

Friendship with the World

It seems that it's all too easy for Christians to remain attached to the 'world' to some degree. Related to this are the things that our 'flesh' – our natural sinful nature – wants to hold on to, or be involved with for our own self-interest or satisfaction. So often it's just the natural thing we do – after all, most other Christians do the same kinds of things don't they? And what's so bad about it anyway? But what do the Scriptures have to say about our own selfish desires and friendship with the world? In other words, **what is God's opinion on this matter?**

Before we look at the Scriptures, we need to understand what 'world' means. The original Greek word for world – 'kosmos' – has many meanings. So the meaning in each verse must be understood from the context in which it appears. In all the verses we are using in this study, the meaning is best described by *Vine's NT Dictionary* as: the "present condition (or state) of human affairs," in alienation from, and opposition to God... ('Alienation' can mean: hostility or separation)

Scriptures which are clear examples of the use of 'world' as described above:

John 12:31 *Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.*

Ephesians 2:1-2 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

The challenges for us personally

The whole **entertainment industry** (except for Christian movies) is part of the '**world**', and therefore **under the control of the evil one**.

1John 5:19 *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

This includes worldly movies and TV programs, worldly music and discos. Anyone who loves being entertained by these things is being a friend of the world, and therefore makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

This will be a real challenge for many of us. But even though worldly entertainment is so attractive, and fun to be part of, **we should hate the idea of being entertained by stuff that comes from the devil**. Even social media, which can have its good side, is also an instrument of the devil with which he influences many

people in the wrong direction.

The response of many people to this is that they carefully check out the content of what they are watching. But the real issue is not whether **the content** appears to be quite harmless, but that **the source** of the entertainment is the devil himself. The devil's works can appear to be so harmless, but he always has underlying and deceitful motives for the purpose of leading people astray, and to 'steal, kill and destroy' (*John 10:10*). He even used the Word of God in his efforts to tempt Jesus. But Jesus knew his motives and responded with "It is written..."

As well as the seriousness of the devil's control over the things of the 'world', is the concern that **entertainment** is a 'passion and desire of the flesh' (our sinful nature). It is a 'thing of the world', a 'desire of the flesh', and of 'the eyes'.

Galatians 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

1John 2:15-16 *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. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions--is not from the Father but is from the world. (ESV)*

However, a **true believer** has been crucified with Christ and has also been crucified to the world.

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Galatians 6:14 *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

This means that we are meant to be dead to the world and all its self-satisfying influences. **Therefore our attention should rather be on that which pleases God, and glorifies Christ.** As you read through the following verses think carefully about what they are saying, and ask yourself – 'Do I understand what this means, and am I applying it to my life?'

Romans 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and **do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.***

2Corinthians 5:14-15 *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

Galatians 1:3-5 *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Colossians 3:1-3 *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Also **2Corinthians 4:18**)*

1John 5:3-5 *In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

What about the Greatest Commandment?

For some strange reason, it is rare to hear a message in church about the greatest commandment. Surely if it of such great importance to God, we should pay more attention to it.

Matthew 22:37-38 - *Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.*

However, the issue is not just that it is a command, but that **it reveals the heart of God**. This is God's desire for all his people.

Also, have you noticed how God stresses the **importance** of loving him: we are to love the Lord our God with **ALL** our heart and with **ALL** our soul and with **ALL** our mind. So somehow God wants us to love him totally with every part of our being. This is a huge challenge, and can only be achieved by our total devotion to him, and by making a daily commitment to walk in his ways.

So if we are spending more time with the world's entertainment, than we are in seeking God through his Word and prayer, then the obvious conclusion is **that we don't really love God that much**.

God is of far greater importance than we can even imagine:

1Chronicles 29:11-13 *Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹² Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and*

might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

Why is it that we fall so short of giving God the honour and glory that He deserves? How can we hold back from truly dedicating our lives to him, or from loving him with all that we are? I would suggest that you revise the Scriptures up to this point, and ask yourself where you stand in terms of being a friend of the world. Do you want to please your sinful self – or do you want to be crucified to the world, and the world crucified to you. As you think about this, ask the Spirit of Truth to give you an understanding of the Truth from God's perspective.

Colossians 1:9-14 *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Romans 13:14 *...clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*

We are supposed to be saints – to be ‘sanctified’?

In the Bible, Christians are called saints – those who are sanctified. But what does this really mean?

To sanctify generally means **to be set apart from the world; to consecrate our lives to God; and to become holy as we allow God to change us to be like Jesus.**
Romans 8:28-29; Hebrew 12:10-14; 2 Corinthians 3:18 & 7:1; 1 Pet 1:15-16

Conclusion

Please give serious consideration to this subject. Read through the scriptures again, and then ask yourself – **do you want to be a friend of God, or a friend of the world?** The choice is yours, but the results of your choice will have eternal results!

There are times when it will take courage to make the right choice, but as God said to Joshua: *"Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. **Joshua 1:7***