



## Sermon Title: 1 John Part 8 - Loving God With All Your Heart

### IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. What is one of your favorite 'eating out' memories (e.g. a special birthday party, family reunion, meal on a vacation)?
2. Today's Scripture basically says that we live in a war between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God.

As a Christian, what is the greatest disconnect you see between your values and the world's values? Discuss how you have experienced this tension in your day-to-day life.

### UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. 1 John 2:15 instructs Christians: "Do not love the world or anything in the world." What does it mean to love "the world"? What is an example of loving the world in a godly way (John 3:16)?
2. Read 1 John 2:16. What does each of these mean? Give an example of what each might look like.
3. Have someone in your group read 1 John 5:19-21 and Romans 12:1-2. How do these verses help us live out John's exhortation in 1 John 5:21?
4. How can being in the Scriptures, attending worship services, and being in Christian community help us keep away from idols? Which has/have been most important to you?

### OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. At what point do your healthy desires threaten to become unhealthy?
2. How do your unhealthy desires stop you from focusing on the mission God has prepared for you?
3. How can our love properly focused on the Father be a witness to those around us who "love the world"?

**UP – IN – OUT** reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

### For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Pastor Henry challenged us to think about the following questions. The honest answer to these questions will help us see whether we have elevated something or someone else in our mind above God:

1. What occupies your mind during your free time? What do you obsess or daydream a lot about? What makes your adrenalin flow?
2. Who do you want to be close to and please more than anything? Whose affection and attention do you crave the most? Who do you want to be remembered by more than anyone?

Pray that we would surrender all to him and live for him.

"The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him." Romans 12:3 (MSG)

### THE WORD (NIV)

#### 1 John 2:15-17

<sup>15</sup>Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father<sup>[a]</sup> is not in them. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

### This week's writers:

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The Apostle John wrote this letter to confront false teaching that was infiltrating the early church around what it meant to be a fully devoted follower of Christ. While John sets the bar quite high it is not a standard we have to meet in order to be a Christian. Rather it is the evidence that you want to live this way as you grow in relationship with Jesus and to live and love like Him that identifies you as a Christ-follower. Such people believe that Christ – fully man and fully God – died on the cross to atone for our sins and rose again on the third day and appeared to many (Ch 1). They believe in Jesus and believe Jesus by cultivating a relationship with Him and, in community with other believers, seek to live like Him and love like Him (Ch 2). Here John sums up that authentic Christians do not love the world but love God with all their heart (1 John 2:15-17).

What is the world? The Bible speaks of the ‘world’ as both the physical world (Acts 17:24) that God created for us to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17), and as humanity (John 3:16) whom God sent His Son to die and save. Neither of these are what John refers to when he says to not ‘love the world’. What John refers to is a worldview that seeks to live independently of God through a system of beliefs and behaviors that are completely opposite to His ways (1 John 4:3). In this system ‘you’ are at the center of the universe. It is up to you to find your fulfillment and satisfaction in this life which is based on what you do, own, wear, live and accomplish.

Jesus came to establish a new Kingdom (Matt 4) which was not of this world (John 18:36). In this Kingdom it is not about you but about the God who created you and loves you. The more that you follow Him and trust Him the more satisfied and fulfilled you will be. Your identity and significance are based on the fact that you are His child.

John gives a description of what it means to ‘love the world’ – one that revolves around our lusts and pride (1 John 2:17). A legitimate God-given desire that has become so important to you that it controls you is a lust. When we move into the territory of believing we will never be happy without this desire being fulfilled, and are prepared to disobey God to have it, we have moved from a natural desire into lust which is unhealthy and sinful. If you cannot say no to a desire then that desire is controlling you. John describes three areas here. Consider them. Look at your lifestyle and your goals, your expenses and what you do. Which kingdom are you giving your life to?

1. **The lust of the flesh.** This is the sensual or pleasurable side of our nature. It is what you feel. It is taking a natural desire such as hunger, relaxation, work, vacationing and letting one or more crowd out God and His calling in our lives, letting them turn to gluttony, or becoming a slave to ease and luxury, or work.
2. **The lust of the eyes.** This is what you see and want to have. It is the desire to possess something so badly you believe you can’t be happy or complete without it. It can be a sum of money, a certain possession or person, or your appearance on which your identity and happiness depend. Jesus does not say possessions are bad in themselves (Matt 6) but that they are all temporary and will disappoint us in the end.
3. **The pride of life.** This is what you want to be seen to be. God placed in us a desire to be creative, to do our best and make an impact in what we accomplish – and to be affirmed in these. We have, however, crossed over into pride when we sacrifice our health and families to be admired as being successful and put our identity in what we have done rather than who we are in God’s eyes.

John closes his letter with the words, “Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.” This is the heart of his letter. His message is this: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind. But stay mindful that there is another kingdom out there that is filled with seductive idols and counterfeit gods that appeal to our flesh, our eyes and our pride. John appeals to us to not go there. In his appeal John is reinforcing the first and second commandment – not having any other gods before Me. Trust Him alone and let Him be the center of our affections. Don’t worship any of those ‘things’ or ‘people’ because they will not come through for you in the end (1 John 2:17). But God will (Psalm 46). What safeguards can we employ to prevent us from being drawn into these temporary counterfeit gods of this world?

1. **Be in the Scriptures daily.** (Rom 12:1-2) Often our attitudes, values, priorities and decisions reflect what we are thinking about. If our minds are centered on the Lord and His Word we will be much more inclined to be influenced by the Lord and His wisdom. How much time do you spend on the phone or social media or immersed in the ‘world’ system and being influenced by it? Be aware of it. Let God speak to you.
2. **Faithfully and consistently attend weekly worship services.** There we are not only reminded of the character of our God but of eternal truths in the teaching of the Word, for where else do we hear this spoken?
3. **Commit ourselves to being in community with one another.** (Heb 10:24) Meeting as Christians in community we can challenge each other not to sell out to temporary things but to give our lives to those things that will really matter in the end.
4. **Love the people of this world.**

The question is not ‘if you worship’ but rather what you worship? What, or who will you give your life to? Commit your life to Christ today.