

Lesson 162 - Christian relationship with the world

This lesson addresses the proper relationship with the world. It looks at the expectations of God upon the Christian as well as being part of the movement to seek and save the lost.

1. What are we considered if we are friends of the world? **James 4:4**

EGW: Christ and the world are not in partnership. The apostle says, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Conformity to the world will never be the means of converting the world to Christ. Christians must be entirely consecrated to God, if the church is to be efficient in its influence for good upon unbelievers. The slightest diversion from Christ is so much influence, power, and efficiency given to the enemy. The church was called into existence to counteract the influence of Satan; but as member after member of the church allows his ability and power to be diverted, one in one line and another in another line, connections are formed with the world, and the enemy of all righteousness triumphs. Almost imperceptibly the world's standard, the world's maxims and customs, are introduced into the church; and as these find room, the objectionable maxims and customs more boldly appear, and leaven the influence of the church; and Satan's devices are successful, just as he has designed they should be. In this way there is brought into the church a mixed company, a divided service. Many profess to love God, yet they are serving mammon, and bowing at worldly shrines. The world is brought into the church, but not through repentance, contrition, and conversion, but because church-members become wedded to the world; and this unholy union is the explanation of the weakness and inefficiency of the church. It is made manifest when church-members follow the maxims of the world, that spiritual discernment is gone. Where this union is preserved, contention, criticism, faultfinding, strife, and decided hatred one of another comes in among those who should be servants of Jesus Christ. {RH, August 23, 1892 par. 2}

2. What spirit is ruling this world, especially behind the scenes? **1 John 4:3**

EGW: Spiritualism is a dangerous phase of infidelity, and we should not go into the assemblies of Spiritualists prompted by motives of curiosity. In so doing we are placing ourselves on Satan's ground, and cannot expect help from God unless he has a work for us to do to speak some message to those who are ignorant and deceived, and immediately leave the assembly. "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." The erroneous doctrine that the soul is immortal is almost universally received by the world, and the belief that the dead go

immediately to heaven gives Spiritualism a deep hold upon the people. Believing this doctrine men have nothing with which to shield themselves from the errors of Spiritualism. Through evil spirits they receive communications, and accept them as messages from their lost loved ones. Satan and his agents personate their dead friends, and thus impart to them Satanic delusions. But God has given us a rule whereby to test what is truth. The prophet says: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." "He that is of God heareth God's word." "We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." {ST, September 3, 1894 par. 6}

3. Who is ultimately directing the ways of the world? **Revelation 12:9**

EGW: (no comment)

4. What are the ways of the world ultimately leading to? **Revelation 13:3**

EGW: Satan is busily laying his plans for the last mighty conflict, when all will take sides. After the gospel has been proclaimed in the world for nearly two thousand years, Satan still presents to men and women the same scene that he presented to Christ. In a wonderful manner he causes the kingdoms of the world in their glory to pass before them. These he promises to all who will fall down and worship him. Thus he seeks to bring men under his dominion. {6T 14.2}

Satan is working to the utmost to make himself as God and to destroy all who oppose his power. And today the world is bowing before him. His power is received as the power of God. The prophecy of the Revelation is being fulfilled, that "all the world wondered after the beast." Revelation 13:3. {6T 14.3}

Men in their blindness boast of wonderful progress and enlightenment; but to the eye of

Omniscience are revealed the inward guilt and depravity. The heavenly watchers see the earth filled with violence and crime. Wealth is obtained by every species of robbery, not robbery of men only, but of God. Men are using His means to gratify their selfishness. Everything they can grasp is made to minister to their greed. Avarice and sensuality prevail. Men cherish the attributes of the first great deceiver. They have accepted him as God, and have become imbued with his spirit. {6T 14.4}

5. What does he try to do? **2 Corinthians 4:4**

EGW: Satan is continually seeking to overcome the people of God by breaking down the barriers which separate them from the world. Ancient Israel were enticed into sin when they ventured into forbidden association with the heathen. In a similar manner are modern Israel led astray. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." [2 Corinthians 4:4.] All who are not decided followers of Christ are servants of Satan. In the unregenerate heart there is love of sin, and a disposition to cherish and excuse it. In the renewed heart there is hatred of sin, and determined resistance against it. When Christians choose the society of the ungodly and unbelieving, they expose themselves to temptation. Satan conceals himself from view, and stealthily draws his deceptive covering over their eyes. They cannot see that such company is calculated to do them harm; and while all the time assimilating to the world in character, words, and actions, they are becoming more and more blinded. {GC88 508.2}

Conformity to worldly customs converts the church to the world; it never converts the world to Christ. Familiarity with sin will inevitably cause it to appear less repulsive. He who chooses to associate with the servants of Satan, will soon cease to fear their master. When in the way of duty we are brought into trial, as was Daniel in the king's court, we may be sure that God will protect us; but if we place ourselves under temptation, we shall fall sooner or later. {GC88 509.1}

6. What is in the world that leads to confusion? **2 John 1:7**

EGW: Writing to a helper in the gospel work, a woman of good repute and wide influence, he said: "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your

house, neither bid him Godspeed: for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds."
{AA 554.2}

We are authorized to hold in the same estimation as did the beloved disciple those who claim to abide in Christ while living in transgression of God's law. There exist in these last days evils similar to those that threatened the prosperity of the early church; and the teachings of the apostle John on these points should be carefully heeded. "You must have charity," is the cry heard everywhere, especially from those who profess sanctification. But true charity is too pure to cover an unconfessed sin. While we are to love the souls for whom Christ died, we are to make no compromise with evil. We are not to unite with the rebellious and call this charity. God requires His people in this age of the world to stand for the right as unflinchingly as did John in opposition to soul-destroying errors. {AA 554.3}

7. What is the world considered being in? **Ephesians 6:12**

EGW: By earnest prayer and dependence upon God, Solomon obtained the wisdom which excited the wonder and admiration of the world. But when he turned from the Source of his strength, and went forward relying upon himself, he fell a prey to temptation. Then the marvelous powers bestowed on this wisest of kings only rendered him a more effective agent of the adversary of souls.
{GC 509.3}

While Satan is constantly seeking to blind their minds to the fact, let Christians never forget that they "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places." Ephesians 6:12, margin. The inspired warning is sounding down the centuries to our time: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Ephesians 6:11. {GC 510.1}

From the days of Adam to our own time, our great enemy has been exercising his power to oppress and destroy. He is now preparing for his last campaign against the church. All who seek to follow Jesus will be brought into conflict with this relentless foe. The more nearly the Christian imitates the divine Pattern, the more surely will he make himself a mark for the attacks of Satan. All who are actively engaged in the cause of God, seeking to unveil the deceptions of the evil one and to present Christ before the people, will be able to join in the testimony of Paul, in which he speaks of serving the Lord with all humility of mind, with many tears and temptations. {GC 510.2}

8. In the eyes of God, what is the whole world considered being in? **1 John 5:19**

EGW: We are sojourners here, pilgrims and strangers on the earth; but we are fitting up for a better country, even a heavenly. We must now learn the language of that country, and prepare for the life that runs parallel with the life of God. Our life in this world is but a vapor, that vanisheth away. Then shall we devote all our powers to securing the treasures of earth for this little, short life-time, or shall we apply all our abilities in such a way that we may gain the future, immortal life? Christ says, "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." {ST, August 4, 1890 par. 8}

Everyone that shall see the King in his beauty, must be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. We now have an opportunity to form characters for the future life, and what a rich blessing we shall receive if we obtain the recompense of the reward! There is no comfort in sin. Men are made miserable because they refuse to obey the commandments of God. The whole world lieth in wickedness, but Christ came to remove the woe that comes as a consequence of sin. He came to our world to show us how to live a pure, holy life, and I have purposed in my heart that he shall not have lived and died in vain for me. I want to say with the apostle: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." I want to leave a bright track heavenward for all that may be attracted in the way of life. {ST, August 4, 1890 par. 9}

9. What are we expected to do towards the world? **1 John 5:5**

EGW: When a man is earnestly engaged day by day in overcoming the defects in his character, he is cherishing Christ in his soul-temple; the light of Christ is in him. Under the bright beams of the light of Christ's countenance his entire being becomes elevated and ennobled. He has the peace of heaven in his soul. Many give loose rein to passion, avarice, selfishness, and deception, and all the time excuse themselves and lay the blame on the circumstances which brought around the trial to themselves. This has been your case. God permitted your surroundings to exist to develop character. But you could have made your surroundings; for by resisting or enduring temptation, circumstances are controlled by the might of the will in the name of Jesus. This is overcoming as Christ overcame. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." {4T 346.1}

10. What do we need to exercise to accomplish that? **1 John 5:4 (Answer is at the end of the verse)**

EGW: The righteous have ever obtained help from above. How often have the enemies of God united their strength and wisdom to destroy the character and influence of a few simple persons who trusted in God. But because the Lord was for them, none could prevail against them. . . . Let them be separated from their idols and from the world, and the world will not separate them from God. Christ is our present, all-sufficient Saviour. In Him all fullness dwells. It is the privilege of Christians to know indeed that Christ is in them of a truth. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." All things are possible to him that believeth; and whatsoever things we desire when we pray, if we believe that we receive them we shall have them. This faith will penetrate the darkest cloud and bring rays of light and hope to the drooping, desponding soul. It is the absence of this faith and trust which brings perplexity, distressing fears, and surmisings of evil. God will do great things for His people when they put their entire trust in Him. {ML 9.3}

11. What is lacking in a person who claims to be a Christian but is caught up in the ways of the world?

1 John 2:15

EGW: The love of the world separates from God. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." It is impossible for any to discern the truth while the world has their affections. The world comes between them and God, beclouding the vision and benumbing the sensibilities to such a degree that it is impossible for them to discern sacred things. God calls upon such: "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." Those who have stained their hands with the pollution of the world are required to cleanse themselves from its stains. Those who think they can serve the world and yet love God are double-minded. But they cannot serve God and mammon. They are men of two minds, loving the world and losing all sense of their obligation to God, and yet professing to be Christ's followers. They are neither the one thing nor the other. They will lose both worlds unless they cleanse their hands and purify their hearts through obedience to the pure principles of truth. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world." "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." {1T 530.3}

12. What are the three main things are promoted in music, sports, entertainment, and even in public education, among other things? **1 John 2:16**

EGW: Cares, riches, pleasures, all are used by Satan in playing the game of life for the human soul. The warning is given, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:15, 16. He who reads the hearts of men as an open book says, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life." Luke 21:34. And the apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit writes, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:9, 10. {COL 55.2}

13. What are all these things of the world considered? **2 Peter 2:20, 2 Peter 1:4**

EGW: We have great victories to gain, and a heaven to lose if we do not gain them. The carnal heart must be crucified; for its tendency is to moral corruption, and the end thereof is death. Nothing but the life-giving influences of the gospel can help the soul. Pray that the mighty energies of the Holy Spirit, with all their quickening, recuperative, and transforming power, may fall like an electric shock on the palsy-stricken soul, causing every nerve to thrill with new life, restoring the whole man from his dead, earthly, sensual state to spiritual soundness. You will thus become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; and in your souls will be reflected the image of Him by whose stripes you are healed. {AG 312.5}

14. What are we not to become in this world? **1 Corinthians 3:18**

EGW: Those who boast of wisdom beyond the teaching of the word of God, need to drink deeper of the fountain of knowledge, that they may learn their real ignorance. There is a boasted wisdom of men, that is foolishness in the sight of God. Let no man deceive himself. "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Those who have only this wisdom, need to become fools in their own estimation. The greatest ignorance that now curses the human race, is in regard to the binding claims of the law of God; and this ignorance is the result of neglecting the study of the word of God. It is Satan's determined plan to so engage and

absorb the mind, that God's great guide book shall not be the Book of books, and that the sinner may not be led from the path of transgression to the path of obedience. {RH, August 21, 1888 par. 4}

15. Therefore, what ought a Christian do regarding the world? **James 1:27 (Answer at the end of the verse)**

EGW: "And to keep himself unspotted from the world." The religion of Christ demands that we be distinct from the world, which has trampled the law of God underfoot. Said Christ: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Do you show that you love God supremely by rendering obedience to his commandments? If not, you are not "unspotted from the world." Only the obedient will is accepted by God; and by constant reliance upon his power, we may gain strength to do his commandments. {RH, May 4, 1897 par. 4}

16. What are we in if we do not keep ourselves? **Galatians 4:3**

EGW: (no comment)

17. What did Jesus come to do for us? **John 8:32-34**

EGW: When we are truly Christ's, our hearts will be full of meekness, gentleness, and kindness, because Jesus has forgiven our sins. As obedient children we shall receive and cherish the precepts he has given, and shall attend to the ordinances he has instituted. We shall be seeking constantly to obtain a knowledge of him. His example will be our rule of life. Those who are Christ's disciples will take the work where he left it, and carry it forward in his name. They will copy the words, the spirit, the practices, of none but him. Their eye is upon the Captain of their salvation. His will is their law. And as they advance, they catch more and clearer views of his countenance, of his character, of his glory. They do not cling to self, but hold fast his word, which is spirit and life. "If ye continue in my

word, then ye are my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They reduce their knowledge of his will to practice. They hear and do the things that Jesus teaches. {RH, August 4, 1891 par. 11}

18. How did Jesus do that for us? **Galatians 1:3-4**

EGW: The Galatians were given up to the worship of idols, but as the apostles preached to them, they rejoiced in the message that promised freedom from the thralldom of sin. Paul and his fellow-workers proclaimed the doctrine of righteousness by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. They presented Christ as the One who, seeing the helpless condition of the fallen race, came to redeem men and women by living a life of obedience to God's law, and by paying the penalty of disobedience. And in the light of the cross, many who had never before known of the true God, began to comprehend the greatness of the Father's love. Thus the Galatians were taught the fundamental truths concerning "God the Father," and "our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." "By the hearing of faith," they received the Spirit of God, and became "the children of God by faith in Christ." {SD 344.2}

19. What eventually will happen to the world and all its ways making it senseless to get caught up in these things? **1 John 2:17, 1 Corinthians 7:31**

EGW: The love of the world has a terrible hold upon the people whom the Lord has commanded to watch and pray always, lest coming suddenly He find them sleeping. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." {2T 196.1}

I have been shown that God's people who profess to believe present truth are not in a waiting, watching position. They are increasing in riches and are laying up their treasures upon the earth. They are becoming rich in worldly things, but not rich toward God. They do not believe in the shortness of time; they do not believe that the end of all things is at hand, that Christ is at the door. They may profess much faith; but they deceive their own souls, for they will act out all the faith that they really possess. Their works show the character of their faith and testify to those around them that the coming of Christ is not to be in this generation. According to their faith will be their works.

Their preparations are being made to remain in this world. They are adding house to house, and land to land, and are citizens of this world. {2T 196.2}

20. How shall we live in this world? **Titus 2:12 [3 answers]**

EGW: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." {RH, August 29, 1912 par. 16}

21. What should we appreciate of Jesus that was made available before the worldly ways were set in?
2 Timothy 1:9

EGW: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." As our heavenly Father is perfect in his sphere, so also those for whom Christ died are to be perfect in their sphere. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We are to believe in salvation through Christ, and make manifest that faith in our life, not by our own strength, but by trusting in the strength and efficiency of Christ. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." {ST, January 3, 1895 par. 1}

22. What are we to appear as in the world? **Philippians 2:15, Matthew 5:14**

EGW: God says to his messengers and to every individual member of his church, "Ye are the light of the world." Then he uses a symbol to show their true position. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Thus the injunction is written that Christ's followers are bound to make him manifest to the world. "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Paul speaks of the darkness of this earth as pervading and overshadowing all human society. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." "He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." Those who follow Jesus will no more walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. The church who walk in the light are radiant with the truth from God's Word. They are the mediums of heavenly illumination to the world, dispelling the moral darkness. The position of the church is to be the light of the world. Should any be pleased to enjoy the light of truth themselves, and feel indifferent in regard to the welfare of their neighbours, close by their own doors, and make no special effort to reveal to them the light of truth, then they are not obeying the injunctions of the Word of God; their light is hid under a bushel. {PrT, November 4, 1886 par. 3}

23. What do we have to do to the mind so as not to be conformed to the world? **Romans 12:2**

EGW: Life is too short, the hours of probation too precious, for us to make a mistake in our religious life. Earnest men and women, filled with courage and devotion, are needed in the Master's service. The call comes to us, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." As we obey this command, the power of the Holy Spirit will come upon mind and body, bringing us into conformity to the will of Christ, and renewing us in His likeness. The hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong will die, and Christ will be formed within, the hope of glory. It will be seen that we are indeed followers of Christ. {ST, June 21, 1905 par. 5}

24. What did Jesus pray for us since we are not taken out of the world? **John 17:15**

EGW: Suppose we catch the spirit that breathed in this prayer that ascended to heaven. Christ here shows what methods and force He used to keep His disciples from worldly practices, maxims, and dispositions: "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world." Their actions, their words, their spirit, are not in harmony with the world, "even as I am

not of the world." And the Saviour adds, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." The children and youth should receive an education in the line that Christ has here indicated, that they may be separate from the world. {FE 431.3}

25. The things of the world are meant to attract us in one way or another, but what should our attitude be towards those things? **John 14:30**

EGW: "The prince of this world cometh," saith Jesus, "and hath nothing in Me." There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan's sophistry. He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character. {CD 152.4}