

5. Changing Our Love for the World

In our last topic, we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to grow to spiritual maturity and become reproducing Christians. This only happens as we walk alongside them as they go through the process of spiritual growth. Today, we want to focus on how we can help our physical and spiritual children learn to have a life of victory as they learn how to recognize the different ways Satan tempts them.

In 1 John 2:15-17, we read, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” In these verses, we see that we are not to love the world. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 explains what is meant by “the world” when it says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” In these verses, we see that “the world” is everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. We are not to love anything that exalts itself against God.

We see that we cannot have two masters. Matthew 6:24 says, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” The word that is translated “mammon” is used four times in the New Testament, the other three times are all in Luke 16:9-13. In those verses, we read, “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” The Lord makes it very clear that we cannot serve both God and the riches of this world.

Every person must make a choice. We must ask ourselves this question, “Are the temporary riches of this world more important to me or are the eternal riches of heaven more important to me?” Those who choose the temporary riches of this world are making the choice to serve this world instead of serving God. That is why it is important to help our physical and spiritual children realize that this is a choice everyone must make, so that they can have the right priorities in their own lives and help others learn that they must choose what will be the priority in their lives. Each person must choose to love and serve the Father, or love and serve the world. We cannot choose both.

Satan knows that there are three key ways he can tempt people with the things of the world.

1 John 2:16 says, “For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” Genesis 3:6 shows that Adam and Eve were tempted in all three of these ways. That verse says, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Since this verse says that Adam was with Eve, at the moment she took the fruit, both of them were tempted in the same way, because he did not stop her from taking the fruit and, in fact, joined her in eating the fruit.

Adam and Eve saw that the fruit was good for food – the lust of the flesh. They saw that it was pleasant to the eyes – the lust of the eyes. They saw that it was a tree desirable to make one wise – the pride of life. Matthew 4:1-11 shows that Christ resisted temptation by quoting the Word of God when Satan tried to tempt Him with the same three forms of temptation. When Satan tempted Christ with the lust of the flesh, by suggesting He turn stones into bread, Christ answered, in Matthew 4:4, “‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’” When Satan tempted Christ with the pride of life, by suggesting that He jump off of the pinnacle of the temple, Christ answered, in Matthew 4:7, “‘It is written again, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”’” When Satan tempted Christ with the lust of the eyes, by showing Him all of the kingdoms of the world, Christ answered, in Matthew 4:10, “‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.”’”

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Satan will try to use these same three ways to tempt them to seek the temporary things of the world. Satan will try to get them to satisfy the desires of their body - with things that are certainly very temporary. He will try to get them to desire the things that they see – the things they see will not last. He will try to tempt them to seek the praise of men (pride) – get them to focus on their own glory, which is very temporary.

As we show our children, by our own values, that we see the temporary nature of these things, we can help them learn how to have victory over temptation. 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” First, we want to help them realize that they are likely to fall for those things that are temporary, if, they depend on their own strength. Second, we want to help them realize that the Lord is faithful and makes a way of escape so that we can have victory over the temptation to seek these temporary things.

Then, we need to help our children understand some of the ways Christ provides as a way of escape for us. The first of these things is advance preparation to prepare them for the times when temptation will come. Psalm 119:11 says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!” Scripture memorization is one thing that prepares us to recognize temptation when it comes. We help our children learn to memorize scripture by memorizing Scriptures with them.

2 Timothy 2:22-24 gives us four more things Christ tells us to do, when we are tempted, to have victory over temptation. Those verses say, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.” When temptation comes, we are to:

1. Flee from youthful lusts.
2. Follow or pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace.
3. Keep our hearts pure before the Lord.
4. Avoid arguments and quarrels, as they show pride but solve nothing.

As we model these things by our actions, our children are being shown some of the ways Christ provides as ways to escape when we are tempted.

Since 1 John 2:17 says, “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”, we want to help our children learn the things that are the will of God, and then, show them how to carry out that will. Some things God clearly tells us are His will. For example, 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.” We want to help them memorize all the verses that tell us something is the will of God.

Then, we also want them to understand that the commandments of God tell us the will of God. Matthew 22:37-40 says, “Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Then, John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The commandments in Matthew summarize the entire Old Testament and the commandment in John summarizes the entire New Testament.

In order to help our physical and spiritual children learn to carry out the will of God, we must show them how to love God by our example. Since Christ defines our neighbor as any person or stranger, we must show our children how to obey this command by taking them with us and showing them how to share the Gospel with those who do not know Christ. Since we are to love other Christians as Christ has loved us, we show our children how to love other Christians by our example, as we practice the “one anothers” of Scripture in all of our relationships with other Christians. The only way our physical and spiritual children will learn how to do things like accepting one another is as we provide an example for them to follow. Love for the Lord, for neighbors, and for one another is most effectively taught through example, because love is caught, not taught. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to carry out the will of God.