

CHAPTER 6

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

⁵¹ *Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; ⁵² for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³ they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.*

Luke 12:51-53 (RSV)

⁹ *I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine; ¹⁰ all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.*

John 17:9-11 (RSV)

³³ *Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.*

Luke 17:33 (RSV)

⁴*You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 4:4-6 (NASB)

⁹ *I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; ¹⁰ not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one.*

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 (RSV)

It is possible to break free from the influence of the world

We are commanded to resist the influence of this evil world system and to be willing to walk alone and refuse to conform. Yet, God never commands us to do anything impossible. Admittedly, it is very difficult to withstand the ‘gravitational pull’ of this world and we are likely to fail again and again even if we try wholeheartedly. The point is victories are possible, though perhaps small at first, and not always consistently.

But your success rate will improve as time goes by and as you develop greater knowledge, self-control and self-discipline. Therefore, never allow yourself to be told it is too hard or that you can never succeed in rejecting the values of this world. You certainly can succeed and you will if you truly want to and are willing to persist for as long as it takes. It is all about perseverance.

Reject all of this world's values and ways

We are to reject this world and all it represents. Therefore, although we are commanded to love other *people*, in the sense of self sacrificial “agape” love, we are not to love *this world system* or its values and ways:

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

1 John 2:15-16 (NIV)

This world has a lot of feral cunning and guile like that seen amongst wild animals for example in the way a leopard will creep up on a potential victim which has its back to it. But the world has no real wisdom to offer us such as we find in the Bible. What the world calls wisdom is just foolishness in God's eyes:

¹⁸Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 (NIV)

What this world stands for is entirely incompatible with what God stands for. We therefore have to choose whether to be a friend of the world or of God because we can't be both. Being a friend of this world and all it represents makes us an enemy of God. It is that stark:

⁴Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4:4 (RSV)

Therefore, we are not to imitate or adopt the standards, attitudes and practices, or even the social and political beliefs, of the worldly people around us. We are to reject the things they do and say and not copy their opinions either. Instead, we are to obey God's Word on every issue, and agree with Him, no matter how much that brings us into conflict with the people around us:

¹And the Lord said to Moses, ²“Say to the people of Israel, I am the Lord your God. ³You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. ⁴You shall do my ordinances and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God. ⁵You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live: I am the Lord.

Leviticus 18:1-5 (RSV)

The world hates God and all that He stands for

We must therefore prepare ourselves for opposition and hatred from this world and all those who embrace the system and feel comfortable within it. Though we must not hate them, we should expect to be hated *by them*:

¹³*Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.*

1 John 3:13 (NIV)

¹⁸*"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*

John 15:18-19 (NIV)

The people who are of this world hate truth. Therefore, they hate genuine Christianity and real Christians because their own deeds are evil and the true Gospel is a rebuke to them. It is like shining a bright light into the eyes of people who are accustomed to darkness:

¹⁹*This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*

John 3:19-20 (NASB)

We have to be "in the world but not of the world"

It would be so much easier if we could just opt out of this world entirely and not have to live our lives as disciples while surrounded by so much evil and so many corrupt people. But that cannot be. God has decided, in His wisdom, that we have to endure 60 or 70 years living in the midst of evil, distressing and hostile influences.

Therefore, Jesus in His 'High Priestly prayer' in John 17 does not ask God to take us out of the world but rather to help us to get through it successfully and to be 'kept from the evil one' meaning Satan and/or his demons. God makes use of the whole world system to toughen us up as if God had refused to remove all the bullies and nasty kids from our school. He knows we will gain more maturity from resisting and overcoming the bullies than we would if we were sheltered from them all.

⁶ *"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.*

John 17:6-19 (ESV)

The purpose and value of a daily “quiet time” or “devotional time” with your Bible and the effect that has on you

I had the great good fortune after I was converted to get the help and mentoring of a group called Insight Ministries which was an offshoot from the Navigators, an excellent group which focused on training Christians to become solid disciples. Therefore, right from the start, I was introduced to the discipline of a daily “quiet time” or “devotional time” and that one habit was the making of me.

It kept me on the narrow path and had a profound effect on my growth as a disciple in all sorts of way. So, I strongly recommend it, for all sorts of reasons, including helping you to break free from the choking influence of the world system and to develop a strong enough ‘spine’ to be able to stand alone and refuse to conform to the world’s mould.

Let’s look therefore at what a “quiet time” is and how to go about it so as to gain the most benefit. It is essentially about setting aside a time every day, without fail, which you devote to reading the Bible, prayer, adoration, thanksgiving, confession and supplication. Supplication means asking God for things and I placed it last in the list because for many people it is at the top of the list or even the only item on it. That should not be.

I would not recommend reading Christian books such as biographies or even commentaries during your morning quiet time. They are important, indeed essential, but should be read at other times later in the day, not during your precious time alone with God while you read **His** Word and speak and listen to **Him**. Reading any other kind of book during your quiet time would be like spending time alone with your wife or child, but going on your phone or reading a book while you are with them instead of focusing on them.

In my opinion, and I think there are many good reasons for saying so, the best time to do this is in the early morning so it is the first thing you do each day and can all take place before the business of the day gets started and before you head off to work or to school. That way you can ensure your mind is not filled with other distractions, or with the worries and pressures of the day.

It is also a sensible and practical precaution which ensures you never find that other events or pressures crowd out your time with the LORD and prevent it from happening. Remember your quiet time is *the most important thing you will do each day*. Therefore, it is vital and God wants it to happen. He wants you to make it your top priority and you need to get to a point where you see its vital importance and don’t look upon it as a ‘chore’.

But for the same reasons, being even more aware of its crucial importance than you are, the demons in your life do *not* want it to happen. Therefore, they will create whatever distractions are needed to divert you, waste your time, cause interruptions and phone calls and stop the quiet time happening. But that is so much easier for the demons to achieve if your quiet time is in the middle of the day or in the evening rather than first thing each morning.

All they would have to do at any other time of the day is make sure you are kept busy, with the phone or door bell ringing and people wanting things so you will say, as you go to bed that night, “*I never got a chance to have a quiet time today*”. In fact, what really happened was you played right into the demons’ hands by not putting the quiet time first on the agenda for the day.

However, if your quiet time is at the very start of each day, before the phone starts ringing and before there are any jobs to be done, or kids to be fed, or people tugging at your sleeve wanting your attention, then it is much more likely to happen and to be uninterrupted.

There is always time to do the first task of the day but not necessarily the 101st task. So, set about making this a habit. Carve out a time at the start of each day, unless you have truly compelling reasons to do it at some other time. Then, having started, stick to it rigidly.

If you can do that faithfully every morning for about 6-8 weeks it will become a habit and that habit will then keep you rather than you having to keep it. It will become so engrained and normal that you will do it automatically, without needing any self discipline and without even needing to remember. You will just head off on auto pilot to your study or some other empty, secluded room to start your quiet time.

But where you will need self discipline is during those first crucial 6-8 weeks while you are seeking to establish and entrench the habit. That is where the battle must be won. Therefore, make this vital habit part of your life and you will inevitably grow in maturity, knowledge and faithfulness and end up succeeding as a disciple. But if you don't, it is hard to see how you can possibly succeed. It really is that much of a game changer.

I recommend you start by aiming to spend only 20 minutes per day in which you read just a couple of pages, or three at most. Also read slowly, like a 6 year old child who has only recently learned to read. Focus on every word, one at a time, even pointing your finger at each word so you don't miss anything. This is important because, if you speed read the Bible you will miss lots of details.

Don't aim for too much to start with or you will fail and then give up on it and the habit won't form. But once the habit has been formed and is firmly entrenched, you can easily increase the amount of time you spend and the number of pages you read. Indeed, you will very probably spend longer by preference because you will find it so rewarding.

I was explaining this to someone recently and I made the point that the purpose of spending time in God's Word every day is not so that you can get some relevant message that will be useful to you that day. You might possibly do so, but that is unlikely and certainly isn't guaranteed.

The objective is not about what you specifically learn that day or about it having any particular relevance to that day. It is about you spending time alone with God one to one, and giving your relationship with Him priority, showing Him He is important to you and also *getting to know Him*, not just His Word, vital though that is.

It is just as when you spend time with your wife or child. That isn't done in order to receive some specific message from them relevant to that day, but to build relationship. We need to make it our aim to build that same personal relationship with God and a quiet time is the best way to do so.

Avoid places where worldly people congregate

There are, of course, some easy decisions you could make to reduce this world's influence over you by avoiding places which are obviously unwholesome or associated with sin such as night clubs, casinos or town centres late at night. But also, at a less obvious level, avoid friendship groups which involve

people who are coarse, vulgar or blasphemous. Pick and choose your friends carefully and be willing to have fewer of them.

Or it might be something much more mundane such as where you sit in the works canteen or when you choose to have lunch. That choice determines which colleagues you will see, or not see, and that matters a lot because even as you eat your lunch you could be being influenced, either for good or evil, by the people you choose to sit with. Therefore, decide only to be with wholesome people not those who are embittered, resentful, angry, crude or otherwise pumping their negativity into your life. Avoid those people and try to eliminate them from your life.

Likewise avoid other clubs, societies or even political parties which promote an unbiblical worldview

In the unusual years of deception we have lived through, in particular from 2020 onwards, with the Covid hoax, the health damaging jabs, the global warming hoax, the immigration hoax, the transgender insanity etc, many people's eyes have opened for the first time to the deception that is all around us. Some have gone further than that and have opened their eyes to the Bible as well. Therefore, we have had people getting converted recently who are coming from a 100% unchurched background.

Many of them have stumbled across, or been led towards, the Gospel by unusual, roundabout means. That is of course, very good. But it has also created a problem which is that we have new converts coming through whose eyes have opened on issues A,B and C but they still have not realised they had been lied to about issues D,E,F and G as well.

So, a person may have realised Covid is a hoax and that global warming is a pack of lies, but they have no idea they are still deceived, about "racism", mass immigration, Israel, Islam, feminism, transgenderism, the Welfare State etc. Therefore, we are seeing new converts whose eyes are wide open on certain issues but firmly shut on other issues.

Moreover, people may have been supporters of political parties or they have at least read newspapers and watched TV programmes which have left them with a residue of unbiblical views that they do not even realise are unbiblical. That is because they have never re-examined their beliefs in the light of having become a Christian.

It would never occur to them to do so because they assume the social and political views they have picked up over their lifetime are all correct and that becoming a Christian is of no relevance to what your social or political views should be. Indeed, they are likely to consider their opinions to be "obviously" correct since they are *"my own views and therefore self evidently correct."*

Sadly, that is the default setting for most people, such that they never even ask whether their own opinions are actually correct. More to the point, it doesn't occur to them that God might have something to say about their social and political beliefs.

I was recently in a debate with a couple who had found the Gospel as a result of the Covid hoax and were avid viewers of many conspiracy theory websites and blogs. But part of the problem for people who have had a revelation on one topic, usually Covid, is they can tend to imagine they are therefore exceptionally discerning and they develop excessive confidence in their own opinions.

This particular couple had listened for years to woke left wing ideas about Israel and the Arabs and nonsense about Islam being a “religion of peace”. Therefore, they were telling me that Israel is a problem, its leaders are corrupt, they are attacking innocent civilians and pursuing “genocide” etc, whereas the Gazan Arabs, Hamas, Hezbollah and even Islam itself, are all being victimised.

That is the left’s grotesquely distorted narrative but it has been widely accepted by naïve people and is now the view of all the main political parties, not just Labour. Sadly, that was that couple’s view and nothing would shift it because they were not open to being corrected. They knew for a fact that they were absolutely right.

Indeed, they argued with me at length and sought to persuade me that Israel was at fault and should be criticised. They were wasting their breath trying to get me to believe that so, in the end, we just agreed to disagree. They were certainly not willing to defer to my knowledge, even though I have studied Israeli history for decades and have been there six times, including some lengthy visits.

By contrast, they were new converts and had never read a single book about Israel or set foot in the place. But that didn’t reduce their certainty that they were correct in their opinions. Their view was that Israel was a purely political issue, not a theological one. I’m afraid God doesn’t see it that way. What He says about Israel in the Bible is the truth and should always be believed in preference to the junk we see on the TV or read in newspapers.

Here’s another example. My late mother-in-law used to attend the Catholic church and was very active in “The Justice and Peace Group”. You would imagine such a group would be innocent and could do no harm. Yet it constantly pumped out anti American, anti British, anti Israel propaganda that was mainly focused on opposing Israel, “defending” Palestinians (i.e. Arabs) from Israel, building bridges with the Islamic world and defending the reputation of Islam! That was how they thought world peace should be achieved. She even chose to get her news by listening to Al Jazeera TV! She thought they were the most trustworthy.

All sorts of groups and places may be wrong for you to continue attending after you become a Christian. Moreover, all of your political, social, historical and economic opinions need to be re-examined in the light of the Bible to find out whether those ought to remain your opinions or be discarded. For example you almost certainly need to re-examine your views on slavery, which is a subject about which we are constantly lied to.

The story they push is that the evil West, mainly the UK and USA, enslaved Africans. It follows, therefore, that slavery is a uniquely “white” crime committed only by the West and only against Africans. That is now what is taught as ‘history’ in our schools. The problem is it is a pack of lies. The real truth is that it was the British people, in particular *white evangelical Christians*, who first campaigned to *abolish* slavery, not to create it.

That had never been done in all of world history until we in the UK achieved it. British Christians fought first to abolish the slave trade and then to abolish slavery itself. The British then spent a fortune in taxpayers’ money paying for the release of slaves and also for funding the Royal Navy to enforce the new anti-slavery laws throughout the Empire and the wider world.

Shortly afterwards the Americans, again largely led by *white evangelical Christians*, campaigned to end slavery in the USA. Indeed, the Americans even fought the Civil War to end slavery at enormous cost to themselves in lives and money.

Why therefore are white people in Britain and American dishonestly portrayed as the villains of this story, especially given that slavery has always existed, and all over the world, not just in the UK and USA? Moreover, it always existed on a far larger scale *outside of Britain and America* than it ever did within them. That is to say we in the UK and even the USA had far fewer slaves than were held by African or Asian nations, and, in particular, by Muslims.

Indeed, Muslim slave traders actually raided the coast of Europe and *took millions of white Europeans to be slaves in the Muslim world*. Has any history teacher ever told you that? I suspect not. It does not suit the ideological narrative they are trying to push. The BBC will certainly never say it.

Indeed, slavery continues even today but is found, in the main, *only in Islamic countries*. For example, the lithium and cobalt being mined in Africa to make mobile phones and electric car batteries is done by slave workers, many of whom are children. Moreover, they work for negligible wages with zero attention paid to the safety of their working conditions. So why do we never hear those facts taught in schools, or stated in the media? And why aren't the woke left wingers protesting?

The official narrative being aggressively promoted in our schools and media is that white people are 100% the villains and black people are 100% the victims. That is pushed very hard to support the left's wider propaganda campaign about alleged "racism" all over the place. Yet, even in the eighteenth century when the UK was still buying slaves from Africa, we did not catch them ourselves.

They were all caught for us *by African slave traders, most of whom were Muslims*. Of course, that does not exonerate us, because we should not have bought them, but it does put a different slant on it and demolishes the idea of the black man as being exclusively the "victim", never the villain.

I have gone into some detail about the lies told about slavery, and how people unconsciously absorb all those lies, but the same level of deception applies with most of the other issues. We are equally lied to on those points and fed on a diet of non stop deception, worthy of Josef Goebbels, Hitler's head of propaganda. Therefore, on all of these issues, we desperately need to re-examine everything we think, why we think it, and where we got our information from.

Yet I see very few new believers (or even older ones) showing any willingness to re-examine any of their opinions, let alone all of them. Overwhelmingly they continue automatically to believe whatever political, historical, social or economic opinions they held before they were saved.

This is a vexed problem and it is really important for you not to fall into this trap of assuming your own settled opinions are "obviously correct". If you do you will consider it unnecessary to re-examine them. That then leaves you trapped in all those lies and vulnerable to being manipulated as a result of all the false things you have been told and have naively believed.

The world would have no power over us if we did not have a sinful flesh nature

Although the world system has a powerful influence over us, it would have no influence at all if we didn't also have a sinful flesh nature of our own. It is the very fact that we are sinful that draws us to

the sins committed by others. If we weren't sinners we would not be tempted by what others say and do. And if we didn't have pride and selfishness we wouldn't be drawn to the world's values.

That is what makes this whole problem so difficult as each of these problems, the world, the flesh and the Devil (demons), feed off each other and depend on each other in order to lead us astray. Consider dry newspaper and matches. Either of those things, on its own, is not likely to cause a fire. So, one could keep on striking matches all day but unless there is something to burn nothing will come of it and the matches will just go out.

Or you could have lots of dry paper but unless you also have matches no fire will result. It is the interaction of these things, as your sinful nature is drawn to the sinful world system that causes the real damage. Much less damage would occur if you only had a flesh nature and there was no world system, or vice versa.

The same could be said of how much easier it would be if we only had to tackle our flesh nature and the world system and there were no demons to tempt and deceive us. Unfortunately, we are stuck with all three problems and that will continue until we die or are raptured. So, we need to get used to tackling all three battles at the same time.

One cure for worldliness is humility, in particular ceasing to care what the world thinks of you

Pride was the sin that led to Satan's fall and pride also lies behind many of the sins we commit and the sinful situations we are drawn into. Therefore, anything we can do to combat our own pride and slap it down whenever it tries to assert itself will be good for us.

Not only will that keep us out of a lot of sin problems but it will also help to avoid us being deceived and brainwashed by the blizzard of propaganda directed at us by our treasonous governments, our corrupt media and the many equally corrupt organisations and institutions which seek to control our lives, such as the Police, Councils, hospitals, schools, universities and judges.

How many people fell for the covid hoax, or the global warming hoax, or the racism hoax, or the multi cultural hoax, or any other hoax, primarily because they wanted to be accepted and to fit in with the people around them and be in line with "majority opinion"? Most of us have become weak, cowardly and gullible precisely because (due to pride) we crave for the approval of those around us. And we are willing to compromise, and to sin, in order to get their approval.

But if we humbled ourselves and decided to say: *"I'm no longer going to be influenced or controlled due to fear of what other people might think of me or say about me"*, then everything would change overnight. We would suddenly be free to form our own opinions, make our own decisions, think for ourselves and swim against the tide, which we desperately need to start doing.

There is a clear connection between our pride and our desire to be approved of by others. I am certain it is a major contributory factor at the very least. Therefore, ask yourself *"Why do I want their approval anyway? What does it matter whether they think well of me or criticize me?"* You will probably discover you are far more influenced by the risk of being disapproved of than you have ever realized. Be willing to tackle this craving for approval and your life will be transformed.

Humility is the opposite of this world's way of operating

Being set free from the treadmill of having to seek for other people's approval is important but it is not the only benefit that comes from tackling our own pride. Humbling ourselves will benefit every area of our lives because the entire world system is based on pride and self-centeredness, whereas humility is the very opposite of how this world operates.

Therefore, developing humility will automatically put you in a better position to deal with every other issue that arises. It will predispose you to think biblically and to identify false teaching and sinful attitudes and practices because those evils are much more easily recognized and avoided by a humble person than by one who operates in pride.

⁴⁶ An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. ⁴⁷But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side ⁴⁸and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

Luke 9:46-48 (ESV)

Let the child Jesus spoke of be your model. See yourself as a child does – with innocence, guilelessness and the total absence of self-importance.

There is a lot of pride and ambition within church leaders

We must not imagine that pride is a sin which doesn't affect church leaders. I have been grieved to discover over the years and in many different churches that the leaders were frequently very arrogant, puffing themselves up, promoting themselves and undermining anyone they saw as a threat to their position.

See my Book 6 for numerous stories of church leaders I have personally known who have behaved in the most shocking ways with dishonesty, greed, paranoia and self-promotion. It is far from being rare. Indeed, I would go so far as to say it is commonplace and perhaps even the norm.

That was not always so. There have been times in history when the condition of the churches was far healthier, in particular from the 16th to the 19th centuries in the UK and the 18th to the 20th in the USA. But that is not the case in these apostate days in which we live in the 21st century.

Therefore, if you are a leader, do not puff yourself up. Do not seek for money, fame, glory or even recognition. Just seek to be faithful to God and to Scripture, and do your best to help others to grow as disciples and to fulfil their callings. Turn everything around 180° and start to think in terms of you being there to help *them* to succeed rather than of them being there to help *you* to succeed.

Life isn't about you, especially if you are a leader. And if you are a leader, remember the Greek word translated as minister simply means 'servant'. Churches might be better led if we got rid of the word 'minister' and called all leaders servants. Just imagine it being announced in your church newsletter that "*our church has appointed a new servant.*" It would affect how he is seen, but also how he sees himself.

There is also a lot of pride and worldliness amongst church members, not just leaders

In case you doubt that there are people inside churches who behave in a carnal, worldly manner, consider this passage:

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; ¹⁰ not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one.

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 (RSV)

Look at the list of features and traits Paul gives here. Is he exaggerating? Is he mistaken? Or could it be that Paul is correct in thinking such people are to be found *inside* churches and in sufficient numbers to make them a danger to that church? Of course, Paul is right. He was right then in the 1st century Church and he would be even more right if he was to say it now of our lukewarm, apostate 21st century churches.

We have to drive the world out of ourselves and out of our thinking, just as the Israelites had to eliminate the Canaanites

The way the Israelites had to operate when they first entered the Promised Land is a lesson to us in dealing with the world. The Israelites were given land that had previously belonged to the Canaanites whom God was punishing and removing due to their extreme wickedness. So, God commanded the Israelites to totally destroy the Canaanites not only as a fully deserved judgment upon them but also because they would otherwise inevitably become a problem to the Jews:

⁵⁵ But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell.

Numbers 33:55 (RSV)

God has not given that instruction to us. Therefore, although we can't destroy or drive out the world, we can resist, avoid and ignore it and we must.

Do not marry, or go out with, a non-Christian

One would imagine this wouldn't need to be said, and that it is obvious, since letting an unsaved person into such a profoundly important place in your life is bound to cause great damage and obstruct you in your growth as a disciple. And yet, somehow, it is not obvious to millions of people worldwide who choose to compromise and marry, or go out with, an unbeliever.

So, although we can and should be friends with non Christians, we cannot allow them to be our spouse or even view them as a possibility. Therefore, we have to be willing to separate ourselves from those who would drag us down to their level. At least we must refrain from entering into intimate relationships with those who are worldly:

¹⁴ Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶Or 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. ¹⁷"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. ¹⁸"And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (NASB)

There are two main contexts in which a Christian must not be intimately linked with a non-Christian. The most crucial of these is marriage. No believer should ever marry an unbeliever and if you think God is telling you to do so, then think again. It would be entirely contrary to His express Word and thus any such message you imagine you are getting could not possibly be coming from Him. To marry an unbeliever will inevitably bring intense problems and grief, usually for both parties. I have virtually never seen it work out well. However, the second context is going into business with a non Christian partner.

Do not go into business with a non-Christian

This is not quite so absolute, but is almost so. I know from bitter experience the harm that can come from entering into a close business relationship, in my case equity partnership in a law firm, with a man who was not only unsaved but also a Freemason. Therefore, I personally would never again join myself to an unbeliever in business.

We can be employed by an unbeliever in a paid job and we can also employ unbelievers to do a job for us because the employment relationship is far less intimate than equity partnership. Therefore, there is no prohibition against either of those things, although both are still likely to bring problems. But to enter into an equity partnership or to share the ownership of a private limited company with an unbeliever is asking for trouble. I did it once, but will never do it again. I became a one third equity partner with two other men, one of whom was a Freemason.

Everything he stood for was the opposite of what I stood for. In the end I caught him stealing from the business by forging an invoice on the firm's letterhead. His other misconduct led to further headaches as well and we were totally unsuited to run a business together. To do so requires total trust and confidence but it also helps enormously if you have the same world view, at least if you are in a smaller firm.

That said, I don't think this problem arises, or not to anything like the same degree, if you are offered equity partnership in a huge law firm or accountancy practice such as Eversheds or KPMG. In such a firm there are hundreds of partners, most of whom you would never meet. Therefore, that would be different, even if most of them were unbelievers, because there is no real intimacy or personal entanglement in such a huge set up.

We also have to stand out from the crowd in the things we *won't say or do*. There are times when we just can't join in with their sinful actions or crude conversations, or even be with them:

³But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Ephesians 5:3-4 (NASB)

This means that if you are a genuine Christian, rather than a compromiser, you will become like a square peg in a round hole. You will be, from now on, a foreigner who does not fit into this world's system. You will therefore stand out like the ugly duckling. The apostle Peter describes it as being like an '*alien or exile*':

¹¹Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul.

1 Peter 2:11 (RSV)

You therefore need to change the way you think about most things and keep on doing so if you want to develop from being a naïve unbeliever to a mature believer:

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

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

We have to be in the world but the world must not be in us

*"The boat in the sea is all right,
the sea in the boat is all wrong.
The Church in the world is alright,
the world in the Church is all wrong"* – Anon

God's Word requires us to turn our backs on many things which the people of this world hold dear. That is not a popular view today and therefore many churches are indistinguishable from the world in the way they speak, act, dress, work and socialise. But that ought not to be. We are obliged to live '*in*' the world, as we have no choice but to do so. However, we must not be '*of*' the world.

We are meant to be so different that the people of the world can tell immediately we are not like them. Some of them may then want to find out why that is and what makes us different, and perhaps some will be saved. Sadly, most will just be antagonised and repelled. The problem is most of us are not sufficiently different for anybody to notice anything unusual about us. Most Christians in the West are worldly, at least to some extent, and an increasing number of us are very worldly.

An individual Christian or church is meant to be like a lifeboat in the sea in stormy weather. It is right for the lifeboat to be in the sea, where it is close at hand to rescue those who are drowning. But it is not good for the sea to be in the lifeboat or it will sink. Likewise, it is right for us to be in the world, where we can do good and reach some people. But it's not right for the world to be in each of us, or in the Church as a whole such that it destroys our witness and hinders our growth.

The pull of the world causes many to fall away

The influence of the world doesn't only hinder our growth as disciples. I believe that in very severe cases it can also cause us to fall away completely so we cease to be Christians and even lose our salvation. Perhaps that is what happened to Demas who deserted Paul as a result of his love for the world system:

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessaloni'ca; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

2 Timothy 4:10 (RSV)

Our clothing should be modest

This issue of immodest clothing applies most often, but not only, to women. I have been surprised in recent years by how many young women come to church dressed suggestively, with clinging garments, short skirts etc. One has to ask for whom are they putting on this display? I think they are so thoroughly steeped in the idea that women need to attract men that they do it all the time and without restraint, even in churches. Of course, they should not do it anywhere, but somehow doing it in church makes it so much more deplorable.

³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.⁴Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands,

1 Peter 3:3-5 (RSV)

Therefore, wherever you are going, dress yourself to please Jesus, not men, and ask yourself whether He is likely to be pleased with the clothes you are proposing to wear. Instead of trying to fit in we should be trying to stand out, i.e. to be obviously different from the unsaved people around us, not imitations of them. This principle should extend to everything we think, say, do and wear.

Seeking the approval of the world instead of God's approval

Unless we set our minds to do otherwise, we are likely to seek for the approval of this world and the people in it rather than seeking God's approval. Seeking the world's approval will always lead us to make wrong decisions. Likewise, looking at this from the opposite direction, we must not fear the disapproval of the world but only God's disapproval:

⁴²Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

John 12:42-43 (NASB)

Fearing the opinions of worldly people, whether they are in the Church or not, will cause us to disobey God. We cannot have the approval of both God *and* the world. So, we have to choose to please one, or the other, because we can't please both. It is impossible, as they are complete opposites.

The majority is usually wrong

There is a tendency, especially in the English-speaking world, to revere democracy. However, the truth is that on many issues the majority is wrong. That is why the founding fathers of the United States wisely chose to make it a 'Republic', ruled by a settled body of law, enshrined in a written Constitution, not a democracy ruled by the ever changing opinions of the majority.

Indeed, in this exceptionally "dumbed down" generation we are now part of, I would go so far as to say the majority is usually wrong, at every level, and on most subjects. For example, most Western nations are financially bankrupt. Their national, commercial and personal debt levels are staggering.

This is mainly the fault of our corrupt governments acting on the instructions of the even more corrupt 'WEF' (World Economic Forum). Yet it would be wrong to blame our elected politicians alone for this. They acted stupidly, and did what the WEF told them to do, but they also did what most of us *wanted them to do*. If any political party in the UK had stood for election in 2010 on a platform of:

- a) cutting public spending
- b) reducing, and then eliminating, public borrowing
- c) paying off the national debt and
- d) living within our means,

then that political party would have been wiped out at the polls. At any rate, that was the assessment of all the major parties, and they were undoubtedly correct, at least in their election forecasting. Even in 2010, in the campaign prior to the UK elections, where it was obvious we were in an appalling economic mess, and had no alternative but to make heavy cuts in public spending, *no party dared to say so*.

It was an elephant in the room that none of them was willing to discuss honestly. However, that was not solely because our *politicians* are corrupt and foolish, which of course they are. It was also because they knew that *we* are corrupt and foolish. They accurately concluded that most of us were far too foolish to handle the truth. So, they hid it from us, to avoid us voting against them as a punishment for telling us the truth.

It was wrong of them to mislead us in that way, but it was also wrong of us to put them in a position where the only thing we would accept from them was unreality and self-delusion. Of course, that was not true of *every* voter, but it was true of *most* voters, as our political leaders correctly figured out.

But the same folly applies in every other context. The majority is wrong about many moral and ethical issues and is certainly wrong about most theological issues. Most people reject the real Christian Gospel, the real God and the real Jesus Christ. They like their own reinvented alternative versions of these, *but not the real ones*. That is why Jesus told us to go through the 'narrow gate' and to walk on the 'narrow way', where few people go, not on the 'broad way' on which most people are walking:

¹³"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴"For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NASB)

Jesus also told us quite bluntly that few people will be saved:

²³And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, ²⁴"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Luke 13:23-24 (NASB)

Please see my Book 5, '*How to become wise*' for some more examples of misguided, politically correct philosophies that this world embraces. These all contradict what God says, and yet they are widely accepted, even by Christians, without any thought or critical appraisal. See also my audio series entitled 'Modern deceptions'.

The world system isn't going to go away and it won't change either

It's no use praying for the world to change or for its values to become godly and biblical. That will never happen. We know that for sure because the prophetic Scriptures show what this world is going to be like at the end and also in the approach to the end. It is going to be as bad, or even worse, than it is now. All we can hope for is to reach individuals and bring the Gospel to them, not to the majority.

Christianity is not going to take over the world as some people, in particular "post millennialists", imagine. Moreover, we are not going to see the world as a whole turn to Jesus or forsake worldly/satanic values and standards. That will only ever be done by individuals and, until Jesus returns, they will always be in the minority.

Until then, we have to live in this evil world and endure what it does whilst also seeking (as individuals) to be an overcomer rather than being overcome by the world. One of the purposes for our being required to live amongst all this chaos, folly and wickedness is to pass the tests God sets for us and to grow in character. The other main reason for our being here is to reach out to others with the Gospel in the limited amount of time we have left.

Don't pray for all the tests and difficulties to go away

Therefore, don't pray for all these tests and problems to go away. That would be like a man at a gym praying that the treadmill or exercise bike would be taken away. What he needs is to face up to them and overcome the pain barriers as he exercises. Otherwise he won't improve. The spiritual battles we face are the same and so some of our situations just need to be faced and overcome and there is no point asking God to take them away. We need at least some of them if we are to grow in character, experience and wisdom.

Some things in the world just need to be avoided

However, there are times when the best way to deal with the pressure of the world's influence is simply to keep away from it, i.e. wherever you can. Therefore, don't deliberately put yourself in temptation's way and take care to avoid all those places, situations and people which are likely to compromise you or tempt you to sin. And avoid any job which involves dishonesty or the need to do something immoral.

Likewise, avoid people who are a bad influence. It is very important whom we choose for our friends. Choose them wisely, purposely gathering around you people who will be a good influence upon you. Of course, you will still have to mix with some bad people, at least at work, but you don't need to make them your close friends or allow them to influence you.

Avoid pornography and worldly films, TV internet sites and music

This is a really important point, especially as there are countless men worldwide (and some women) who are led astray by suggestive or even outright pornographic content. I know one man who was in a leadership position in a large church and yet he confided in me that he had an addiction to pornography and watched X rated films after his wife had gone to bed.

There is no way you can watch things like that and yet still grow as a disciple. Indeed, it is in doubt whether you could even continue as a disciple at all, let alone grow. So, take this very seriously and if need be, treat yourself as you would treat a child and put in place effective firewalls and other means of blocking "adult content". Protect yourself from yourself.

Have nothing to do with any film or programme which creates temptation or induces you to sin in any way. And it is not just sex but also horror films, occult films and even online gambling sites. Put all those things out of your reach so you can't be polluted by them. And remember, nobody will do any of this for you. You must do it all for yourself.

It is not just what we watch but also what we listen to that can lead us astray. Therefore, we must have a thorough reappraisal of what music or radio comedy programmes we allow ourselves to listen to. You need to adopt the role of a strict but sensible parent and tell yourself what is and is not acceptable for you to listen to.

I say that because today much of the music industry is utterly godless and immoral, not only in their dress and lifestyle but also in the lyrics to their songs which openly promote sexual immorality, the occult, feminism, selfishness and so on. Indeed, many of them glorify Satan and the singers themselves openly identify as Satanists. You see this in particular in the hand gestures they make which are intended to be seen by those who understand.

Therefore, if you are a new convert, or even if you have been a Christian for years, look closely at your CDs or downloads and critically appraise the music, and also the performers, with all of this in mind. Do not allow any corrupt, immoral or worldly lyrics to be heard by your ears or any of their dance videos to be seen by your eyes. Protect yourself as you would a vulnerable 11 year old child.

I remember when I was 19 and newly saved a man called John Van Harn who became a tremendous influence in my life and who was my first, and only, mentor said to me that I should rethink what music I listen to and get rid of anything that wasn't wholesome. I was a very earnest and teachable young man and I immediately took his advice.

Indeed, I believe I substantially over did it, because I got rid of *all* my music cassettes, not just some of them as John had in mind. I did so because I knew he had given me a very important piece of advice and I wanted to be receptive to it. I therefore threw away everything, including all my Simon and

Garfunkel and Beatles cassettes, some of which I then repurchased some years later. Although a few of their songs were not wholesome, the vast majority were alright in my view.

Yet, I don't regret it and I believe that although God was well aware that in my zeal to obey Him I was taking it too far, He was touched and honoured by my willingness to be instructed. I believe He therefore rewarded me for it, even though I went too far, and He made sure I later moved to a more balanced position.

A far greater problem than my youthful enthusiasm and excessive zeal is the attitude of being reluctant to do this at all. For example, I recently counselled a couple in their fifties who regularly went to open air rock festivals, usually taking place for a whole weekend. They were relatively new converts and I said, as gently as I could, that I was concerned they were attending such events, given the lyrics they would hear and also the lifestyle of the performers, and even the fellow audience members.

They looked at me with blank incomprehension, unable to grasp what on Earth the problem was. They asked if it was drugs I was concerned about and I made clear I had no anxiety about them taking drugs. I said my concern was about them allowing into their ears music and lyrics which could be, in some cases, worldly, immoral and sinful.

However, they brushed my concerns aside and I don't think they ever understood my point or grasped what danger they faced. They saw it as a complete non issue and that I was making a fuss about nothing. I would have been content if they had said *"Yes, I see what you mean. Perhaps singer X and group Y could be a bad influence on us and we will be alert from now on to examine other groups' lyrics too"*.

But they didn't. They just brushed it all aside as irrelevant and could not imagine how they could possibly come to any harm. Thus they were at the opposite end of the spectrum to my 19 year old self. I over reacted but they refused to react at all. We were both mistaken, but my mistake was healthier, and more capable of being rectified, as indeed it was, a couple of years later.

The temptation to fit in or join in with the world

Refuse to go along with worldly ideas and manipulative marketing. Reject that whole package of values and assumptions. For example, I once received a letter from a company wanting me to sign up to some contract. They offered me an incentive in the form of a "VIP card" which would enable me to go straight to the front of the queue at airports and to sit in a luxurious departure lounge away from other tourists.

That is not a problem in itself, but what put me off was that their letter spoke about how "important" this would make me feel and how it would reflect my "high status". Reading that flattery just made me want to laugh. The whole advert was based on the assumption that the world's self-promoting ways are right and that I would be on its wavelength and want to be part of all of this competitiveness.

Thus, that advert did not work for me, but only made me wince. I'm not saying it's wrong to go into a VIP departure lounge, if that's what you want. It's simply that I didn't want to be manipulated into that by any attempt to puff up my sense of self-importance. They automatically assumed I had a craving for status. But I already have enormous status, because I am a human being and am therefore *made in God's image*. I also have all the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to me.

How can my status get any higher than that? You could apply the same thinking to a multitude of different scenarios where advertisers seek to manipulate us through our own worldliness. We therefore need to recognize and reject the world's system and values whenever we see them surfacing and don't let yourself be manipulated.

God uses the world as a training ground for us, like an assault course

Part of the reason for God requiring us to be in this wicked world is that it is like being on an army assault course at times because of the opposition and hostility we face. That training regime will never be pleasant or easy, but it is beneficial, and we should not be surprised by it or consider it strange:

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; ¹⁶yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God.

1 Peter 4:12-16 (RSV)

God will use all the trouble and opposition this world creates to benefit you and you will grow because of it:

³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)

My Dad told me of how, when he was in the army in World War 2, he and his colleagues were required to crawl on their bellies across a field while the instructors fired live bullets just a couple of feet above their heads. The purpose of it was to get them well used to the experience of being under fire from the enemy. Then, if they had to face active service, they wouldn't panic when the real bullets were flying.

The training was so realistic that men were occasionally killed. But it served its purpose and I have to say that God's approach to training us for warfare is not dissimilar. He is willing to let us face real hardship and even real danger, to toughen us up and make us into mature disciples. So don't bother getting your Mum to give you a note asking God for you to be excused from all this. I am quite sure God won't pay any attention to it. As the saying goes – “*You're in the Army now*”.

There are rewards on offer to us if we can overcome the problems the world poses for us

The Judgment Seat of Christ awaits us. There will be rewards and honours for all of us who can learn to be overcomers and deal well with the challenges and opposition this world brings. Remember also that as your character grows through opposition and difficulty you can expect, one day, to be rewarded for that. It will not go unnoticed by God.

Without the opposition of this world we could not grow in character or earn the rewards God wishes to give us. That is why the Bible tells us to “give thanks in all circumstances” and to rejoice when we face

all kinds of trials, because we really do benefit from them, even though it never seems like that while we are going through it. If you can see that, then your mind is already starting to be renewed.

Beware also of getting your political ideas and values from the world

You do need to be careful how you form your social, political and moral opinions and how you develop your world view. Instead of being careful, most of us allow our opinions and beliefs to form themselves, based on what we hear on the TV news, whom we mix with, what job we do or what our background is. For example, I was once talking to a lawyer who was a Christian and whose focus was employment law. But he told me he only acted for employees, not employers, as he wanted to “fight for justice”.

Basically, he was left wing and assumed that in any dispute between an employer and an employee, the employee will always be the victim and the employer is always the wrongdoer. But that is naïve at best and a sign of narrow minded prejudice. In real life, victims and villains are to be found all over the place and on both sides of the fence. You can’t adopt a simplistic world view based on your political bias.

Likewise, I remember once getting into a debate with a young Christian woman about whether the Human Rights Act is a good or a bad thing. Her view was it is obviously good and that this was self evident. In fact, the only thing that was obvious was that she knew little or nothing about the Human Rights Act. More to the point, she had never even asked herself what God thinks of it. Presumably she assumed it was obvious that He agreed with her.

She particularly objected when I said God doesn’t think in terms of us having rights, but rather duties and responsibilities. So, the biblical position is that we do not have any rights as such, but we do benefit from the fact that other people have duties and responsibilities. And other people benefit from the fact that we have duties and responsibilities which limit what we are allowed to do to them.

That is God’s way of handling it. It puts Him at the centre, not us. By contrast, the Human Rights Act views mankind and the world through an unbiblical humanist lens which distorts everything, puts us at the centre instead of God, and leads to all sorts of perverse conclusions. That is why, for example, it protects criminals and puts restraints on the law abiding and on the victims of crime.

In my Book 5, I have a chapter on the whole subject of “rights based thinking” which I argue goes entirely contrary to the way the English legal system always used to work. That is because the English Common Law used to be based on biblical thinking and principles. You may find that chapter useful. But, at the very least, please be willing to be on the lookout to challenge worldly thinking and deceitful propaganda in every part of your life, including the places where you least expect it, because it is being fired at us in a constant cascade, like a farmer driving a slurry spreader across a field.