing. They're making progress.

Their lives are coming together. Their hearts are in the right place. Their desires are going north. They love you, and they're fighting, which is a good thing. They're strong, which is a good thing, and they're in the process of overcoming the evil one. God, I pray you would really encourage them tonight. I pray you let them look back on the last year or two and just see all the good things that you've empowered them to resist and to overcome and to accomplish, and God, some are mature, and I pray that they wouldn't denote themselves that way in pride, but simply just recognizing that they do love you.

They've walked with you for a lot of years. They know the Bible, and they know you, and they have good things to say, and they have good ways to lead, and they have good life to share. God, we invite them to step forward and to nominate themselves for leadership in the church and to help others because they are a tremendous gift to us all. Jesus, we love you. We thank you that we can be in the church. We don't have to be in the world, and we pray that as we study the Scriptures that it would live in us and that it would help us move forward, closer to being with you and from your grace, ultimately, to be like you. Amen.