

Church of God Sunday School

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP #12 – WORLDLINESS

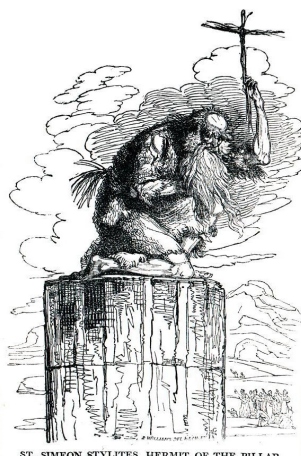


1 John 2:15

DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Three different worlds are described in the Bible (Acts 17:24; John 3:16; John 7:7).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Ways the spirit of the world works (Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 John 2:15-16).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** The spirit of the world is against God's people (John 15:19; James 4:4; 1 John 3:1).
- ❑ **Thursday:** Examples of people who loved the world (Matthew 19:16-22; 2 Timothy 4:10).
- ❑ **Friday:** How should the Christian resist worldliness (Colossians 2:8; Colossians 3:2; Titus 2:12)?
- ❑ **Saturday:** God's people must become spiritually minded (Romans 8:5-8; Romans 12:2; Romans 13:14).

MEMORY VERSE: *"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



ST. SIMEON STYLITES, HERMIT OF THE PILLAR.

Separating From the World

In the fifth century, a young man named Simeon became a Christian. He decided to escape from the world by living on a platform placed on a tall pillar. In time this pillar was reported to have been more than fifty feet above the ground. For thirty-seven years Simeon lived this way. He was the first of many *stylites* (pillar hermits). However, this method of withdrawing from the world did not work as thousands of people traveled to see Simeon and hear what he had to say.

There have been many people who have sought to escape the world and its influences by separating themselves and their followers, often living secluded in compounds or communes. Some extreme examples of this include: Charles Manson, Jim Jones, and David Koresh. Others have sought to separate themselves from the world by only wearing certain styles of clothing and not owning worldly things. For many people, avoiding worldliness consists of a long list of do's and don'ts that must be followed. The Pharisees lived a very strict lifestyle, following many rules and being very careful to avoid all contact with sinners.

How is the Christian to avoid worldliness? What exactly is worldliness? Is it only certain choices, clothing, or attitudes? What does it mean when people say, "Worldliness is creeping in"? Is it possible to dress right, go only to the right places, say all the right things, and still be worldly? With so many differing opinions on what worldliness is, how can you know for sure?

Love Not the World

In 1 John 2:15 we read: "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." To understand what John was writing about, we must first understand that there are three different worlds spoken of in the Bible: God's creation (Acts 17:24), people (John 3:16), and a system that opposes God (John 7:7). The last world is the one John was referring to. One author described this as "a system of values . . . which makes sin look normal and righteousness seem strange" (David Wells). Ephesians 2:2 describes it as "the course [or the ways and fashions] of this world." The world (or worldliness) is not limited to one place, but it is composed of ungodly thoughts, ideas, attitudes, values, and expectations. It is placing greater emphasis on the things of the world than on the things of God. One example of this is the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22). It was

love for his worldly riches that prevented him from following Jesus.

How do you know when things of the world become sinful? It has been said that "worldly people move horizontally rather than vertically" (*Worldliness* by C. J. Mahaney). The things of the world tend to drive one *forward* (selfish desires) instead of *upward* (godly desires). First John 2:16 describes three ways the world works in one's life: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The word *lust* means "having a strong desire, craving, or desiring what is forbidden." The "pride of life" includes boasting about what you have accomplished or accumulated. All of these are endeavoring to make you become like the world. These things are "not of the Father." In other words, these are not part of His plan and are completely opposite to His will for His people.



Demas From
Pilgrim's Progress

The Snare of Worldliness

In the New Testament, Paul wrote of Demas sending greetings to the Christians in Colosse (Colossians 4:14) and also called him a *fellowlabourer* (Philemon 1:24). Demas was actively involved in the work of God. However, something happened to Demas. Four years later, Paul wrote to Timothy that "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). What happened? How did a love for the world creep into the heart of one who had worked with the Apostle Paul? In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Demas tried to tempt Christian and Hopeful away from the path with hopes of gaining great riches. Christian told him, "Demas, thou art an enemy to the right ways of the Lord."

When the word *worldliness* is mentioned, people often think of someone who is wearing the world's fashions, going to questionable places of entertainment, and adopting the language and mannerisms of the world. However, people can love the world without ever leaving the church seats. Many people attend church services and seem to dress right, act right, and talk right, but their heart is not right. Worldliness begins as a heart condition; it is not always noticeable at first. As one's love for God grows cold, it will not be long until the snare of worldliness catches him or her. It might be an attraction to worldly riches, fame, dress, or goals. Worldliness also works when persecution comes, making fitting in with the world look very appealing.

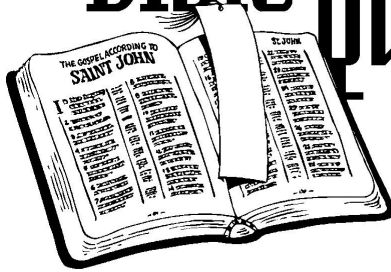
How does one's love for God grow cold? Becoming careless about daily reading and praying and not making attending church services a priority are often the first signs. The less time you spend with God, the more time you begin to spend thinking about things that make you happy. Soon things of the world begin to come first in your heart and your life. You become concerned with worldly affairs to the point that you neglect spending time with God and desiring to do His will. As you let down your spiritual guard, your affections begin to change, and a love for the world creeps in.

Avoiding Worldliness

When James wrote about "friendship of the world," he said that "a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). But how can you live, work, and go to school with worldly people and not become affected by worldliness? Jesus prayed in John 17:16 that His people be "not of the world." Worldliness might be all around us, but it is God's will that it not be *within* us. It is through salvation, daily prayer, and Bible reading that God's people are set apart from the ways of the world. They become spiritually minded (Romans 8:5-8), and it shows in their talk, clothing, attitudes, and in the places they go and do not go. Is there anything in your life that is affecting your love for God? Have you become lazy in your personal devotions, have you become irritable and rebellious toward your parents and spiritual leaders? Have the values (morals and standards) of the world begun to become yours? If so, the spirit of worldliness is working on you. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed [fashioned or molded] to this world: but be ye transformed [changed] by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Resisting the spirit of worldliness will require effort on your part. Start every day by putting "on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14): put on His thoughts and His values through reading His Word and talking to Him.

"One reason why the Church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church" (Charles Spurgeon).

Bible Quiz



1. How did Simeon the Stylite try to avoid the world? _____

2. What are some ways people have tried to avoid worldliness? _____

3. What are the three different worlds described in the Bible? _____

4. What is one of the descriptions of *worldliness* given in the lesson? _____

5. What are the three ways the world works (described in 1 John 2:16)? _____

6. What is the definition of *lust*? _____

7. What is the *pride of life*? _____

8. Why do you think John Bunyan chose Demas as a character in *Pilgrim's Progress*? _____


9. How does worldliness begin? _____

10. What causes your love for God to grow cold? _____

11. How can you be *in* the world but not *of* the world? _____

What Do You Love?

**If you
love me,
keep my
COMMANDMENTS.**
(John 14:15)




**Love is not a
feeling.
Love is an
action.**

**Love is not
what you
say. Love
is what you
do.**

**What you
love,
you will
talk about.**

What Does the Following Reveal About Your Love for God or Your Love for the World?

- daily conversations
- internet activity
- the way you dress
- your music playlist
- your video/movie choices
- your social media
- your hobbies
- your friends
- your leisure time activities
- your thoughts
- your plans for the future