

No matter what people say, you can't do two things at one time. Sure, you can walk and talk at the same time. You're definitely breathing, blinking, and listening right now. But people have tripped while walking and talking. Listening won't keep you from breathing or blinking, but can you listen to the TV and do homework? How many parents here were told to keep their radios off while doing homework? How many of you have said the same thing to your children about their iPods, TVs, or computers?

It's hard to do. The more we love something the harder it is. Think about lunch time at school or the office. Isn't concentration hard when your stomach is growling? With Christmas getting closer each day and decorations going up soon if they're not already toys will start to enter the minds of children from young to old. That something you've waited for all year now jumps to number one on your list because you love it and want it.

Near the end of the Bible there are a couple of letters from the apostle John. This disciple whom Jesus loved wrote his first letter mainly about love; love which comes from God and makes us his children, and creates a relationship with those around us. But it's also love that can be misplaced or misused. John mentions that kind of love today in the second lesson. He warns us against love that finds the wrong target and won't let go, and commands for us to...

**Love God above all  
Even above the things of this world  
To attain the eternity he provides**

Picture the end of a race. Runners, cars, or horses all cross the finish line. Their finish order is flashed up on the screen. First for the first one across, second for the second across. You don't ever see it flash up that two names get the same place though. One had to cross before the other one. It might not be visible, it might take a laser or photo to decide, but someone finished before the other. There can never be two who finish in the same position.

John said something similar applies to our lives. Our hearts are like the finish line. Two things can never occupy first place in our hearts. Love is something that can't be split. **"If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."** Our hearts only have one top spot, and God demands it. When we put something there that's not God the Father, when God the Father is out of the top spot the love of the Father isn't even in us anymore.

But so many things are vying for our attention and love. Commercials tell us that we should love the car we drive and if we don't we need a new one. We love how it feels to have people looking at us driving that new car. Society tells us that if we don't like how we feel we must change. Drugs or surgery will help because no one should feel bad about themselves. Do something so you love yourself. And no one can limit who you love. We're told we can love anyone; it doesn't matter if we're male or female or they're male or female, no one will stop us from loving whomever we choose to love.

That's loving something that won't last, and something God tells us not to. **"Do not love the world or anything in the world."** We disobey God when we fixate on the life we have, the things we buy, or the relationships we form. Many are not bad in themselves. But **"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."** Everything and anything is sinful when we love it more than we love God.

Love is important to God. The most recognizable passage in the Bible talks about love. This John recorded that verse too. **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son."** So we're not to love the world, the stuff of this world. But God does love the world, the people of this world. He loved you and me. And because of his love you were first in God's mind and heart. Because of that incredible love he sent his Son Jesus for you. And not just you. God has many first places in his heart. So not only were you first but I was first in his heart too. He sent Jesus for me. And your grandma was first. And my uncle too. Each and every person in this world was first in God's heart. He loved them and sent Jesus to remove their sin, your sin, my sin.

Forgiveness means God never stops his love. It overflows directly into our lives. It's a love that overwhelms us and draws us close. God's love leads us to put him first in our lives. His promises to us drive us to keep him in the top spot. Everything we have, everything we want, everything falls into line when we love God. The Holy Spirit works in our hearts to make that happen. We love God above all, even above the things of this world.

From our earliest school days you probably remember falling in love for the first time. No one else mattered. What that person did was the most important thing. Events they went to you went to. Friends they had suddenly were your friends. You forgot your friends. You totally switched your schedule to spend every moment of every day with them. You loved them above everything else. And in many cases your first love got you only pain. First loves often fail in heartache and pain. Our love relationship with God won't end that way, not with heartache or pain. Loving God above everything means we will attain eternal life through him.

Prepare for a reality. Everything you see is going away. Everything in this world is perishing. **“The world and its desires pass away.”** John said. The rich man walked away sad when Jesus told him something similar. He had great wealth and thought he was doing okay on his own. Does this reality make you sad too? The beautiful home you’ve made over the years is going away. The football or soccer you’ve trained so hard to play will be gone. The video games you want now, the movies you can’t wait to buy on DVD, and the toys you just have to have are all passing away. Are you saddened? Do you want to hold on a little longer? Not quite ready to let go.

John takes us back to the starting point to show only one thing is needed; the will of the Father. But what is his will? John quotes Jesus, **“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”** It’s centered in Christ his Son. It’s the saving work of the son that sets people free. Believing in Jesus guarantees eternal life. That’s so different than the life we live today, a life fading away, a life with no glory, a life with an end. With Jesus we have a life that is only going to get better. A life that has glory because Jesus has glory and chooses to give it to us. A life that will never end. **“The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”** Believe in Jesus and you’re doing the will of God.

God isn’t going to run a race so he can finish first in your heart. God isn’t going to compete with the things of this world. He wants you to put him first, to love him above all. It’s his love for you that allows you to do just that. Love that flows through Christ to you gives you the motivation to put God first in your life above even everything else. And love that flows from Christ is growing in your heart so that your confidence for a life beyond this one also grows. Love from God gives you eternal life. Do the will of God; believe in Jesus, he grants you eternal life.