

STUDIES IN 1 JOHN

STUDY NUMBER FOUR: Fellowship is Escalated by Growth

1 John 2:12-17

Key Verse 2:15: "Stop loving the world, neither the things which are in the world. If a man keeps on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

TEXT:

v.12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven through His name.

v.13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the one who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have conquered the evil one.

v.14 I write to you, young children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have come to know the one who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God is abiding in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

v.15 Stop loving the world, neither the things which are in the world. If a man keeps on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

v.16 Because everything which is in the world, the passionate desire of the flesh, and the passionate desire of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

v.17 And the world is passing away, and its passionate desire; but the one who is doing the will of God is abiding forever.

INTRODUCTION:

Grizzard Attributes Recovery to Miracle Drug--Prayer
by Lewis Grizzard

All those learned men and women of medicine said basically the same thing to me once I had emerged from wherever God puts your mind while people are trying to save your life in a hospital.

They said it was a miracle I had lived from what were the most complicated of complications that arose during what was supposed to have been a fairly routine heart valve replacement surgery at Emory hospital in Atlanta seven weeks ago.

All I know is what I read in the papers later and what friends and these medical people told me. But it does seem that I spent days sticking one foot in and out of death's door.

Doctors and nurses said to me after the critical time had passed, "We exhausted all medical possibilities. We did everything we knew to do for you, and it probably wouldn't have been enough. What saved you was prayer."

Can you believe that? Great men and women of science saying such a thing in 1993?

Prayer?

Surely not. It had to be some new miracle drug developed by researchers at Harvard. It had to be one of those cardiac pumps they said they attached to my heart when it just up and decided not to beat anymore.

No, they said. It was prayer.

One doctor explained, "Everywhere I went during your worse time, I ran into people who said they were praying for you. One woman said, "I don't agree with anything he writes, but I'm still praying for him."

A friend said, "Everybody I saw said they were praying for you. A man said his church held a special prayer service for you. You had a lot of people asking God to spare you."

What I did to deserve any of that I don't know, but I do know I had spent a lot of time in my life doubting. At one time or the other, I doubted it all: spirituality, love, the basic good of humankind.

But this flirtation with the end of me has removed a lot of that doubt. If the medical experts say prayer brought me back from certain death, who am I to doubt them?

And prayer only works if there is someone or something to grant the favor asked. My faith and belief in that someone or something not only has been restored but it has been forevermore cast in my soul as the great truth beyond all others.

But now comes the hard part. I owe a lot of thank yous. I must thank those who are responsible for the fact I'm still amongst the quick. The Emory doctors and nurses know how I feel about them. They are the best of the best.

But what do I do about the prayerful? Say simply, "Hey, everybody who prayed for me, Thanks"?

It's got to be more profound than that. I snatched away a new life. I have been to the other side of the veil and came back from behind it. I received the reprieve at the midnight hours. I made the dawn once more and it was bright and beckoned with the promise I could finish the unfinished and fulfill the unfulfilled.

Here is what I would like to do: I would like to gather all who lifted a voice when I stood in need of it so badly and, one by one, I would like to hug them around the neck and say, "I love you and I thank you for my life."

And I pray myself and ask, "Lord, you know who you heard from in my behalf. Please let them know there is no end to my gratitude."

For the record, even if you didn't pray for me, it's nice to be with you again, too. To be honest, it['s] just nice to be.

(1993 Cowles Syndicate, Inc. Tyler Morning Telegraph)

(Why Geese Fly Farther than Eagles by Bob Stromberg)

I thought I'd found a solution during my first term in college. I enrolled in a weight training class three days a week, two full hours a day. The course cost \$350, but it was worth it to me. After all, I was not just getting a college credit, I was getting a new body, and with it a whole new way of life.

But it didn't work, at least not the way I thought it would. Ten weeks later, on the last day of class, I walked disgustedly into Coach Phil Ed's office (we called him Fizz). I weighed four pounds less than when I began and still possessed little motivation to oil my skin.

"Coach Ed," I said, trying hard not to look at the floor, "I want my \$350 back."

"I'd love to do that, Bob," said the coach, "but that would be an infraction of the rules."

"Yeah, well, it didn't work," I said more boldly. "You told me if I faced the pain, I'd find the power. And I believed you, but it didn't work!"

"Whoa, Bob. Time out!" he said, making a T with his hands. Placing his reading glasses on his nose and spreading my workout chart before us on his desk, he said sternly, "I'm afraid you're out of bounds here, Bob. You've stepped over the baseline, fella. You're offside. Net ball!"

"We can clearly see your progress," he said, pointing at the chart. "For example, right here where it says Day One, your maximum number of curls was three at two pounds. But today you did twenty-five at fifteen. In squats you were at . . ."

Down the chart he went--curls, squats, bench press--and in every category I had made considerable progress.

"Is this what you meant?" I moaned. "Did you mean that if I went through these last ten grueling weeks, I would just get stronger?"

"You got that one right on the putting green, young man," he said. "What did you think I meant?"

"I thought I might look different," I protested. "I thought it might even change my body a bit."

"Whoa, Bob, you dropped the ball on that one. You ran the wrong pattern, tackled the wrong guy. Technical foul!" he shouted, making another big T. "You took the wrong course, Bob. You want a new body, that'll cost you another \$350."

But my classes were already scheduled for the new term. I couldn't afford to pay the penalty fee to have them changed, and besides, I'd have to take the course from Coach Ed, who I always felt was playing the game of life about three yards short of a first down.

My feelings about my body were not something I talked openly about to people. It seemed better to keep my thoughts to myself.

pp. 112-13

SANCTIFICATION

"I sometimes say I've been sanctified a dozen times, but it never quite took. I very much appreciate that side of theology, but I think the kind of easy way that mainstream Protestantism tolerates sin without hope of change is not New Testament. The Holy Spirit wants us to keep making progress, although it's a process."

--Ron Sider

(in Christianity Today,

Apr 27, 1992

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

FAST-FACT: GROWING PAINS

In one survey, nearly nine out of ten respondents reported that they were able to find a more positive meaning in life through a painful experience (divorce, death of a family member, illness, etc.).

(from Critique, Issue #8, 1991)

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

(Success, Motivation, and the Scriptures by William H. Cook)

There came a time in my life when I earnestly prayed: "God, I want your power!"
Time wore on and the power did not come. One day the burden was more than I could bear.

"God, why haven't you answered that prayer?"

God seemed to whisper back his simple reply. "With plans no bigger than yours, you don't need my power."

--Carl Bates

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

--Goal of the apostle Paul

p. 127

The importance of goals is underlined by Dr. Howard G. Hendricks. "I have never met a Christian who sat down and planned to live a mediocre life. But if you keep going in the direction in which you are moving, you may land there."

p. 134

Peter's final words that he ever wrote are recorded in:

2 Peter 3:18

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

1 Peter 2:2, 3

like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 3:2, 3

I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

Hebrews 5:11-14

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The Scriptures place a strong emphasis upon this matter of growth after once becoming a believer. This growth seems to take place in our lives as we feed upon His word and as we become more and more submissive to His spirit and this submission manifests itself by obedience to His word.

We then can summarize by saying:

The environment for spiritual growth is created by the following 3 THINGS:

- 1.FEEDING UPON HIS WORD,
- 2.SUBMITTING TO HIS SPIRIT,
- 3.OBEDIENCE TO HIS WILL.

Paul Adolph, in his book Release from Tension, says:

It is to be observed that the Bible gives as great an emphasis to Christian growth as it does to the actual message of salvation. It appears to us that Spiritual starvation is in many instances the reason for lack of spiritual growth in many Christians today. This in turn accounts, we believe, for the prevalence of diseases which stem from emotional tensions in Christian people. While we are convinced that when adequate attention is given to factors which produce spiritual growth, there is usually little or no difficulty encountered in connection with diseased states caused by emotional tension.

The question we raise at this time is:

What are some of the areas that the Spirit of God works upon in my life, as He begins to produce growth?

I have just listed the 3 W's:

1. THE WILL
2. THE WORLD
3. THE WISHES

1. THE WILL

I mean by this that the Lord exposes my stubborn self-sufficient will that is striving for perfection in the flesh rather than in the Spirit. Through the process of failure, there comes the breaking of my will and a realization that true joy and progress in the Christian life is going to come as my will is submissive to His will.

2. THE WORLD

Secondly, my relationship to this present world system is brought under scrutiny, and I have the experience of His rearrangement of my priorities so that love for Him is dominant.

3. THE WISHES

He begins to change my wishes and desires. Here the Lord begins to work on the emotional part of me by dealing with my fears, my anxieties, my worries, my bitterness, and my resentfulness, my lack of a forgiving spirit, my doubts, my failures to believe and to lay claim to God's promises, my indecision, my failure to discern God's will, my lack of discipline, which in turn produces a lack of rest and relaxation and recreation, my jealousy and my boredom, my selfishness--all of which can provide real hindrances towards spiritual growth and development.

As we study these verses in 1 John 2:12-17, we are going to be noting that John discerns several stages of maturity. It is because of the several stages of maturity in the Christian body that so many people are confused about what is right and what is wrong for them to do in their personal lives.

I believe that when we concentrate upon our fellowship with the Father, our personal conduct is going to be glorifying to Him, whether it is right or wrong or acceptable in the eyes of other Christians.

I have noted one thing happening in my relationship to my children. That is, when their lifestyle changes to conform to something which I have taught them or asked them to do, I find myself deeply joyful and closer to them at that moment than at any other time. I am sure this is how our heavenly Father feels when we follow the instructions in His word and our lives begin to reflect the changes related to what we have been taught.

v.12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven through His name.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

In describing these assets, the author addressed his readers as "dear children," "fathers," and "young men." Thought of in this way, the sequence, "children," "fathers," and "young men" is meaningful. The readers knew what it was to have sins forgiven and then have fellowship with the Eternal One. As a result they were like vigorous young men who had defeated satanic assaults. The growth process involves all 3 of these: forgiveness, fellowship, and a fight.

Dr. Mitchell says:

We find that the place of the fellowship is in the family. In this verse, the Greek word for children is "teknia" which means the "born ones" and includes the whole family of God. The only way we can be in the family of God is by the new birth (John 1:12, 13; I Pet. 1:23). To those who are in the family John says, "I write unto you, teknia (born ones), because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Forgiveness is for the whole family! We are speaking here of something that is true for every believer. This complete, perfect, and permanent pardon for every believer is based on the grace of God.

Guy King says:

The entrance to the fellowship is not a stopping place but a starting place. As in all life there is to be growth, progress. Some people miss so much for lack of this onward spirit.

In these next verses, John is going to discern several levels of spiritual maturity. Like Jesus, He likens this maturing process in the same way that we have physical developments. In speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus said, "You must be born again." Once we are born again by His Spirit into this new life in Christ, we begin to progress through the normal stages of child development to mature manhood.

The 1st wonderful stage of development in the spiritual life is addressed to the "LITTLE CHILDREN." That is, the wonderful truth that our sins have been forgiven through His name.

The slate has been wiped clean.

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord.

"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Isaiah 38:17

Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.

Micah 7:19

You will again have compassion on us;
you will tread our sins underfoot
and hurl all our iniquities into
the depths of the sea.

Earlier in this chapter we learned that the Lord has made a complete provision for the forgiveness of our sins.

1 John 2:2

And He Himself is satisfaction for our sins; not for ours only but also for the whole world.

As Christians we learn that He pleads our case before the Father, when, after becoming a part of His family, we inadvertently commit acts of sin.

What a thrill to be born again. What a thrill to have all forgiven. What a joy to be in God's family.

Psalm 130:3, 4

If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins,
 O Lord, who could stand?
 But with you there is forgiveness;
 therefore you are feared.

Acts 13:38, 39

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

Colossians 2:14

having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

BRAND NEW START

Christians share the conviction that people can change. See 2 Cor. 5:17, Phil. 1:6, 2:12-13. Sometimes change occurs quickly and sometimes slowly; sometimes dramatically and sometimes subtly, but there are always signs. A changed Christian may appear more mature, but other changes come from within. He may be calmer, more confident and pleasant, patient, forgiving, purer minded and stronger in character. Gal. 5:22-23.

"Brand new start" by Jim Long. Campus Life, Sep 1989. Pp. 31-33

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

v.13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the one who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have conquered the evil one.

John now mentions the "FATHERS," referring to those who in the maturing process have grown in the Lord to the point that fruit has been borne in their lives by the Holy Spirit. And then this fruit has been borne in the lives of others, because to be a father you have to have children.

You see this in Paul's letter to:

Philemon 10

I appeal to you for my child, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, Onesimus,

"I AM WRITING TO YOU, FATHERS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE COME TO KNOW THE ONE WHO IS FROM THE BEGINNING."

The word for "KNOW" here is the word "to know by personal experience."

Stott says:

The author divides his readers into 3 groups whom he names: "little children," "fathers," and "young men," and addresses each group twice. He is indicating, not their physical ages as some have thought, but stages in their spiritual development, for God's family like every human family has members of different maturity.

Barclay says:

It is suggested that in every case the words include all Christians and that no classification is intended, that, in fact, there is but one universal group. All Christians are like "little children," for all can regain their innocence by the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. All Christians are like "fathers," like full-grown responsible men who can think and learn their way deeper and deeper into the knowledge of Jesus Christ. All Christians are like "young men" with a glorious and vigorous strength to fight and win their battles against the temptor and his power. It seems to us that indeed this is John's wider meaning.

When we read his words, we may begin by taking them as a classification of Christians into three age groups, and maybe we will stop there. But as we go on to think of them, we come to see that the blessings of each group are the blessings of all the groups, and that each one of us finds himself included in each and in all of them.

Dr. Mitchell says:

John goes on to speak of three kinds of people in the family of God. There are the fathers, the young men, and the babies. They have all been born into the family, but they are not all at the same stage of maturity. They have not all attained the same spiritual growth.

Philippians 3:10

that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

The more we know the more we love Him. These fathers had walked a good time with the Lord and have had many experiences of seeing the Lord change their lives as they have been abiding in Jesus Christ. They can recount numerous experiences of the Lord's faithfulness, not only to provide for them in physical ways, but also in spiritual ways. They could share how faithful the Lord has been to produce fruit through them as they have been available as instruments for Him to use.

I am always reminded of that old gentleman at 70 years of age, on the Hallelujah praise tapes, who sings:

The longer I serve Him,
The sweeter He grows.

THE LONGER I SERVE HIM

Since I started for the Kingdom.
Since my life He controls,
Since I gave my heart to Jesus,
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.

REFRAIN:

The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows,
The more that I love Him, more love He bestows;
Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows,
The longer I serve Him the sweeter He grows.

Every need He is supplying,
Plenteous grace He bestows;
Every day my way gets brighter,
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.

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(From InfoSearch 3.0)

One is reminded of David in his old age. I think he is looking back on his life when he writes:

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
 he leads me beside quiet waters,
 he restores my soul.
 He guides me in paths of righteousness
 for his name's sake.
 Even though I walk
 through the valley of the shadow of death,
 I will fear no evil,
 for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff,
 they comfort me.
 You prepare a table before me
 in the presence of my enemies.
 You anoint my head with oil;
 my cup overflows.
 Surely goodness and love will follow me
 all the days of my life,
 and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

(God Is the Lover of My Soul by Ken Olson)

TWENTY THIRD PSALM (paraphrased)

He is a Shepherd to me. Yes! A Shepherd is He.
 I am one of His sheep, and that didn't come cheap.
 He provides for my needs, He protects and He feeds.
 To still waters He leads, where His peace He then feeds.
 But wherever I stroll, He restoreth my soul.
 When deaths in my face, and it numbers my days.
 Still no evil I'll fear, for he always is near,
 And his words are so dear, to give comfort and cheer
 There's a table for me, to show satan I'm free.
 I'm so satisfied, in His love I can hide.
 His mercy's with me, and goodness you see.
 Sins are forgiven, I'm bound for His heaven.
 Where forever I'll be, yes eternally.
 p. 11

"I AM WRITING TO YOU, FATHERS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE COME TO KNOW THE ONE WHO IS FROM THE BEGINNING."

This is Jesus Christ himself that is referred to here. Just as He was back in:

chapter 1:1

That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands touched, concerning the Word of Life--

JESUS, THE VERY THOUGHT OF THEE

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see
And in Thy presence rest.

No voice can sing, no heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,
O Savior of mankind.

O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who fall, how kind Thou art!
How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah, this
No tongue or pen can show;
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,
As Thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be Thou our glory now
And thru eternity. Amen.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

"I AM WRITING TO YOU, YOUNG MEN, BECAUSE YOU HAVE CONQUERED THE EVIL ONE."

This is the 3rd "BECAUSE" phrase:

1. "I AM WRITING TO YOU, LITTLE CHILDREN, BECAUSE YOUR SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN THROUGH HIS NAME."
2. "I AM WRITING TO YOU, FATHERS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE COME TO KNOW THE ONE WHO IS FROM THE BEGINNING."
3. "I AM WRITING TO YOU, YOUNG MEN, BECAUSE YOU HAVE CONQUERED THE EVIL ONE."

Stott says:

The Christian life, then, is not just enjoying the forgiveness and the fellowship of God but fighting the enemy. The forgiveness of past sins must be followed by deliverance from sin's present power--justification by sanctification.

The words "YOUNG MEN" refer to those who have walked with the Lord for a little time and have begun to develop some spiritual muscle. They have tasted the joy of victory and are moving ahead with determined spirits.

Their lives are characterized by the 3 D's:

1. DESIRE
2. DETERMINATION
3. DISCIPLINE

1 Timothy 6:11, 12

But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Ephesians 6:10-12

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

2 Corinthians 2:11

in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

Spiritual growth is always accompanied with a struggle.

COPING WITH CRISIS

To cope with crisis, Christians should 1) be aware that God's people experience crisis. Consider Abraham, Moses, David, Joseph, Paul, Peter, etc. 2) Read Heb. 11:32-39. 3) Do not assume crisis is punishment. Read Heb. 12:7-11 and John 15:2. 4) Be patient, wait and trust in God. Read James 5:10-11. 5) Develop a support group for sharing and praying. 6) Pray for someone you can depend on to be there day or night. 7) Be involved in creative activities and recreation. 8) Consider crisis as a possible opportunity for growth.

"Coping with crisis" by Vernon C. Grounds. Decision, May 1989. Page 9.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

1 Peter 5:8, 9

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

James 4:7

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Because Christ lives in them and they are depending upon the power of the Holy Spirit, they have conquered the evil one, because "greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world." They have developed a dependence upon the Lord, and as a result have experienced victory in their lives.

2 Corinthians 2:14

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Zachariah 4:6

. . . "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty.

1 Corinthians 15:57

but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

v.14 I write to you, young children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have come to know the one who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God is abiding in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The attainments of the readers were then reiterated, but with some subtle variations: Young children have come to know their divine parent; the fathers have the repeated attainment mentioned earlier without changing it; the young men have had growth and strength--"you are strong and the word of God lives in you." By repeating the 3 categories under which he here addressed his audience, John suggested not only that they possess spiritual attainments worthy of being called children, fathers, and young men, but also that they possessed these attainments in ample measure.

J. Vernon McGee says:

"I write to you little children because you have known the Father." The "little children" in this case is the Greek paidia, immature little folk. They are the ones who know they are the children of God, but that is about all they know, and some of them feel that is all they want to know. Oh, how many children of God fall into this classification! In some churches you feel as if you are in a spiritual nursery. Although the folk are physically full-grown, some of them with grey hair, they are spiritually immature. They never did grow up.

In this 14th verse John says:

1. "I WRITE TO YOU, YOUNG CHILDREN, BECAUSE YOU HAVE KNOWN THE FATHER."

Here John is referring to "YOUNG CHILDREN" in the sense that they are those who are still young and immature in Christ. You can be a Christian for many years and still be a young child in the Lord. They have come to know the Father through a relationship to Jesus Christ, but they have not taken advantage of the opportunities to really develop along spiritual lines. Perhaps some of them have been Christians for just a brief time, and they are going to need more time for spiritual growth.

When a person is satisfied to stay in this position, carnality or living in the flesh results.

1 Corinthians 3:2, 3

I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

There is not a hint in the passage, however, that these "YOUNG CHILDREN" are abnormal in their growth process; rather, they are just passing through a stage of normal development on the way to becoming "YOUNG MEN," and then "FATHERS."

"I WRITE TO YOU YOUNG CHILDREN BECAUSE YOU HAVE KNOWN THE FATHER."

2. "I WRITE TO YOU, FATHERS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE COME TO KNOW THE ONE WHO IS FROM THE BEGINNING."

This is a repetition of the very same statement made in verse 13:

"I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the one who is from the beginning."

John repeats this statement to remind the fathers of why he writes to them, "because you have come to know the one who is from the beginning," or they have come to know Jesus Christ by personal experience.

3. "I WRITE TO YOU, YOUNG MEN, BECAUSE YOU ARE STRONG AND THE WORD OF GOD IS ABIDING IN YOU, AND YOU HAVE CONQUERED THE EVIL ONE."

Here John repeats the reason for writing to the "YOUNG MEN," but adds a couple of other things that were not included in verse 13.

There are 3 THINGS that are said about the "YOUNG MEN" in this 14th verse:

He is writing to them because:

1. THEY "ARE STRONG,"
2. "THE WORD OF GOD IS ABIDING IN" THEM,
3. THEY "HAVE CONQUERED THE EVIL ONE."

1. They were "STRONG" because they were not dependent upon their own resources, but upon His.

Isaiah 40:31

but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Colossians 1:11

strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously

The in-living Christ is that source of power.

It was the Lord Jesus in John 15 who said, "Without Me, you can do nothing."

The Holy Spirit is also that source of power for victory in the believer:

Acts 1:8

but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

2.The 2ND THING that is said about these young men is:

"THE WORD OF GOD IS ABIDING IN YOU."

It is not only in the HEAD but it is also in the HEART.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

In John's writings, "the word of God" could refer to either the Living Word--Jesus Christ--or the written word, the Bible. It is probably the latter thought that John has in mind here.

How do we let the word of God abide in us? I believe the prescription for this is seen in Psalm 1 where we read about the happy man that meditates in His law day and night.

It is the M & M THEORY:

MEDITATION

MEMORIZE

Psalm 119:9, 11

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word,

I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

Jeremiah 15:16

When your words came, I ate them;
they were my joy and my heart's delight,
for I bear your name,
O Lord God Almighty.

These young men had not only read the word, but had meditated upon it and stowed it away in their hearts so that they could be equipped to do battle when necessary.

In Matthew chapter 4 you see the Lord Jesus Christ three times using the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God from the book of Deuteronomy to conquer the evil one.

3. The 3RD THING that is said about them is that:

THEY "HAVE CONQUERED THE EVIL ONE."

This is a repetition of the phrase that characterized them back in verse 13:

"you have conquered the evil one."

They have experienced the sweet taste of victory in their Christian lives, and the reason they have is because of the

2 PREVIOUS THINGS mentioned about them:

1. They have not faced the foe in their own resources, but have been strong in the power of the indwelling Christ, as well as the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. They have used the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, which is abiding in them to lead them in this victory over the evil one.

Mitchell says:

The young men are the believers in conflict. Three things are said about them: 1) they are "strong," that is, they have spiritual power and courage of faith and purpose. They have conviction and are not tossed about by every wind of doctrine. They have a real purpose in life. 2) The reason they are strong is because "the word of God is abiding in" them. It is their daily food, it is the sword by which they overcome the wicked one. 3) The third statement John makes concerning them is that they have "overcome the wicked one." There is no possibility of victory over the enemy apart from the word of God. We too can be strong when we use the only aggressive weapon that God has given us, the word of God abiding in us.

WHEN YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE IS DRY

"Above all, in the desert place we must remember that without faith it is impossible to please Him."

Every Christian goes through times of spiritual dryness when God seems far away. Here are ten questions to ask yourself to stimulate spiritual growth--even in the desert.

(1) Do I expect too much? Unrealistic expectations of what the Christian life is like can come from biographies that focus on the exciting aspects of a great Christian's experience but say little about his or her discouraging times. Yet even David had down times when he felt like God had left him, but even then he trusted God.

(2) Do I need to confess and repent of sin? Harboring sin in your heart dulls our sensitivity to God, and He can't get through to us. Saul and David both confessed their sin, but David had a heart to turn from it. We must guard against hypocrisy.

(3) Am I doing things that make me spiritually insensitive? Some believers will be bothered by some things that pose no problem to the consciences of others. Each individual must discern what activities (movies, music, people, etc.) hinder his relationship with God.

(4) Do I consistently practice spiritual disciplines? The benefit of spiritual disciplines is not gaining God's favor (which would be legalism) but rather a renewed appreciation for His love and grace.

(5) What used to help me feel close to God? Thinking back to times when God seemed especially near can help you recover that "first love." Remembering how things used to be can prompt repentance and renewal.

(6) Am I just going through the motions? It may be helpful to re-evaluate your motives for attending church, praying, and reading the Bible. If these have just become habits and do not help you meet the real Person, look for ways to revitalize your conversations with God, such as singing psalms to the Lord.

(7) Are physical problems getting me down? Spiritual dryness can result from fatigue, chemical imbalance, or illness. God's prescription for the despondent Elijah was sleep.

(8) Am I praying about my spiritual life and asking others to pray for me? Petitioning God to reveal Himself to you and garnering the prayer support of others will sustain you through times of drought.

(9) Am I connecting with others who are alive in Christ? Even though you are responsible for your own spiritual walk, God designed us to express the life of Christ corporately, too. The benefit of being in contact with even one other growing Christian can be significant.

(10) What does God want to teach me through this time? Perhaps there's nothing wrong. This could be just a time of testing like Jesus went through those 40 days in the wilderness. God used the desert to teach Moses and others the importance of depending on Him. Most important, we must continue to have faith in Him even in the barren wasteland.

"Ten questions to ask when your spiritual life is dull and dry" by Jean Fleming. Discipleship Journal, Nov/Dec 1991 [#66]. Pages 41-44.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

Van Gorder says:

In verses 12-14 of 1 John 2, the apostle addressed all of God's family. What is your classification within that family? If you are an infant, only recently born into the family, thank God today that you know the Father. Yours is the opportunity for growth and grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. If a young man, press on toward maturity; if a father, feed the flock of God.

v.15 Stop loving the world, neither the things which are in the world. If a man keeps on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

I have chosen this as my KEY VERSE to:

"FELLOWSHIP IS ESCALATED BY GROWTH."

Right here in the middle of this passage, where he speaks so much of the maturing process as it relates to our fellowship with the Father, he gives this NEGATIVE COMMAND to:

"STOP LOVING THE WORLD."

Just as LIGHT and DARKNESS are opposed,

LOVE and HATE are opposed,

so also the FATHER and the WORLD are opposed.

Stott says:

Some people have been puzzled as to how this command not to love the world can be reconciled with the statement of God's love for the world in John 3:16. There are 2 possible explanations. The first is that the world has a different connotation in these verses. Viewed as people, the world must be loved. Viewed as an evil system organized under the dominion of Satan and not of God, it is not to be loved.

Dr. Mitchell says:

In verses 15-17 we find that the young men have another enemy, the world.

2 Corinthians 4:3, 4

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

James 4:4

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

It is so easy in our fellowship with the Father to not recognize the world as a rival lover to His cause. It is possible to love the Lord truly with our hearts but not wholly, or completely. There is still that wall of separation between us. Worldliness seems to be just a little thing, but in the eyes of the Father it is very serious. It is so serious it is necessary for us to make a choice. We cannot let the things of this world have first place in our lives and still enjoy a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ.

Matthew 6:32, 33

For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

Mark 10:17-23

And as He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and began asking Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'"

And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up."

And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But at these words his face fell, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property. And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"

2 Timothy 4:10

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescent has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

Matthew 13:22

And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Fellowship is affected by my attitude toward the world.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

He is wanting to warn them about existing dangers. No matter how far one has walked with the Lord, he still is a candidate for temptation from the world.

The world is hostile toward God.

John 15:18, 19

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

The command that John is giving here is a command to Christians in their pursuit of fellowship with the Father. They are not to let the things of this world have a dominant place in their lives. God is a jealous God and will not have any rivals to His love.

The questions we need to ask ourselves at this particular point are: What is the most important thing in my life? What am I living for?

As a young man and a young woman start to sense that there is something going on between them, there is a stripping away of all rivals and a deepening of commitment to each other.

Fertile soil for fellowship with the Father is found in the heart that seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

How many times have I heard Christians express the fact that since they have come to know Christ a lot of the things that seemed so important to them have faded into insignificance. It might have been:

- a house,
- a car,
- a large bank account,
- a lake cabin,
- or something else.

But now that they have come to know Christ, these things are only instruments or tools to be used to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ because now He is their first love.

Matthew 9:9, 10

And as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man, called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he rose, and followed Him. And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.

Luke 19:1-10

And He entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; and he was a chief tax-gatherer, and he was rich. And he was trying to see who Jesus was, and he was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. And he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." And he hurried and came down, and received Him gladly.

And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

And Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

John 17:15-17

I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.

NOT NEGOTIABLE

A hunter who had his gun aimed at a large bear was ready to pull the trigger. Just then the bear spoke in a soft, soothing voice saying, "Isn't it better to talk than to shoot? Why don't we negotiate the matter? What is it you want?" The hunter lowered his rifle and answered, "I would like a fur coat." "That's good," said the bear. "I think that's something we can talk about. All I want is a full stomach; maybe we can reach a compromise." So they sat down to talk it over. A little while later the bear walked away alone. The negotiations had been successful--the bear had a full stomach, and the hunter had a fur coat!

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

PROPER PRIORITIES

In his great spiritual allegory Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan paints a word picture of a man "who looked no way but downward." This poor creature was groveling on his knees in the dirt and filth, working constantly with a rake, trying to unearth some choice jewel that would enrich his life. All the while a bright diadem of great worth was in reach just above him. The tragedy of it all is summarized by Bunyan in these words, "There stood One over his head with a celestial crown in His hand, and proffered him that crown for his muck rake; but the man never looked up as he continued gathering to himself the straw, the small sticks, and the dust of the floor!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

A THERMOMETER OR A THERMOSTAT?

In a church nominating committee meeting the pastor suggested a name for consideration, but one of the deacons said, "I wouldn't recommend him. He's a thermometer instead of a thermostat! He lets his surroundings regulate him instead of being a positive influence for God. He seems to be spiritual when he's around Christians, but when he's at work he joins in with the ungodly and makes no impact upon them."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

(Victory through Surrender by E. Stanley Jones)

Someone has said: "If the church is wedded to the spirit of the day it will be a widow tomorrow. For the spirit of the day is a fickle, changeable, undependable ghost.
p. 122

We have already been challenged in the earlier verses in this passage to continue our growth. We are saying that:

"FELLOWSHIP IS ESCALATED BY GROWTH."

One of the things that stands in the way is the world.

Hebrews 6:1

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Colossians 2:6, 7

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

Daniel 11:32

With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.

Philippians 3:7, 8

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,

The dearest idol I have known,
 What e'er that idol be,
 Help me to tear it from Thy throne
 And worship only thee.

After John gives this command about not loving the world nor the things which are in the world, he goes on to say:

"IF A MAN KEEPS ON LOVING THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM."

F. B. Meyer says:

Thousands of Christians are like waterlogged vessels. They cannot sink, but they are so saturated with inconsistencies and worldliness and permitted evils, that they can only be towed with great difficulty into the celestial port.

What John is saying is what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Someone has said it well:

If you and God feel at a distance, guess who moved?

One of the first things that has to be considered when there is a breakdown in communication and a distance developing in the marriage relationship is to probe the area of the personal. Inquire within to find if there is not perchance someone else who has taken the place of the loved one in the heart of one of the two.

God designed us with a heart that only has the capacity for a single devotion. That single devotion was designed for Him, and when something else enters in you have problems.

Growth is escalated and fellowship is deepened as we demonstrate that commitment by continually stripping from our lives those things that do not bring pleasure and honor to our Lord.

(The On-Purpose Person: Making Your Life Make Sense
by Kevin W. McCarthy)

"Focus your efforts on your number-one want. Let go of everything else. In a sense one regains his life by pruning back to the single most important want."
p. 76

"No, it won't be easy. Think about it. Is that what you really want? Without resistance, you can't build strength. You will continue to face challenges--only now you have new insight, new responses, and therefore new choices. I promise you, in many ways your life will be tougher. You are choosing a narrow, purpose-filled path. At times you will make seemingly unpopular, yet purposeful, choices. You will be different, and some people will take great joy in watching you falter or fail. Others will maliciously and deliberately try to pull you off-purpose. Don't give up. You must persevere."
p. 115

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHANGE

"If you desire to change, and if you are using personal strength to get it done, you will never have enough courage and perseverance to accomplish lasting change."

Even though making positive changes in our personal lives often brings great benefit, very few of us are capable of pulling it off. Radical change is not merely hard to do; it is downright improbable without wholehearted effort. We all face three obstacles to change.

1. Pain. Nobody enjoys pain, and we go to almost any lengths to avoid something that hurts. Yet the process of change always involves pain. So we resist changing. We're willing to put up with a predictable level of ongoing emotional misery instead of going through more intense pain temporarily in order to get beyond a problem. It takes courage to choose to deliberately subject ourselves to pain.

2. Perseverance. As hard as it is to begin making a change, it is even harder to persist and stay with the process to its completion. We lack the stamina to continue the daily struggle of staying on the straight and narrow. We tend to desire beneficial changes in our lives, but we want them to come quickly and painlessly. Resolve that lasts only a few days or weeks isn't enough.

3. Powerlessness. Trying to change by your own will power--the way our culture approaches self-improvement--never succeeds in producing deep, lasting change. The old "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" approach is like trying to get enough energy out of a AA battery to fly a 747. To tackle fundamental personal and life pattern problems we need to plug into the only power source that can bring permanent change: God. We need His power to change, but He needs our cooperation. Without God we can't change, but He "can't" change us unless we submit our wills.

The starting place is to honestly admit your failures and weakness to God. It is easier to listen to the humanistic hogwash that "You can do it!" than it is to be broken and humbled before the Almighty. Merely accepting God as your power source while insisting that He change you on your own terms will not work. If you admit your inability to change yourself, God will supply strength and encouragement through His Word, His people, and His Spirit.

Studying the Bible "academically" doesn't help, but allowing the Scriptures to penetrate your shell and break down your defenses will facilitate change. God will bring other Christians into your life to affirm and to challenge you. The Holy Spirit Himself will support you and intercede on your behalf.

It is discouraging to realize that change is so difficult, that self-reliance can't cut it, and that we must be broken, but the balancing truth is that God loves us deeply, wants to forgive us, and makes His power available to change us into what He wants us to be.

"The truth about change" by Chris Thurman. Today's Better Life, Sum 1992. Pages 38-41.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

(Looking Back, Moving On: Applying Biblical Principles of Freedom to Your Life by Boyd Luter)

Where there is no accountability, there probably will not be much recovery. Without clear boundaries and limits, it is altogether too easy to wander out of bounds into a self-indulgent or self-destructive lifestyle.

The book of Judges offers Samson as a classic example of the effects of a lack of accountability, resulting in both self-indulgence and self-destruction. He did not learn until it was too late. What a pity that a life full of such God-given ability would end up in such an embarrassing shambles because no one had the care and courage that added up to speaking the truth in love!

p. 87

(Living by the Book by Howard G. Hendricks & William D. Hendricks)

After captivating an audience at Yale University, the late novelist Ayn Rand was asked by a reporter, "What's wrong with the modern world?"

Without a moment's hesitation she replied, "Never before has the world been so desperately asking for answers to crucial questions, and never before has the world been so frantically committed to the idea that no answers are possible. To paraphrase the Bible, the modern attitude is, 'Father forgive us, for we know not what we are doing--and please don't tell us!'"

That's very perceptive for an acknowledged agnostic. Many of us want a word from God, but we don't want the Word of God. We know enough to own a Bible but not enough for the Bible to own us. We pay the Bible lip service, but we fail to give it "life service." In a world where the only absolute is that there are no absolutes, there is little room left for the authoritative Word of God as revealed in the Bible.

p. 23

v.16 Because everything which is in the world, the passionate desire of the flesh, and the passionate desire of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Now John gives us the reason for the negative command of verse 15 to "stop loving the world":

"BECAUSE EVERYTHING WHICH IS IN THE WORLD . . . IS NOT OF THE FATHER BUT IS OF THE WORLD."

He then lists 3 THINGS:

1. "THE PASSIONATE DESIRE OF THE FLESH,"
2. "THE PASSIONATE DESIRE OF THE EYES,"
3. "THE VAINGLORY OF LIFE."

The WORLD is famous for its:

UNCONTROLLED APPETITES,
FALSE VALUES,
EXALTATION OF SELF.

The 1st of these 3 AREAS mentioned by John is:

1. "THE PASSIONATE DESIRE OF THE FLESH."

Galatians 5:16, 17

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

(The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children by William J. Bennett)

In the end drug use is wrong because of what it does to human character. It degrades. It makes people less than they should be by burning away a sense of responsibility, subverting productivity, and making a mockery of virtue.

Using drugs is wrong not simply because drugs create medical problems; it is wrong because drugs destroy one's moral sense. People addicted to drugs neglect their duties. The lure can become so strong that soon people will do nothing else but take drugs. They will neglect God, family, children, friends, and jobs--everything in life that is important, noble, and worthwhile--for the sake of drugs. This is why from the very beginning we posed the drug problem as a moral issue. And it was the failure to recognize the moral consequences of drug use that led us into the drug epidemic in the first place. In the late 1960s, many people rejected the language of morality, of right and wrong. Since then we have paid dearly for the belief that drug use was harmless and even an enlightening, positive thing.

Drugs undermine the necessary virtues of a free society--autonomy, self-reliance, and individual responsibility. The inherent purpose of using drugs is secession from reality, from society, and from the moral obligations individuals owe their family, their friends, and their fellow citizens. Drugs destroy the natural sentiments and duties that constitute our human nature and make our social life possible. As our founders would surely recognize, for a citizenry to be perpetually in a drug-induced haze doesn't bode well for the future of self-government.

When all is said and done, the most compelling case that can be made against drug use rests on moral grounds. No civilized society--especially a self-governing one--can be neutral regarding human character and personal responsibility.

p. 121

(Temptations Men Face by Tom L. Eisenman)

Lust is the ape that gibbers in our loins.
Tame him as we will by day, he rages all the wilder
in our dreams by night. Just when we think we're safe from
him, he raises up his ugly head and smirks, and there's
no river in the world flows cold and strong enough
to strike him down. Almighty God, why dost thou
deck men out with such a loathsome toy?

FREDERICK BUECHNER

p. 53

(Bold Love by Dan B. Allender & Tremper Longman, III)

Lust is the effort to possess another in order to steal enough passion to be lifted out of our current struggles into a world that feels (for an instant) like the Garden of Eden. If anger is the desire to make someone pay for blocking our return to the garden, then lust is our effort to push our way back into the garden.

p. 103

(If Jesus Has Come by Steve Brown)

In his Confessions, Augustine was frustrated by his memory of sexual sin. He cried out, "Great is the power of memory, a fearful thing, O my God, a deep and boundless manifoldness; and this thing is the mind, and this am I myself. What am I then, O my God?" Have you ever allowed your mind to wander through forbidden fields of sexual fantasy? Guilty!

p. 129

(Over the Edge and Back by Joe White)

I learned to drive with a manual four-speed transmission. You had to shift gears purposefully. My daughter drives an "automatic." The gears shift without any effort at all. First gear wraps to about 20 MPH, then automatically kicks into second. Second gear shoots her up to about 35 MPH, then third kicks in. Sex is an automatic transmission. Don't kid yourself for a second. Nearly every pregnant 16-year-old was "only petting" just a few months before. Every kid with AIDS and syphilis was "only fooling around a little" just a while back.

p. 43

"BECAUSE EVERYTHING WHICH IS IN THE WORLD":

1. "THE PASSIONATE DESIRE OF THE FLESH,"

2. "THE PASSIONATE DESIRE OF THE EYES."

This is satisfied enjoyment through contemplation.

Matthew 6:22, 23

The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Matthew 5:27, 28

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Job 31:1

I made a covenant with my eyes
not to look lustfully at a girl.

Van Gorder says:

The lust of the eyes is also a powerful source of temptation and expresses itself in the sin of covetousness. It entices us to grasp for visible things like gold, silver, houses, lands, and possessions. This, too, is of the world.

(Lewis & Me & Skipper Makes Three by Ludlow Porch)

Skip recently paid four thousand dollars for a complete home entertainment unit. It is a work of art. In addition to the television, it has a CD player, a VCR, and a very fancy AM-FM radio. It is as useless to him as a one-handed wheelbarrow. It just sits there on a shelf looking pitiful. The only sign of life is the VCR, proclaiming to the world, twelve o'clock, twelve o'clock, twelve o'clock.

p. 139

This is the same guy who has to take a shower everywhere he goes because he says:

"If there is one thing on earth I can't stand," he declared, "it's washing my face in the same water I've been sitting in."

p. 140

The EYES,

our DESIRE,

the MIND,

and OUR ACTIONS are all very closely connected.

Psalm 25:15

My eyes are ever on the Lord,
for only he will release my feet from the snare.

Hebrews 12:2

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Heavenly Vision
(Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus)

O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free!

Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
Over us sin no more hath dominion,
For more than conqu'rors we are!

His word shall not fail you He promised;
Believe Him and all will be well:
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

(The New Church Hymnal, 1976, Lexicon Music, Inc., #344
by Helen H. Lemmel)

"BECAUSE EVERYTHING WHICH IS IN THE WORLD, THE PASSIONATE
DESIRE OF THE FLESH, AND THE PASSIONATE DESIRE OF THE EYES, AND
THE VAINGLORY OF LIFE, IS NOT OF THE FATHER, BUT IS OF THE WORLD."

3. The 3rd thing that John used to characterize the world is the phrase:

"THE VAINGLORY OF LIFE."

This is personal pride in one's possessions.

Stott says:

It's a conceited, pretentious humbug (Dodd) who seeks to impress everyone he meets with his own non-existent importance (Barclay). The pride of life is therefore an arrogance or vainglory relating to one's external circumstances, whether wealth or rank or dress. Pretentious ostentation (Plummer). The desire to shine or outshine others in luxurious

living (Ebrard).

Westcott says:

It is the vainglory which springs out of and belongs to our visible earthly life.

Van Gorder says:

The pride of life is self-centeredness, the constant seeking of praise. Kandlish calls it "a game of diplomacy and a race of emulation." It puts the men and women of the world on a poor struggle to outmaneuver and outshine one another, to outdo one another, for the most part, in mere externals.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

It is the pretention of human life which signifies a proud and ostentatious way of life.

The word alazoneia is used only here in the New Testament. Christians ought to have nothing to do with such worldly perspective as these.

It is the word for:

pretention,

arrogance,

pride in one's possessions.

It is a false pretention.

Luke 12:16-20

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?""

When a man puts all of his emphasis on these things, he finds too late that they are empty and unstable. All of these things are not of the Father, but are of the world.

(Victory through Surrender by E. Stanley Jones)

William Barclay tells of the tragic story of Oscar Wilde.

One of the tragedies of the nineteenth century was the career of Oscar Wilde. He had a brilliant mind, and won the highest academic honours; he was a scintillating writer, and won the highest rewards in literature; he had all the charm in the world, and he was a man whose instinct it was to be kind; yet he fell to the temptation of unnatural vice, and came to prison and disgrace. When he was suffering for his fall he wrote his book De Profundis and in it he said: "The gods have given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. . . . Tired of being on the heights I deliberately went to the depths in search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace." p. 13

Dr. Mitchell summarizes the 16th verse by saying:

The world appeals to us through three avenues: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This is always true. In Genesis chapter three we find that Satan tempted Adam and Eve these three ways. He questioned the love of God by implying that God was withholding something good from them and forbidding them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He caused them to doubt the word of God when he told them they would not die. Then he attacked the Person of God by saying they would be like gods, knowing good and evil. He tempted them in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

He did the same thing with the Lord Jesus in Matthew 4. In the 3 TEMPTATIONS OF THE LORD JESUS you can see:

- 1.THE LUST OF THE FLESH,
- 2.THE LUST OF THE EYES,
- 3.and THE VAINGLORY OF LIFE.

This wily foe desires to distract us from our commitment to Christ and our deepening relationship with him. He is using the same old program to accomplish his plans and to achieve his victories in the lives of those who are duly distracted.

May we take fresh warning and may we be those who are characterized as people who are walking with God, recognizing that our FELLOWSHIP IS ESCALATED BY OUR GROWTH as we do not allow ourselves to be distracted by the evil one.

v.17 And the world is passing away, and its passionate desire; but the one who is doing the will of God is abiding forever.

Here we have a choice between the WORLD and His WILL. The world is temporary; His will is eternal.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary, speaking on the word "ABIDING" in verse 17, says:

The abiding life is fellowship with God, but here is obviously the additional thought that the life lived in God's fellowship, rejecting the sinful things of this passing world, is a life that has no real ending. A person whose character and personality are shaped by obedience to God will not be affected by the passing away of the world and its vain desires.

Only one life, t'will soon be past.
Only what's done for Christ will last.

(The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock)

Men are kings only for a time, their lives expire like a lamp, and their dominion is extinguished with their lives; they hand their empire by succession to others, but many times it is snapped off before they are cold in their graves.
p. 684

(Victory through Surrender by E. Stanley Jones)

If you don't surrender to God don't think you don't surrender. Everybody surrenders--to something. Some surrender to themselves as God. If you surrender to yourself as God you won't like your God. You will do as you like and then you won't like what you do. You will express yourself and you won't like the self you express. You won't like your self and no one else will like you. "It's a million chances to one that the self-centered are unpopular," said a psychiatrist.

If you don't surrender to your self as God, you will probably surrender to someone else as God. And if you do you will probably be disillusioned.
p. 121

PRECAUTION AND PREVENTION

A sign on the highway had been placed there by the American Dental Society and it said, "Ignore your teeth and they will go away." For some people that's a helpful reminder, but for others it's like hitting an exposed nerve with the drill! Much expense and trouble can be avoided by developing good eating habits and practicing dental hygiene. Apparently the American Dental Society thinks we need a strong reminder of the importance of preventive dental care.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: One of the greatest things we realize when we are born again into God's family is that our sins have been forgiven through His name.

LESSON #2: The number one thing that should thrill us as we look back on our lives as believers is our ever-deepening knowledge of the Father.

LESSON #3: Spiritual growth involves conflict with the evil one.

LESSON #4: His strength and the word of God abiding in us are the keys to victory over the evil one.

LESSON #5: Love for the Father must be the number one priority in our lives.

LESSON #6: If we keep on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in us.

LESSON #7: It is the flesh within us that desires those things which are contrary to the Father's purpose and plan for our lives.

LESSON #8: The power of temptation is magnified through the eyes.

LESSON #9: The vainglory of life is pride in one's possessions, or the thought of shaping one's life apart from God.

LESSON #10: The world is passing away but the one doing the will of God is abiding forever.

We have noted together several levels in the maturing process. When he addresses the different levels with different admonitions, our FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER IS ESCALATED BY PERSONAL GROWTH in the areas which John has talked about:

1. THE FORGIVENESS OF MY SIN,
2. THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST,
3. MY VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION,
4. MY PROPER ADJUSTMENT TO THIS WORLD SYSTEM.

It is my prayer that our fellowship will be escalated as a result of this understanding of the maturing process in growing up in Jesus Christ.

(The On-Purpose Person: Making Your Life Make Sense
by Kevin W. McCarthy)

"I know there isn't less clutter in my life," he went on, "it just feels that way. I have a peace about me that I never had before. It hasn't been easy. I'm changing thoughts, habits, and relationships that were off-purpose. This is demanding and emotional work. Those old habits and life patterns are difficult to break. Because I'm trying to make changes in my life and others are not aware of it, it's easy to fall into old patterns with old friends. It's especially hard with my family. The patterns are like routines we get into unconsciously."

p. 112

"You're wise to be in touch with the changes you're making and the influence of the outside world," the professor commented. "I suggest you tell a few special people of the innovations and renovation you're engaged in. Ask for their support, encouragement, and accountability."

p. 113

(The Not-So-Compulsive Woman by Sandra Simpson LeSourd)

For years drinking had helped to anesthetize my feelings of defeat as a wife and mother. But sobriety, plus therapy, forced me to a realistic appraisal of the liabilities I had brought to marriage. The following became clear:

My immaturity
 Gamesmanship with men (based on deception)
 Fear of intimacy
 Fear of responsibility
 Inability to share my feelings at a meaningful level
 Selfishness

p. 31

(Living by the Book by Howard G. Hendricks
 & William D. Hendricks)

A. W. Tozer, for many years a spiritual gadfly to the Body of Christ, placed a burr in my mental saddle with these words:

A religious mentality, characterized by timidity and lack of moral courage has given us today a flabby Christianity, intellectually impoverished, dull, repetitious, and to a great many persons, just plain boring. This is peddled as the very faith of our fathers in direct lineal descent from Christ and the apostles. We spoon-feed this insipid pabulum to our inquiring youth, and to make it palatable spice it up with carnal amusements snatched from the unbelieving world. It is easier to entertain than to instruct. It is easier to follow degenerate public taste than to think for oneself. So too many of our evangelical leaders let their minds atrophy while they keep their fingers nimble operating religious gimmicks to bring in the curious crowd.

I'm afraid too many churchgoers today are listening but not learning. They are spectators, not students. They are passive, not participating. Why? Because we who teach often give them cut flowers that easily fade and wilt, rather than showing them how to grow plants for themselves--to discover firsthand the truth that God has revealed in His Word.

pp. 331-32

STUDY #4 - 1 John 2:12-17

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

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