

In the World but Not of the World

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When I read the verses that follow they compel me to ask the question, "What should be my relationship with the world around me?" I still remember the time in our country when the impeachment hearings were in full swing and we were about to elect a controversial politician as our next governor. Midterm elections were wrapping up. As awoke the morning after I fully expected that the 'silent majority' would right the ship so to speak. The actual results threw me for a loop. For the first time in my memory I felt like an outsider looking in through the window of someone else's cabin. Others were assembled around the fireplace. I was on the porch peering through the window longing for the warmth of the fire.

What was I to do? I could escape to the mountains and set up an isolated community of 'true believers.' We could live our lives in accordance with our perception of values. Kind of like a Christian survivalist environment. On second thought, that wasn't a good choice. I could jump on the bandwagon of some group committed to a set of common values. But to do so I would have to compromise some of my values to band together with others to pursue some worthwhile end. That didn't seem to be a good choice either. So I decided to serve my calling by ministering to one person at a time. I wouldn't become a Christian isolationist. Nor would I join a movement that had some commonality with my calling. I would serve God by serving others in accordance with my wiring and calling.

I reminded myself that I was a citizen of a new kingdom not of this world. I held to a new set of beliefs and values representative of the new kingdom. I was a sojourner in a foreign land who was called to serve an unfriendly community by demonstrating God's love in concert with His redemptive purposes. I was called out of the world to go back into the world and help others find their way to the new kingdom, God's kingdom. I must not expect that those who benefit from my service in His name would appreciate it. Each act of service must be seen as an act of worship to the Lord regardless of the response of others.

So the verses that follow do not permit abandonment of the world. I must make sure that the world does not consume my allegiance in the midst of service. My function is to help people find their way to God's kingdom. So until He calls me home you will see me in the world but not of the world.

#1 Citizens of Heaven

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. **Philippians 3:20-21**

#2 Aliens and Strangers

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. **1 Peter 2:11-12**

#3 Nonconformity with the World

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will. **Romans 12:2**

#4 Lovers of the World

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**

#5 Friendship with the World

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. **James 4:6**

#6 Our Mandate

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope-the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. **Titus 2:11-14**