

WORLDLINESS

The word *worldliness* does not appear in the standard versions of the Bible, but the trait is referred to often. Worldliness is the condition of being worldly. The “world” God’s Word warns us not to embrace is not merely the material world in which we live, but the moral and spiritual morass that is opposed to and is alienated from God. All of those who love and are influenced by the world stand opposed to and alienated from God. Consider some of the warnings the Lord gives us against worldliness and the world.

Be not fashioned by it (Rom. 12:2): Worldly people are constantly pressuring us to be like them. They do not want to do right, and they do not want anyone to rebuke them by doing right. They harass, ridicule, denounce, curse, sue, and sometimes inflict bodily injury in their attempts to make us conform to their standards. Paul urged us to resist such pressures: “be not conformed.” Why should saints of God let modern pagans determine how we talk, dress, spend our money, and what we do for recreation and entertainment? We have a Savior who died and is risen to become **our** Lord, **our** Ruler. If one is a Christian, Christ sets his standards. If the world dictates one’s behavior, he is not a follower of Christ, even if he is an elder or preacher.

Be not a lover of it (1 John 2:15–17): John made the issue very clear in this passage. One must choose between loving the world with its treasures, temptations, and trinkets, and loving God. Love for the world excludes love for God (and vice versa) because all that the world stands for is opposed to God and will sooner or later perish.

Be not stained by it (Jam. 1:27): Worldly behavior in a Christian soils and stains the fabric of his life. It prevents the practice of pure and undefiled service unto God. Those who profess to see nothing wrong with such worldliness as drinking, dancing,

near-nudity in public places, bar-hopping, using filthy language, engaging in dishonest practices, lashing out in hateful vengeance, and so forth, merely advertise their love of the world. They also advertise a woefully low and ignorant view of the ethical standards of the Gospel. They want to behave in the ways of the world while maintaining “respectability” in the church; they desire to “have it both ways.” It cannot be so. Like it or not, one cannot run with the goats without smelling like them. To practice pure, undefiled religion one must “abstain from every form [appearance, KJV] of evil” (1 Thes. 5:22).

The worldly church member not only invites the charge of “hypocrite” for himself, but for the whole church.

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