

Living in A World Where We Don't Belong

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Text: Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform 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.”

Introduction

Just as God calls us to follow him and to hear his voice so the world system calls after us for us to hear its voice follow it. We are left in the position of being in this world, having to live within the confines of this world, yet serve God who operates outside of the worlds confinement. It is that constant tension in our existence that leaves us feeling stranded like a stranger or foreigner in a country that is not ours.

Consequently, when people find themselves in that situation there is a natural tendency to, “blend in” and be like those of their new homeland. Sociologists call it “acculturation” which means they go through a “cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture.” They “assimilate” or are “absorbed into the cultural tradition of a population or group.” This is natural for this world, but Jesus Christ calls us to go against the natural mindset of the world and to not “blend in” with the world.

The question is how do we live in the world without being absorbed by it?

The Apostle Paul gives us the secret in Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

“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.”

The power of Christ living in us is the secret!

As we consider living in a world where we don't belong and how that we can do this in a way it Pleases an honors God we need to remember there to areas of focus we need to understand.

1. The reality of where we live
2. The reality of how we live

The tension and conflict will always remain until Christ returns and sets up His kingdom. However, the following *truths* will guide us in living in a world where we don't belong.

I. We Must Come to Terms with The Reality of Where We Live.

A. The world and its system reject the One we serve. This is the nature of the world.

I John 4:1-3 NIV “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”

B. The world system seeks to perpetuate itself. This is the motive of the world.

Charles Swindoll writes, “The world system is committed to at least four major objectives, which I can summarize in four words: fortune, fame, power, pleasure.

First and foremost: Fortune, money. The world system is driven by money; it feeds on materialism. Second: Fame. That is another word for popularity. Fame is the longing to be known, to be somebody in someone else's eyes. Third: Power. This is having influence, maintaining control over individuals or groups or companies or whatever. It is the desire to manipulate and maneuver others to do something for one's own benefit. Fourth: Pleasure. At its basic level, pleasure has to do with fulfilling one's sensual desires. It's the same mindset that's behind the slogan: "If it feels good, do it."

--Charles Swindoll, [Living Above the Level of Mediocrity](#), p.219.

C. This is the pattern of the world. It is the world's system that is at work.

When we read of the "world" in the New Testament, we are reading the Greek word *cosmos*. *Cosmos* most often refers to the inhabited earth and the people who live on the earth, which functions apart from God. Satan is the ruler of this "cosmos" ([John 12:31](#); [16:11](#); [1 John 5:19](#)). By the simple definition that the word *world* refers to a world system ruled by Satan, we can more readily appreciate Christ's claims that believers are no longer of the world—we are no longer ruled by sin, nor are we bound by the principles of the world. In addition, we are being changed into the image of Christ, causing our interest in the things of the world to become less and less as we mature in Christ. <https://www.gotquestions.org/in-but-not-of-world.html>

II. We Must Come to Terms with The Reality of How We Must Live.

A. We are focused on a destination beyond this world. This is our pursuit.

Speaking of the Old Testament saints who had lived on victoriously before us, the writer of Hebrews notes, in chapter 11:18-16, “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. ¹⁴People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had

opportunity to return. ¹⁶Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” NIV

B. We are guided by the Word of God. This is our protection.

John 17:14-19, “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”

C. We are led by the Holy Spirit. This sustains our power and motivation.

A. W. Tozer wrote, “One of the greatest hindrances to internal peace which the Christian encounters is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas, the sacred and the secular. As these areas are conceived to exist apart from each other and to be morally and spiritually incompatible, and as we are compelled by the necessities of living to be always crossing back and forth from the one to the other, our inner lives tend to break up so that we live a divided instead of a unified life.”

He goes on to say, “It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular; it is why he does it. The motive is everything. Let a man sanctify the Lord God in his heart and he can thereafter do no common act.” — A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine*

Conclusion

Someone wrote, “Being ‘in’ the world also means we can enjoy the things of the world, such as the beautiful creation God has given us, but we are not to immerse ourselves in what the world values, nor are we to chase after worldly pleasures. Pleasure is no longer our calling in life, as it once was, but rather the worship of God.” <https://www.gotquestions.org/in-but-not-of-world.html>

One way to remember the right mindset is to think of the scuba diver illustration. “A scuba diver lives in the water but breathes the air—he takes his environment with him. Believers are exhorted to be in the world but not of the world.”

In closing, here are a few specifics of how to live in a world where you don’t belong.

1. Set your mind on spiritual thoughts
2. Set spiritual boundaries to keep the carnal out
3. Set biblical expectations for yourself
4. Make choices based on God’s Word and His will
5. Make choices that will lift up Jesus Christ

Notes

Believers in Jesus Christ are simply in the world—physically present—but not of it, not part of its values ([John 17:14-15](#)). As believers, we should be set apart from the world. This is the meaning of being holy and living a holy, righteous life—to be set apart. We are not to engage in the sinful activities the world promotes, nor are we to retain the insipid, corrupt mind that the world creates. Rather, we are to conform ourselves, and our minds, to that of Jesus Christ ([Romans 12:1-2](#)). This is a daily activity and commitment.

Recommended Resource: [In, But Not Of: A Guide to Christian Ambition and the Desire to Influence the World](#) by Hugh Hewitt

<https://www.gotquestions.org/in-but-not-of-world.html>