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KNOWING THAT WE KNOW HIM

DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD || JOHN 2:15-17

When April was a little girl, she became attached to a blanket. It was her constant companion for the first three years of her life. Over time you would have never known that it had once been white or that it had ever been a blanket at all. Toward the end of its days, it was more of a ragged scrap of cloth than anything else. April would grab that little scrap of fabric, hold it next to her face, curl up in a ball, and fall asleep.

We were on one of those arduous road trips designed by fathers for the sole purpose of driving the rest of the family insane. We were somewhere between El Paso and San Antonio. Like most dads, I was committed to making it to San Antonio in record time. We stopped at a truck stop to get some gas and choke down some burgers. We piled back into the car and were nearly a hundred miles down the road when we heard a quiet whimper in the back seat. April was doing everything she could to hold back the tears. Her lower lip was quivering. She finally blurted out, "I left my blankie in the restaurant." There was a collective gasp. Everyone looked at me.

I knew that one day we would have the talk, "Honey, I think it's time to give up your blankie." But that was not the day. We pulled off the road, turned the car around, drove back to the truck stop to rescue the blanket. It added three hours to the trip. That was possibly my most heroic moment as a dad.

I don't know if I have ever loved anything as much as April loved that blanket, although I do have a fly rod and a mountain bike that come close. I don't sleep with them, but that is only because Cindie won't let me. We all grow attached to, and find great comfort in, our things.

That's why we are a bit surprised to hear John say, "Do not love the world or anything in the world." He seems to be drawing a line that many of us are not ready to embrace. He not only tells us not to love the world, he tells us how much our love for the world actually costs us. He wants us to be vitally aware that there are two very different loves, coming from two very different sources, leading to two very different results.

TWO VERY DIFFERENT LOVES (v. 15)

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.

WORLD: In John's writings, the "world" refers to sinful humanity's attempts to make life work without God. He is not nearly concerned with our appreciation for good things as he is with our tendency to turn our good things into ultimate things.

LOVE: John strongly commends love for God expressed in obedience to his commands, and love for our brothers and sisters expressed in sacrificially meeting their needs. He strongly condemns a love for this world expressed in an inordinate desire to find significance and meaning in the things of this world.

1. How should Christians view the things of this world?
2. How does love for the world diminish our love for God?
3. How does love for God diminish our love for the world?
4. What is our best strategy for loosening the world's grip on our heart?

TWO VERY DIFFERENT SOURCES (v. 16)

16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

LUST OF THE FLESH: Those things we enjoy that can quickly become our drug of choice (sex, food, drink, rest, and entertainment).

LUST OF THE EYES: Those things we see that we just have to have (cars, houses, mountain bikes, fly rods, anything you can buy at REI, Bicycle Sports Shop or Home Depot).

PRIDE OF LIFE: Those things we are good at that become the source of our identity (Being a mom, a successful business person, your hobby, being extremely bright, your savings account and stock investments, having a more beautiful home than your old high school buddies).

1. How are the world's gifts a cheap counterfeit of the good gifts God desires to give us?
2. What does God give that the world cannot give?

3. What does the world give that God cannot give?
4. Why do we tend to look for significance and meaning in the things of this world rather than God?
5. What are the tell-tale signs that you love the world and the things in this world more than you love God?
6. What is our best strategy for finding meaning and significance in God rather than the things of the world?

TWO VERY DIFFERENT RESULTS (v. 17)

17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

THE WILL OF GOD: Pursuing God's purposes and goals for our lives (as described in Scripture) rather than our own.

1. How quickly does the new wear off of the things of this world?
2. How would you compare the immediate gratification that comes from the world with the lasting satisfaction that comes from doing God's will?
3. Why do we more often pursue the immediate gratification that comes from the world than the lasting satisfaction that comes from doing God's will?
4. What will be the ultimate outcome of pursuing the things of this world over the things of God?
5. What is our best strategy for pursuing God's agenda over our own?