

Respecting Local Culture Without Conforming To The World

I. Introduction:

A. Paul gives us insight in how not to hinder the spread of the Gospel by standing too far out in local cultures (**I Corinthians 9:19-23**).

1. He conceded to Jewish culture in areas of his liberty (**Acts 16:1-4; 18:18**).
2. He went to great lengths to not offend temple laws (**Acts 21:20-26**).
 - a. Remember, they were in a transition from the Law of Moses to Christ.
 - b. Going into the temple was NOT like assembling with a religious erring group of today. The temple was lawful in the past (**Ezra 1:3**).
3. There was authority to exercise one's liberties towards those that were not under the Law of Moses too (**I Corinthians 10:23-33**).

B. What was the goal (**II Corinthians 6:1-3**)?

1. Think about Paul's instructions to Timothy (**I Timothy 4:15-16**).
2. Not that thinking like this only applies to evangelists (**I Corinthians 7:16** and **I Peter 3:1-4**).

II. Body: We Cannot Pattern Our Lives After The World (**Romans 12:1-2**), So Where's The Balance?

A. Jesus does not desire that we remove ourselves from the world entirely (**John 17:6-20**).

1. As it relates to the same principles Paul was discussing in **I Corinthians 9:19-23**, Jesus too interacted socially with people of the world (**Matthew 9:9-13**).
2. Like Paul, Jesus' goal was to save the lost (**Luke 15:1-32**).

B. Yet, friendship with the world is hatred with God (**James 4:4**) and this poses us with a difficult point of balance.

1. Think about the many, many Scriptures that support what was written in James 4:4: **Psalms 26:4-5, Psalms 97:10, Psalms 101:3, Psalms 119:104, Proverbs 13:20, Proverbs 29:27, Jeremiah 15:17, Romans 12:9, I Corinthians 15:33, II Corinthians 6:14-18, and Ephesians 5:6-11**.
2. Who are the friends of Jesus (**John 15:14**; cf. **Matthew 12:46-50**)?
4. You are not "of God" if you are "of the world" (**John 15:19-20, Ephesians 2:1-3, and I John 4:4-6**).
5. There is a spiritual division between saints and sinners (**Acts 26:18-20, Colossians 1:12-13, I John 3:1-10, and I John 5:19**).
6. Since we are in this world, there are times when we will keep company with sinners (**I Corinthians 5:9-13**).
 - a. We have to be lights to the world (**Matthew 5:14-16**).

b. Just remember what we are shining in the midst of (**Philippians 2:14-16**).

7. We have to remember that the works of the world are evil (**John 7:7**) [context is Jesus talking to His physical brothers (**John 7:3-6**).]

C. There is a balance. This is true even besides trying to win lost souls. In a context about marriage, the point is made that one can use the world without abusing it (**I Corinthians 7:31-34**).

1. As has been established already, if we're going to be soul winners (**Proverbs 11:30**) we have to interact with the world.

2. However, we can also make use of this world (**Luke 16:9-10**).

3. The balance comes down to the individual.

a. Avoid what causes internal spiritual conflict (**I Peter 2:11**).

b. Are you using the world, or are you the one that is being put to use for worldly purposes (**Mark 8:31-33**)?

c. Are your thoughts tending too much to the satisfying of the flesh (**Romans 13:13-14**)?

d. Can people of the world tell the difference between you and them (**I Peter 4:1-5**)?

e. Don't use these principles to justify yourself being worldly (**Proverbs 12:15** and **Luke 16:14-15**).

III. Conclusion: No scripture authorizes Christians to love the world or the things of the world (**I John 2:15-17**).