

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

AUGUST 2020

“Not of the World”

John 17 records a prayer of Jesus that is primarily for His disciples. In **verses 15-17**, He said, “*I pray not that you would take them from the world, but that you would keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in your truth. Your Word is truth.*”

These words in the Lord's prayer demonstrate the principle that Christians are to be “in the world, but not of the world.”

Jesus' disciples have work to do in His kingdom, and that work cannot be accomplished by cutting oneself off from society. Instead, we must be “in the world.”

Part of being “in the world” is living amidst people who are in sin. This is not a new challenge for God's children in the time and place we live. God's followers have long been faced with the duty of living righteously in the midst of unrighteousness. Noah and Lot demonstrated this principle (**2 Pet. 2:5-9**).

Living righteously, like Noah and Lot did, is the key. While Christians are surrounded by evil in the society we live in, this does not excuse evil on *our* part. We must shine light on the darkness, instead of joining it. This is the idea behind the phrase “*not of the world.*”

John 17:17 explains how we can be “in the world, but not of the world.” The word “*sanctify*” used by Jesus refers to being set apart from evil for God's use. This sanctification is possible through God's Word of truth. To be “in the world, but not of the world,” we must let God's Word transform our thinking and behavior (**Rom. 12:2**), rather than allowing society to dictate our morals.

This transformation begins at the heart of life, with one's purpose and focus.

People of the world tend to focus on doing what fits one's *own* will for life, whether it be gaining possessions, prestige, popularity, position, power, or something else. Faithful Christians, by contrast, center their lives on pleasing God by following *His* will. Like the apostle Paul, we must make it our aim to please God (**2 Cor. 5:9**).

Because the faithful Christian is focused on submitting to *God's* will, he or she will develop a *character* that stands in stark contrast to the world.

While the world displays pride, envy, covetousness, ingratitude, and the like, we must be filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control, compassion, gratitude, virtue, and godliness, among other things (**Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:12-15; 2 Pet. 1:5-8**).

Being “in the world, but not of the world” is further evidenced by one's *speech*.

While the world is given to filthy language like cursing, the Christian speaks words that build up (**Col. 3:8**). While the world sees “little white lies” as acceptable, the faithful Christian always speaks the truth (**Col. 3:9**). While gossip is common in our society, it will not be common in *us* if we are what God wants us to be (**Rom. 1:29-30**).

Moreover, our *actions* will be much different from the world's if we are what God desires.

Consider, for instance, how faithful Christians conduct themselves in the marriage relationship. While the world says that husbands and wives can decide for themselves what roles to fill in the family, God teaches that He created the husband

and wife to perfectly complement one another by following *His* pattern for the home.

God commands, "*Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being Himself the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything*" (Eph. 5:22-24). To husbands, God commands, "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for it*" (verse 25).

God's pattern is for the husband to be the chief provider of the family (1 Tim. 5:8), while the wife's primary responsibility is in the home (Titus 2:4-5). While men and women have equal *importance* and *value*, this does not mean that God gives the same *roles* to men and women. This truth is unpopular in our society, but that does not make it *untrue*.

The same could be said with God's teaching concerning divorce and remarriage. While the world may teach that if one grows tired of his or her spouse, he or she can leave the marriage and look for another mate, *God* teaches something far different.

When Jesus was questioned about divorce in **Matthew 19:3**, He answered, "*Have ye not read, that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (verses 4-6). He went on to say, "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery*" (verse 9).

While on the subject of marriage, note that God designed marriage to be between a *man* and a *woman*. Homosexual conduct is condemned in **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**: "*Or don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Don't be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortionists, will inherit God's kingdom.* Concerning these sins, **verse 11** says, "*Such were some of you...*" This shows that homosexual conduct can (and must) be repented of.

This truth is, again, extremely unpopular in the society we live in, but that does not make it *untrue*. Those who are "in the world, but not of the world," do not base their idea of "truth" on what society promotes, but on the unchangeable and perfect Word of God.

Homosexual conduct is a form of *fornication*, as are *adultery* and *premarital sex*. While such behavior is commonplace in our society, faithful Christians *abhor* it. The Lord permits sexual contact in a God-approved marriage (**Heb. 13:4**), but never outside of it (**Gal. 5:19**). In fact, Jesus even condemns looking on a woman (one's not married to) to lust after her (**Matt. 5:28**).

God forbids "*lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties...*" (1 Pet. 4:3; NKJV). He also *commands* practices that are *uncommon*, like devotion to prayer (**Col. 4:2**), diligent study of His Word (1 Pet. 2:2), and sincere self-examination (2 Cor. 13:5).

It is evident that the lifestyle Jesus prayed for His disciples to live in **John 17** is far different from the lifestyle of the majority.

May we each choose to be among the "*few*" traveling the narrow path "*that leads to life*" (**Matt. 7:13-14**), and not be "of the world."

- Michael Hickox

The Sincere Milk of God's Word

www.thesinceremilkofgodsword.com

For questions, comments, or to request a Bible study, please contact MichaelDHickox@gmail.com