

## Discerning Love

*Listening to the Apostle of Love*

By Steve Viars

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**Bible Text:** 1 John 2:15-29

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### **Faith Church**

5526 State Road 26 E

Lafayette, IN 47905

**Website:** <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>

**Online Sermons:** <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

John MacArthur, the long time pastor of Grace Community Church near Los Angeles likes to tell the story of one of his most embarrassing experiences early in his ministry. He was teaching a series on end time events so one Sunday he spoke on why the antichrist must be a Gentile. After the service, somebody from his church came and showed him a verse that apparently contradicted the position he had just taken. So, do you know what subject he spoke on the next Sunday? Why the antichrist must be a Jew. Sometimes that happens when you're studying through the word of God and you think you're on the right track and then you come across a verse or a cluster of verses or a concept in Scripture that either balances out what you were saying or in some cases like that one, makes you completely turn around and go the other way. So the antichrist must be a Gentile on one Sunday; the antichrist must be a Jew on the next.

Well, what would happen if that occurred here? As you know, all year long we've been talking about "Loving Our Neighbors." It's on the cover of our bulletin. It's guided the various sermon series we've had this year in all sorts of ways. We talked about loving our brothers and loving our neighbors and even loving our enemies, loving our world. What if there was a passage of Scripture that says we're not supposed to do that? Then what? Well, either we had it all wrong this year which would be a fairly significant faux pas to have to acknowledge this late in the calendar, huh? Or perhaps the Christian life is more nuanced than that or there are senses in which we're supposed to love the world and other senses in which we're not supposed to love the world? A couple of observations we could already make about that. If the Christian life at times is that nuanced where the Lord trusts us with healthy tensions that have to be worked out in real time, I think that ought to excite and invigorate us because it demonstrates that Christianity is a thinking person's religion. In fact, if you study your Bible, you're probably going to have some marks on your noggin where you have been scratching your head trying to figure out the balance the Lord wants us to achieve in many areas of daily living and I love the fact that that's true, don't you?

Secondly, I think we would say this: regarding this issue of whether we're supposed to love the world or whether we're supposed to not love the world, getting that right impacts decisions that every last one of us has to make every day. It's not just a theoretical discussion, it's real time. For example in entertainment. We're supposed to love the

world/not love the world. So what should we be involved in? What should we watch? What should we listen to? Should Christians work in entertainment fields or separate from them? In that area of life, are we supposed to love the world or are we supposed to not love the world? Where does "Dancing with the Stars" fit into that anyway? You've got to figure that out. You've got to figure that out. What about the arts? If God has gifted you in music or painting or in sculpture or in drama, whatever, should you try to influence culture? Should you be right in the middle of that? Should you in some sense love the world or should you step away? What about education? Should you send your children to a Christian school or to a public school or should you home school? You see, where does loving the world or not fit into that decision? Or if you're in college. Should you attend a public university? Should you attend a private university? Should you only attend a Christian university? What about teaching or working on a college or university staff? What about involvement in sports?

Do we love the world or do we not love the world? That might impact my afternoon. How about yours? And if there is some sort of nuanced balance here, what exactly does that look like in real time? Then, horror-of-horrors, is it even possible that the way the Lord might want you to stack that up in your life and family at this particular season in which you find yourself, is it possible that that might be different than his desire for another follower of Jesus Christ who might be sitting right next to you this morning? We've got a lot to talk about today.

Open your Bible, if you would, to 1 John 2. That's on page 185 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that this morning. This fall we're doing a series entitled "Learning from the Apostle of Love." That was one of the ways that the Apostle John was referred to in the early church, the apostle of love, and we're just going verse-by-verse through this book this fall. So far we've talked about proven love from the early verses in chapter 1 and then authentic love from the rest of that chapter and on into chapter 2. Then cautious love from chapter 2, verses 3 and 4. Last week we talked about brotherly love from 1 John 2:5-14. Well, this morning we're going to focus on the rest of chapter 2 and think about what essentially functions as the bookend to last week's discussion where John explains the issue of discerning love. Discerning love. Now, let me just warn you: this is another one of those passages where we're really going to have to concentrate and we've been seeing that all fall and I want to encourage you to carefully follow along as we read from the Bible. This is the word of God. Do you believe that? So this is worthy of our careful attention and also if you know Christ as Savior and Lord, you have the Holy Spirit resident inside of you and you could even pray silently right now and ask God to help you to understand his word. You could thank him for trusting you with nuance and also ask the Lord to help you apply specifically his word to the situations that you face each and every day. Important stuff.

1 John 2, beginning in verse 15 where John says, "Don't love the world." There it is. What does your bulletin say?

15 Do not love the world nor 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 lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. 18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us,

What? The antichrist went out from your church?

They went out from us but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

25 This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. 26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. 27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. 28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. 29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

So we're talking this morning about discerning love and let's wring out everything we can from that passage of Scripture and find three characteristics of love that achieve the appropriate balance in today's culture. You need that, don't you? A healthy dose of balance? I need that. All God's people need that. This church needs that balance. Balance. Balance. Well, how do you achieve the appropriate balance in this culture in which God has placed us? Well, discerning love first of all is properly related to the world. It's amazing how many brain-stretching remarks we have uncovered in this book already, isn't it? Like last week when John said that his command to love the brothers was an old commandment. He said, "You've heard this from the beginning." Then he said in the next verse, "On the other hand." That's what he said, "On the other hand, it's a new commandment." That's one of the things that I love about Bible study, it purposely challenges us to pause, to think carefully about what's being said. That's why you ought to have scratch marks on your noggin. How it applies to your particular situation.

Well, the obvious question here is: how come we're told in this passage to not love the world when you know John reports in his Gospel if you know anything about the Bible, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world." What's up with that? God loved the world and we can't? Well, I can think of at least three possible explanations for this. One is that the Bible contradicts itself. Maybe we just need to acknowledge that. The Bible just contradicts itself and here's an example. John forgot what he wrote back in his Gospel, there's one option. Or maybe God operates under double standards where he can love the world but we can't. Do as I say but not as I do. Is that it? Or, I'm getting fussed at even from Faith West. I'm getting fussed at right now. I can hear the sneers. Well, maybe, maybe the word "world" is used different ways in the Bible? Is that possibly true? For example, sometimes when you see the word "world" in the Bible, it's talking about the created world like this, and there are many examples like this, Psalm 97:4, "His lightnings lit up the world." What, the world of people? Is that talking about some poor guy who got struck by lightning and bam! He got lit up? No, his lightnings lit up the world, the created world. "The earth saw and trembled." Or Psalm 98:7, "Let the sea roar and all it contains, The world," again, defined by the previous phrase, "the sea and all it contains, The world and those who dwell in it." So clearly, passages like that are using the word "world" to describe the created world.

But at other times, it's not that, it's the world of people. Like this and, again, many examples in the Bible under this category. John 1:29, "he next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the,' lightning? Sea? No, of the world of people. But then you have other times where the word "world" is used to describe the world's philosophies that are in opposition to God's truth like Matthew 18:7, "Woe to the world." Woe to the sea? Woe to the lightning? Woe to the world of people that God loves? No. "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks!" the part of the world, the world's philosophies, system, way of interpreting life apart from God. "For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!" Again, obviously not speaking about the physical creation there, not speaking about the world of people whom God so loves. What's in focus here is the world's sinful philosophies that ignore or oppose God and his word.

So, crank that back into 1 John 2:15, "Love not the world." Well, the meaning becomes pretty clear, does it not? John is telling us not to fall in love with the world's way of interpreting life. Don't adopt its values as your own. We're to get our marching orders somewhere else. Now, while we're in the neighborhood "love not the world," we also need to think about the kind of love that John is warning us about. We understand the "world" part but what about the "love" part? If you were with us last week, you know that there were at least four different words in the Greek language for love, two of which are found in Scripture. One is eros or erotic love and sterga which is another kind of love, not used very frequently even in their culture. Those two are not found in the Bible. Not that there's anything wrong with them but they're not found in the Bible. The other two are found in Scripture, phileo, which means friendship love, fondness, closeness. A great quality for sure. Then the fourth one is agape which means sacrificial, giving love. Well, love not the world. Which one if you're just guessing, which of those four do you think

John uses in this text that we're studying this morning? The answer is the last one which in this particular discussion is very, very important.

I know I've said a lot. We've got to come up for air and put all this together so far. John's talking about the person who loves the world's ways and loves the world's values and loves the world's way of thinking about things, the world's way of doing things, the world's way of talking about things and that person loves it so much that he or she is willing to what? To sacrifice for it. They're willing to be devoted to it. They believe they'll find their joy and satisfaction in it. That's why they laugh at it. That's why they strive for it. That's why they lust after it. They love the world. Well, why is this so important according to John? And can we all pause and just say that there's a little bit of love for the world in all of us. You understand, this message is not for them. This message is for us. Have we all got that? We all have a bit of love for the world or maybe a lot of love for the world residing in our hearts and lives. Do we all understand that? Can I get an yeah? Very good.

So what is God saying here that can help us understand why it's so crucial to get a handle on this? Well, for one thing, think about the nature of this world's system. It's organized around, it's founded on, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. You may recognize that sinful triad from the Garden of Eden. There is nothing new under the sun and I hope right now you're asking yourself questions like this: are there any ways that I'm opening up my heart or my life or my family to greater affection for the world? Is there a willingness to sacrifice our relationship with God or our witness for Jesus Christ for any of that hot mess? Is the lust of the flesh really worth that? Is the lust of the eyes, is it worth that kind of sacrifice? Is the pride of life?

John also says this is so important because of the source. It's not from the Father but it's from the world. James said it like this, "You adulteresses." Any lack of clarity there? "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world," think about what you've got on your bulletin cover, by the way. "Friendship with the world is hostility toward God. Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." Do you realize that for some who will hear this message today, the honest answer to the question, "What have you been doing this week?" is, "Well, I've been cultivating greater hostility with God." You can say whatever you want but that's what it is. "I've been cultivating greater hostility with God by increasing my affection for and commitment to the world that hates and opposes him."

It's also important because of the destiny of each one of these approaches. I'm really glad John told us this, "The world is passing away." You might be on the wrong bus. "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." Now, we've got a lot on the table. Let's just push the pause button and we're going to get back to the rest of this text because I know you want to know who that antichrist is. There's more coming but just push the pause button right there. Let's talk about what does loving the world, what does that look like? What are we being warned against and how might that be true of you? How might that be true of me? Here's a random example although honestly the list is practically endless. Honestly. Let's just pick

one. The issue of materialism. Our world wants you to believe that material things will bring joy and satisfaction to your heart and it's not that money, it's not that material things are inherently wrong but if you cultivate your heart to love them and to worship them, you will find yourself sacrificing and that's the key issue, sacrificing all sorts of things in order to get more stuff. That's right. You're working more than you should or you have to. You're putting needless things on credit cards and heaping up outrageous amounts of debt. Then you wake up one day and realize that you've loved and sacrificed to a false god and your kids are grown and they don't love Jesus because you didn't really love him. You've got all this junk that couldn't possibly replace the joy that comes from authentic relationships with people that just take time to cultivate. The stuff has to be constantly maintained and it sucks all the joy and resources and margin out of life. The message of the Scripture is that loving the world is a dead end street because the world is passing away with all its junk, actually all its lusts.

You might say, "You know, I'm not sure that I like a pastor getting on me about that." Well, Paul instructed young Timothy in one of the pastoral epistles to do exactly what I just did and here's what he said in 1 Timothy 6, "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either." Which is why you've never seen a U-Haul behind a hearse. "If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content." Now hear this, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." And a question that every one of us would be wise to consider is: does my checkbook reveal a love for God and a balanced life when it comes to material things or does it just reveal a love for the world? Because I've bought into the world's idea of what constitutes joy and success?

Now, let's broaden this concept out. What about what's been written on your bulletin cover all year? By the way, I should tell you that we order those bulletins for an entire year so we've got months worth left. Loving our neighbors. What about this whole issue? We're really talking about balance here. What are the extremes? Love the world/love not the world. What are the extremes of this discussion? What are the ditches? What are the buoys? Here's the answer: we want to find ways to love the world of people without falling into the trap of loving the world's philosophies. Friends, that requires the wisdom of Solomon, does it not? How do you have a balanced approach on this issue?

Well, let's work one through the grid. Do you want to? Let's just work one through the grid together and see how we do and let's pick a hard one. Do you want to? Absolutely, I do. Let's talk about educational choices and I realize this is a passion-filled topic but where's the balance? Well, part of the answer is understanding that there's no perfect educational choice. I realize it will bother some people to hear me say that which is exactly why I said it. Some of you may need to be shepherded here a little bit because people can get this one out of kilter in a way that is divisive in a church. Now, for sake of time, let me put Christian schools and home schools together for this conceptualization although I understand there are plenty of differences but what is the strength of Christian

education and Christian home schooling? The answer is in trying to instill a love for Christ in and through every aspect of the curriculum. So it's not just a matter of, "Well, they pray at the beginning of the school day," or "They have a Bible class somewhere in the curriculum." That would be a gross misunderstanding of what it means to have a Christian philosophy of education. We're trying to help young people develop a love for Jesus in and through every subject, in and through every extracurricular activity where they eventually want to choose to love their God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind, with all their strength so they won't love the world's philosophies.

What's the possible danger? It's isolation from the world of people to the point that they're not learning how to love and interact with those around them who believe quite differently than they do so maybe they don't love the world's philosophies but they also don't tangibly love the world's people and therefore are out of balance. So why are Christian school and home school parents are looking for controlled opportunities for their students to do just that? That's why on purpose our Christian school plays public schools. We do that on purpose. Why? Because yes, we want our curriculum to help our students not love the world's philosophies but instead to love Christ but we also want them to be comfortable around people who may believe differently than them and they can actually interact with the world of people in a loving way. That's the balance.

What about parents and students who choose public education? Plow it the other way. What about students and parents who choose public education? Well, it's much easier for them maybe to love the world of people because there are so many natural opportunities to do so but what's the danger? If you say, "Well, I don't think there is a danger." Let me love you enough as a pastor to tell you that you are asleep at the switch. If you think there's no danger there, you're not thinking very carefully in my opinion. The danger is the possibility of being immersed in the world's philosophies and inadvertently falling in love with them which is why there has to be massive doses of knowledge about and practical love for Christ. If you don't believe that, and if you are not taking specific steps every day as a parent in that environment in order to make that happen, I would gently question whether you truly possess discerning love. Discerning love.

Broaden it out even more. Think about a typical week for you. I hope you're thinking, okay, driving in between these buoys. I'm supposed to love the world of people but I'm not supposed to love the world's philosophies so how do I achieve in the world but not of it? Well, think about a typical week for you and if you're going to be out of balance and I like Warren Weirsbe who said, "You know, balance is that elusive point I pass on the way to my next extreme." So if you're going to be out of balance, how and where and toward what ditch is that likely to occur? And what corrections need to be made in your life in order to develop biblical balance on this issue of our relationship to the world?

Now, let's bring the next part of the passage into this discussion. John also tells us this that discerning love understands the spiritual nature of, we're in a battle. On this point and it's clear exegetically in this text if we'll let the Bible do its work. I know there's another exegetical issue here. I know that. It's the antichrist. I read "antichrist" several times in that text and what's that? Well, the word "antichrist," that phrase is actually used different

ways in the Bible. Sometimes it's speaking about the literal person who will live during the tribulation period and oppose Christ and his followers. That is why he would be called the antichrist. He's also known in the Bible as the beast; as the one who will require people to wear the number 666 signifying their allegiance to him before buying and selling. You can read about that in Revelation 13 if you want to learn more. At other times, when the Bible uses the phrase "antichrist," it's talking about false teachers who are denying some facet of the doctrine of Christ. So when a person denies that Jesus is the Son of God or denies that salvation is available in and through his shed blood, that person is an antichrist. They are opposing. They are against Christ. You can't dress it up and make it any prettier than that. That is what it is.

At other times, when you see that phrase "antichrist," it's speaking of demonic forces behind that kind of antichrist teaching and John is actually going to use the term later in this book in that exact way. But for our verses this morning in chapter 2, John is using it with that second meaning to try to help us understand the significance of this issue. What he said was that there were actually people who used to be part of his church or used to be part of that cluster of churches that he was shepherding, who were now false teachers. Think about that. False teachers. That's why the Apostle Paul told the Ephesians elders, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood." We're not playing tiddlywinks here, folks. We're talking about the entity that Jesus shed his blood for. Then he said this, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you." Among who? Us? "Not sparing the flock and," here it is, "from among your own selves men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them."

What's the core issue? The core issue is what they do with the Son of God. "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father." What does that mean? What does that mean for this church? The answer is: we want to love our community, don't we? What's on the bulletin is right. We want to love our community. We want to impact our world in as many ways as possible. We can never compromise any aspect of our belief in Christ in order to do community ministry. The Gospel has to be at the heart of everything we do, always. Do you realize that our church could skyrocket in popularity in this town if we were willing to compromise certain biblical truths regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ? For example, I bet you said, "I hope he gives some examples." Well, I think I will. For example, the belief that Jesus created the world. You say, "Well, I'm not sure I believe that." Welcome to your heading down the path of an antichrist because John could not have been any clearer on that point in places like John 1:3, "All things were made through him." That's it. Through Jesus, "without him nothing was made that was made." As soon as you choose to believe that or affirm that or proclaim that, you run the risk of being mocked and ostracized in the community, the same world of people that you're trying to love. That's the challenge. You see the buoys that have to remain in place? You see, the philosophy of the world is worship popularity, worship success, worship acceptance. You have to love that. You have to sacrifice whatever is necessary in order to get that so stop proclaiming, stop affirming, stop believing that Jesus created the world.



This isn't just a temptation for individuals, it's a temptation for churches. So you have places that have "church" on their sign. You have churches denying the virgin birth of Christ. That's antichrist. You can dress it up anyway you want but that's what that is. Denying that Jesus actually did miracles as recorded in Scripture. That is antichrist. Denying the centrality of the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross. That's antichrist. Denying his bodily resurrection. That's antichrist. Denying the reliability of his word. Denying the exclusivity of his work. Denying the truthfulness of what he said about the sanctity of life. Denying what he said about the nature of marriage. That is antichrist. Friends, that's what theological liberalism is. In some congregations and some churches leaders believe that in this secular culture in which we live, you have to compromise those aspects of the person and work of Christ in order to be accepted today. We would say, "No, that's loving the world." We could never be ashamed of the Gospel. By the way, I realize I'll probably get some emails, "Well, you're just arrogant." You keep those cards and emails coming, would you? Don't confuse arrogance with confidence because this text actually concludes with that and you're going to need confidence in the person and work of Christ if you're going to make it in this world. I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

The irony is and you saw this illustrated in the front page of our paper last Sunday. Theological liberalism is dying and some people aren't going to like the fact that I say this either but if they're not going to repent and change, I'm more than happy to attend that funeral. Those are the people whose ancestors went to Europe for seminary and came back and announced that God is dead but we're going to have some kind of a "church," we're going to have some kind of a religion without the principles of Scripture. God is dead. Welcome to they were wrong. The world, my friends, is passing away and if you are going to jettison core biblical truth about the person and work of Jesus Christ in order to be accepted by the people around you, you are on the wrong bus and if I were you, I would take both of my hands and I would grab that cable, I'd stop that bus and I'd get off of it as fast possible.

Now, what's the other side of that argument? Just in case you were tapping your feet just a little bit too much on that one. What's the other side of that argument? That is those who are so concerned to protect and preserve their theological convictions that they don't interact with their communities and so there's very little impact. I would suggest to you that that is equally antichrist. That's equally antichrist because Jesus' mission to a lost and dying world is not being accomplished. So we should be regularly asking the Lord to help us not love the world's philosophies but to simultaneously love the world of people. So what does that look like in real time?

Well, think about the strategy we're trying to follow with our Community Development Corporation. Our city leaders came to us. We didn't approach them. They came to us and asked us to start a Community Development Corporation where we would buy beautiful properties like this one on Seventh Street, pick out a home that is in really tough shape in the neighborhood and buy it and then renovate it and then make it available for low or

moderate income buyers. So we took that hot mess and by God's grace and a ton of great volunteers and others supervising this project, turned that house into that. Well, we've also been able to have all sorts of opportunities to teach our Jobs for Life class. Our Faith in Finances class. Wide open door to bring the Lord into the conversation. We have not had to compromise our core values in order to be involved in that effort at all. Right around the corner from that house, looking pretty good now by the way, right around the corner from that house is a community garden that we've been able to participate in along with some other churches. Recently, a woman from another church met someone at that community garden and had the opportunity to lead that person to Christ. That's what we're talking about. By the way, if someone from our church or another church meets the income requirements to purchase that house, it would be a great value financially. What has been invested in that house and through the funding, what it is going to be sold for, it's an incredible value. What we're looking for is and we're not going to be selective, anybody can buy that house who meets the requirements but I'm hoping that followers of Jesus Christ in some cases will want to move into a place like that in order to do incarnational urban ministry. We're also looking at ways that we can get some of our seminary students into areas like that so that they can, as part of their seminary training, be involved in incarnational urban ministries. That's the balance that we're talking about here. Loving the world of people including Seventh Street. Loving the world of people without adopting the world's philosophies.

Now, if you say, "You know, Pastor Viars, I'm trying to think about how this is going to work its way out in my job this week. Or how is it going to work its way out with my friendships in my neighborhood. I mean, in the world but not of it. Loving the world but not loving the world. How is it going to work itself out?" You might even say, "This is going to be really challenging." Well, that's why I'm glad the text ends the way it does with an emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. By the way, if you don't know Christ as Savior and Lord, you wouldn't have his Spirit resident inside of you yet and we would encourage you to place your faith and trust in him today. That's one of the benefits. You can then have discerning love which is abiding confidently in his truth. Be encouraged because of the power of the one who lives within you. John says, "As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. Obviously that doesn't mean that you don't need any teachers in any way in your life. That would contradict the need for the book of 1 John. It would contradict what the Scripture says about the importance of teaching and it would render me without a job. So we're going to balance Scripture with Scripture.

But the point here is: in a given situation where you're trying to navigate between these buoys. If you have the Holy Spirit of God inside of you in that particular situation, your heart is right, your affections are directed toward the Lord, the Holy Spirit will help you when you need it. That's why you see so many examples of men and women from this church who are in the world but not of it. They are making a difference in their culture because they choose to be different by living for Christ. For example, we have people in this church family who are accomplished scientists but they have not had to compromise

their beliefs to get to where they are. In fact, it was their beliefs that motivated them to go into science to look for additional ways where God could be glorified. Now they have opportunities to speak for Christ because of the platform they have been given in this world because of their expertise. And the Holy Spirit helps them seize those opportunities wisely and well. We have people in our church who are very talented in sports. Again, they weren't doing it for vainglory. They were using their gifts in an interest to bring glory to God. They haven't had to compromise anything but now look at the platform to show love to the world of people. We could say the same thing about people in various businesses. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." So don't be intimidated by this calling, that's the point. Be challenged and confident. Develop the joy and the discipline of abiding in him. "Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."

A great example of what we're talking about in this message today was this man. He passed away this past week. You may recognize him. That is Truett Cathy. He was born in Georgia March 14, 1921. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He started Chick-fil-A. At the time of his death, there were more than 1,800 Chick-fil-A restaurants in 40 states and Washington DC. Remarkably, Truett Cathy led Chick-fil-A on an unparalleled record of 47 consecutive years of annual sales increases. You can live for Christ and have an impact in this world. Truett Cathy married Jeanette McNeil in 1948, three children, 19 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren. A member of First Baptist Church in Jonesboro Georgia. Taught Sunday school there for over 50 years. Truett Cathy died of natural causes at the age of 93. Truett Cathy said in his book "It's Easier to Succeed than Fail," that the Bible is his guidebook for life. In the family blog this week they wrote, "Dad built his life and business based on hard work, humility and biblical principles." In every website that features Truett Cathy, this verse is always there, Proverbs 22:1, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches and loving favor rather than silver or gold." That's why Chick-fil-A is not open on Sundays because they want to give their employees time to go to church and to spend time with their families. Their company's corporate purpose is posted everywhere, "To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us, to have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A." Truett Cathy said, "Nearly every moment of every day we have the opportunity to give something to someone else: our time, our love, our resources." He said, "I've always found more joy in giving when I did not expect anything in return."

One of our Presidents commented on Truett Cathy. He said, "In every facet of his life Truett Cathy has exemplified the finest aspects of his Christian faith and by his example he has been a blessing to countless people. I hope that people will learn from him the virtues that have brought him remarkable success in life. He has dedicated himself to service in the broadest sense following Christian principles not only in his personal life but in his relations with his customers and his employees." That's from President Jimmy Carter.

I hope that every last one of us will ask the Lord, "Lord, help me to be balanced. Help me to not love the world's philosophies but help me to love you and therefore love the world of people in a way that is different, in a way that is remarkable, in a way that helps me accomplish your purposes."

Would you stand for prayer with me?

*Father in heaven, Lord, this is a challenge and I pray that you would help us to embrace this challenge and I pray that you would help us to accomplish it. Help us to think this afternoon, this week, about our relationship to the world of people and our relationship to the world's philosophies. Help us to love the first but to never love the second. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*