

**RELATIONAL THEOLOGY SERIES SIX**  
**THE GREAT DISTRACTION**  
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**I Jn 2:15-17; Josh. 7:21; Mk. 3:14; Gen.39:7; Ps. 131**

Turn in your Bible to 1 John 2:15. I will read the passage in a moment. But, first, I want to share a short video clip from the opening moments of the Robin Williams movie, Hook, which is as current as today, and as timeless as this Bible passage from the first century.

VIDEO FROM HOOK

Can you imagine a father or mother so distracted that he or she could neglect loving the most important things in life: God, each other, and/or their children?

Of course it doesn't have to be work or business that distracts.

- SLIDE #1: The television set can be just as distracting. Any number of things can distract us from the important things in life.

I want to talk to you today about the greatest distraction of all.

- SLIDE #2: READ 1 JOHN 2:15-17: *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of 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. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”*

Now, let's unpack these verses.

- BUILD SLIDE #3A: There is a COMMAND here: Do not love the world or anything in the world.

Immediately we face a dilemma.

- BUILD SLIDE #3B: We have difficulty reconciling this with John 3:16 where we learn that God loves the world. Are we to love it or not?

Let's define the term “world.”

- SLIDE #4: “The world” as John uses it here is not the created, material universe, which is declared by God to be a good creation.
- SLIDE #5: The world is not the structures of society: It is not worldly to follow a career in politics, to get married, to have children, to be involved in earning a living.
- SLIDE #6: “The world” is not some list of taboos or practices to be avoided by “good” Christians. Many Christians tended to define worldliness as a list of practices frowned upon. They vary from time to time and from culture to culture: Don't dance or play cards, or go to the movies. In one part of the world Christians might frown upon bare arms, earrings, wearing short hair.
- SLIDE #7: “The world” here is a disposition, an outlook, a frame of mind. It is an anti-god mentality of the human race, the human fondness for sin and self which lead men and women away from God.

“Anything in the world” is anything in the world which distracts us from the love of the Father.

And the command is: Don't love the world.

And I want to know WHY? Because the degree to which we love the world is the degree to which we impair our ability to experience the love of God.

*“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

The reason this does not sound like such a good reason to many of us is because we have such little comprehension of the love of the Father.

•SLIDE #12: THE FOCUS of this passage has to be: The love of the Father.

“The love of the Father” in this verse seems ambiguous. It can refer to God’s love for us; or our love for God; or divine love; or the love for people we have because God is at work in us.

All of the above are used at different points in 1 John.

Let’s examine the love of the Father here more closely:

•SLIDE #13: The last two weeks I used a Hyperbole when I said, “Imagine that God stepped out on the edge of nothingness and it was dark and lonely and said, “Let there be light...” and He created the universe because He was alone.

A hyperbole is an over-statement used to drive strongly home a point or to get the listeners to engage in deeper thinking.

Jesus did it all the time: “If your right eye offends you, pluck it out.” And people have been pondering the depths of that statement ever since.

My focus was not on whether God was alone. The focus was to get you to think deeply about the Biblical concept of how much God wants to have an intimate relationship with each of us. Of course that is taught all over the Bible.

•SLIDE #14: You see, back before the foundation of the universe the Bible teaches that God existed in a marvelous relationship unity of fellowship.

Triangle: Father, Son, and Spirit. Was relationship of perfect oneness and intimacy.

Only once was this interrupted: “My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?” Only time Christ refers to his father as God.

God so enjoyed the fullness of this relationship that it is obvious that He wanted to share it with all His creation. This is one of the reasons for the creation.

READ JOHN 17:1-5.

Glory is more than light. It was describing the relationship, etc. with the Father.

The “love of the Father” is like a flowing life force to be experienced and enjoyed.

The Love of the Father will manifest itself in a powerful loving relationship with God and powerful, overflowing relationships with others.

God wants us to experience the “love of the Father.” Unfortunately, most of us have no idea what the depths of intimacy with God or others is really like.

Many of us have little experience with the overwhelming love of the Father cascading down through our lives.

We were dealing with a pastor and his wife in crisis. Pastor was struggling in his relationship with God. He was a workaholic, leaving wife and children alone for long periods of time.

“Why are you away from your family for such long periods of time?”

“I suppose that I feel more adequate at work than I do at home. At home I have a wife who needs a best friend and I don’t know how to do that. I have three children who need a father—and I don’t know what one of those does.

Little experience with Love of the Father to enjoy God or pour it all over his family.

Intimate Life pre-marriage conference: “How many of you have in mind a picture of what your ideal marriage is going to look like? See the love, joy, intimacy, time spent together, etc. Who in your life do you know who can serve as a model for that kind of marriage.”

Soon they conclude that they have never seen that kind of marriage in anyone they know. The blind are leading the blind.

Many of us go through life with no intimate friends. Hard to experience with God what we have never experienced with any one else.

Until we begin to value and deeply desire to experience the love of the Father, we will forever be struggling with the world’s attractions which continually distract us from experiencing the love of the Father.

•SLIDE #16: THE DISTRACTIONS: Three channels by which the world attacks us

*“For everything in the world-- the cravings of 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.”*

How many pay attention to airline pre-takeoff announcements? Boring—so it is easy to be distracted away from them.

SW Airlines Jokes: “OK, OK, put on your seatbelt, because we are getting ready to fly really really fast.”

“By the way, we have a man on the airplane today who is experiencing his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Why don’t we all sing *Happy Birthday* to him? So we all sing *Happy Birthday*, to this centigenarian. Moments later we pull up to the gate: “Oh, by the way, please feel free to greet our captain as you deplane. It is his birthday.

STORY on AA flight to Tucson: Heard the speech 100 times: I was Distracted with Brie: Stewardess confronted me: What do you do when the O2 mask falls out.

These are the three channels by which we are pulled into worldly ways.

•SLIDE #17: 1. “The cravings (eithymia=desire [not necessarily evil]) of the sinful man (flesh) is the pull into wickedness which comes through our physical appetites, our sexuality, our physical tiredness and moodiness, our desire to protect ourselves, our hunger and thirst.

Any desire that draws us away from God or from continuing fellowship with him.

•SLIDE #18: 2. “The lust (eithymia=desire) of the eyes” is the way in which world’s pull is intensified when we see things that attract us.

Window shopping and advertising count on what the eyes see.

”I saw, then I coveted ...” said Achan (Joshua 7:21).

Potiphar’s wife “lfted up her eyes to Joseph” and wanted to sin (Genesis 39:7).

Value on the unseen: the heroes of the faith had their eyes on what was unseen.

- SLIDE #19: 3. “The pride of life” is the tendency we all have to exalt ourselves, to manipulate ourselves to look good in the eyes of others, to grasp after admiration.

The idea is an attitude of pretentious arrogance or subtle elitism that comes from one’s view of wealth, rank, or stature in society.

Sum up all three as anything that distracts us from our top priorities of loving God and loving others.

- SLIDE #22: THE DOOM OR THE REWARD: Nothing forever, or abiding with God eternally

*“The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”*

Eschatologically, Christ has brought a new value system to history. Practically speaking, those who are utterly invested in the world and its passions will see all of it vanish. Only those passions for the Father will continue forever.

Some of us live as if this world is going to go on forever. It is not.

Remember the ultimate statistic: One out of one dies.

Man in Portland with Pituitary tumor. “Of course this could be fatal.” I am thinking, “Life is fatal.”

Now, let me illustrate this: Trying to fill up our lives with the world is like trying to fill a bottomless glass—it cannot be done. Insatiable. How much is enough? One more dollar.

It is like drinking salt water. Far from bringing satisfaction, the unquenchable thirst is in fact increased.

The opposite is true when we search out spiritual things: Spiritual things will satisfy.

Exercise: Living water, bread from heaven.

The reward for staying free from worldliness and keeping in love with God is continuing and abiding with God.

- SLIDE #23: Now let’s bring all of this home. In the context of 1 John, “THE WILL OF GOD” revolves around loving God and loving our brothers.

“The will of God” is everything that God makes known to us by the Word and by the Spirit as being His will for our lives. Do the will of God and the “Well Done” will last forever.

1 John is all about loving God and loving the brothers.

- SLIDE #25: What does loving the brothers look like?

Dad calls, 2 teenaged sons about to kill each other: “He’s breathing my air.” That is conflict.

Dad about to ask how to fix them. Before he could, Dave said, “How long has it been since your 14 year old had some quality time alone with just you doing something he enjoyed doing?”

(Pause) How long has it been since your 12 year old had some quality time alone with just you doing something he enjoyed doing?

“You go have time alone with each boy and then call me back.” He never called back.

Six weeks later they talked: “It worked.”

There was sibling rivalry, but part of issue was that they were experiencing aloneness. They were acting out inappropriately because they needed their daddy’s love and attention.

Let me show you one way to love the people around you. Share more of this in 1 John.

Concept of WITH.

READ MARK 3:14: “Jesus appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be WITH HIM and that he might send them out to preach.”

Jesus did not send them out until the final year of His ministry. They spent 2½ years just being WITH Him. In the western world we have lost the wonder of being with. We are so frantically wanting to go out and do—we are so distracted.

Imagine what people said to disciples during the first 2½ years? “What do you do here in ministry?”

“Well, we are here with Him.” “Yeah, but what do you do?” “We just hang around with him.”

The only one who held a job during those 2½ years was who? Judas. I bet Judas never embraced the wonder of with.

Where do you learn the wonder of “with”? You learn it—just hanging with your wife and family.

More about what this love looks like during the next several weeks in 1 John

•SLIDE #26: What does loving God look like?

Psalm 131

Where do you feel most at home?

Intimate with wife.

Wherever she is is home. Same with God.