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# Everlasting love

## 1 John: Confidence and faith - Session 4

*To show that we should invest in things that will last. For followers of Jesus, investing in the right things in the right way is evidence that their faith is real - from 1 John: 2:15-17.*

**Materialism** A tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.

**Hedonism** The pursuit of pleasure; sensual self-indulgence. [oxforddictionaries.com](http://oxforddictionaries.com)

### Q1. How well do you think these two “isms” describe society around us?

#### 1 John 2:15-17

*15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For 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. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

Note: When John uses the word ‘world’ he is not referring to the physical environment as such. What he means is ‘humankind’ – a generic reference to human beings – who are opposed to God and what God stands for.

### Q2. What is John talking about when he says: “do not love the world or anything in the world?”

· In 1 John 2:16 he talks about “cravings”, “lust” and “boasting” to describe what’s in the world. So not loving the world is about not having these same desires. It’s about not being driven by materialism or hedonism.

### Q3. Does that mean we shouldn’t get any enjoyment from a buying a new jacket, having dinner at a nice restaurant, going on an overseas holiday or buying a new car?

· No, but it can be a problem if these things are the things that we live for.

“Don’t let your happiness depend on something that you can lose” – C.S. Lewis

#### **Q4. Why does John say not to love the world or anything in the world?**

· It is because the world will pass away (1 John 2:17). God wants us to love him/do his will because it is the only thing that will last beyond the grave. To love what this world offers is to tie your happiness to what you will ultimately lose.

#### **Q5. How can we work out what we love?**

· There are two things we can look at:

How content we are – if we desire more then that can be an indication of what we love.

How generous we are – if we find it difficult to give things away then that can be an indication of what we love.

“I’m not a materialist or a hedonist. To me, the most important thing in life is my family”.

#### **Q6. Does 1 John 2:15-17 have anything to say in this case?**

· Making family the most important thing in life sounds more noble than being a materialist or hedonist. However, even the best of human relationships are separated by death (theirs or yours) so the person is still tying their happiness to something they can lose (to quote C S Lewis).

John writes: *‘The man who does the will of God lives forever’*. (1 John 2:17). One man who claimed to have gone to the ‘other side’ was billionaire Australian businessman Kerry Packer.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Q7. How do we know if Packer is right about the other side?**

· A good question to ask of Packer is: how dead is “technically dead”?

· Comparing Packer to Jesus, it then becomes a question of looking at the evidence of the resurrection: Eyewitnesses of Jesus knew that he was dead on the cross (Roman soldiers knew how to properly execute their victims), that he was placed in a burial tomb (guarded by Roman soldiers)...that he was dead three days. This makes Jesus much better qualified to speak about the other side.

#### **Q8. John writes: *‘The man who does the will of God lives forever’* (1 John 2:17). Is John saying that acceptance by God is based on what we do?**

Note: To answer this question, something we looked at in a previous session should help with an answer: *‘But if we walk in the light, as he [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, purifies us from all sin’* (1 John 1:7).

“Fellowship” just means partnership, being united for a purpose.

· What makes us acceptable to God? On face value, 1 John 2:17 seems to say that it is obedience to God. However the verse from 1 John 1:7 suggests that it is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us. Both are true statements. If we’re in partnership with God then we will walk in the light/do his will – that’s the nature of the partnership. But it is

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<sup>1</sup> Kerry Packer: *Wizard of Oz*, BBC news, Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2000.

a partnership that is underwritten by the blood of Jesus, because it is Jesus that deals with our sin. Without that cleansing there's no way a pure and holy God could accept us.

(...) He has already experienced eight heart attacks and after one of them, while playing polo in Sydney, the Australian media magnate technically "died" on October 7, 1990. His heart stopped beating for seven minutes before he was revived. The experience did nothing to change Packer's robust, if tenuous grip on life. "I've been to the other side", he said. **"And let me tell you, there's nothing there"**.

Getting back to John's letter ...

### **1 John 5:13**

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

Note: By "know" John means that his readers might have greater confidence and assurance in what they believe.

### **Q8. How does this section in 1 John on love help John's readers with their confidence and assurance?**

1. "The world and its desires are passing away". This reality check is useful because it shows that the alternatives to loving God are temporary and ultimately unsatisfying...this helps with assurance (the alternatives aren't that attractive, under this reality check).
2. "The man who does the will of God lives forever". Obedience is key. Concern for obedience – as seen in the changing attitudes and behaviour - is evidence that their faith is real (personally true for them rather than evidence that the Christian faith is absolutely true)...this is confidence-building.

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