

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

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?

“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.”

(1 John 2:15-17)

THE COMMAND: Do not love the world or anything in the world

“The world” is not the created, material universe, which is good (2:2; 3:17; John 1:10); or the structures of society; or some list of taboos or practices to be avoided by “good” Christians.

“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.

The world causes us to stumble into sin (Matthew 18:7).

The world is spiritual ignorance (John 1:10).

The world is hostility toward God (James 4:4).

The grip and influence of Satan is behind all worldliness (1 John 5:19).

“Anything in the world” could be anything in the world which begins to distract us from the love of the Father.

THE FOCUS: The love of God

“The love of the Father” in this particular 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 that we have because God is at work in us. All of the above are used at different points in 1 John. John leaves us to make up our own minds here.

But, let’s be a little more specific. God wants us to experience the “love of the Father.” The “love of the Father” can only be understood in light of the love experienced and enjoyed among God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit long before the creation of the universe. God so enjoyed the fullness of this relationship that it is obvious that He wanted to share it with all His creation.

The “love of the Father” is like a flowing life force to be experienced and enjoyed. Read John 17:1-5.

THE DISTRACTIONS: Three channels by which the world attacks us

1. “*The cravings of the sinful man*” 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, etc.

2. “*The lust of the eyes*” is the way in which world’s pull is intensified when we see things that attract us.

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, and to grasp after admiration.

These the three channels operated in the temptations that assaulted Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4; Luke 4) and in the temptations in the Garden which devastated Eve (Genesis 3).

Love for the world will distract from the love of the Father—or, the love of the Father will detract from love of the world.

Trying to love the world is like struggling to fill a bottomless glass—the attempt is insatiable. The opposite is true when we search out spiritual things: spiritual things will satisfy.

THE DOOM OR THE REWARD: Nothing forever, or abiding with God eternally

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

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

THE WILL OF GOD: Love God and love your 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.

In the context of 1 John, “the will of God” revolves around loving God and loving our brothers. Loving the world induces a failure to love God: it is failure to grasp hold of how much God loves us; it is bound to show itself in failure to truly love other people.

What does loving the brothers look like?

What does loving God look like?