

# How Can We Be in the World but Not of the World?

Michael Jakes | Pastor, writer

2021 7 May



Photo credit: ©Getty Images/Grafner

“I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world” ([John 17:14](#)).

In this verse, Christ states without question that, “they are not of the world.” This is because He himself, is not “of this world.” How does this happen? What does it mean to be “of this world”?

First, when we speak about this world, we are speaking of this *world system*. This world system is opposed to everything that is God and is under the dominion of Satan. Those who are unsaved, who move and operate within its system: its traditions, its culture, its music, its philosophies — are all *of the world*. Laws put into effect that violate God’s standards are all of this world, and tainted by the fingerprints of the enemy. Things evil called good, and good called evil, are all under the umbrella of this evil world system.

Even we sometimes think that we can live godly lives, and yet hold on to a piece of this world for ourselves. This is the spirit of the world trying to deceive us. No wonder we read from the pages of 1 John:

“We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one” ([1 John 5:19](#)).

Without Christ on the inside, everyone is of the world. If this is the case, then everyone who is of the world is classified as being *worldly*. When we are born again, we become a new creation because we are now in Christ. We read these powerful verses here:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)).

## How Are We Not “of the World”?

Since the world is under the sway of the wicked one, how can we who are *of God*, and *in Christ*, which is one and the same thing, be a part of that which is opposed to God?

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” ([Romans 6:4](#)).

The fact that we now able to walk in newness of life is only because the Spirit of Christ, which is the Holy Spirit, dwells within us. Had it not been for this glorious truth, we too would be part of this world system.

To further understand this concept of not being of this world, we must look further at what happened when we were born again. At the moment of salvation, we are *sanctified*; this means that we are separated.

“To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours” ([1 Corinthians 1:2](#)).

Being sanctified in Christ Jesus requires that we be mindful of who we are. Knowing who we are is an aid in helping us to steer clear of that which is of the world:

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” ([1 Peter 2:9](#)).

This truth alone should catapult us to a place where we should say of the world, “I don’t need your power, or your popularity, or your platitudes, to make me someone — look who I am!”



Photo credit: ©Getty Images/Wenping Zheng

## How Can We Put This into Practice?

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever” ([1 John 2:15-17](#)).

If all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, then, as Scripture states, what does it profit me if I should gain the whole world, but in the end lose my soul?

How do we maintain an “in the world, but not of the world” walk with the Lord?  
First, we can follow the Lord close:

“My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me” ([Psalm 63:8](#)).

The psalmist says here that he will be careful to follow the Lord close. We must be mindful never to do anything that would cause us to stray from Him. The world and its offerings can easily cause us to drift away from Him.

In the Old Testament, we see that Daniel and his three friends were taken from their homes and brought under Babylonian captivity. In an effort to assimilate the four young men into Babylonian society, they were given new names. The world system seeks to do the same thing to us; not change our names literally, but try to cause us to forget the God we serve through indoctrination—that was their plan.

But these four were devoted to God, and Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the food that was being offered — he had standards. These young men serve as an example to every child of God who faces the forces of world. Standing for what you believe may mean that you will stand alone, but that is fine when you have the favor of the Lord.

### Be Careful Not to Drift

“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” ([Hebrews 2:1](#)).

Do you find yourself drifting away from the Lord, and into the world? We need to remember who we are. This can give us courage to stand in the evil day.

Since Scripture makes clear to us that the world is our enemy, what is our defense against the world?

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our [faith](#)” ([1 John 5:4](#)).

This verse should cause a shout! When we place our faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross, we are victorious over the world, the flesh, and the Devil! Of course this does not mean that we will never be tempted with evil, or never sin, because there is no sinless perfection or graduating class in Christ.

It does mean however, that sin shall not have dominion over us. When we make Christ the object of our faith, when we ensure that we will have the help of the Holy Spirit who will guide away from that which is evil; we need only to be obedient.

As we walk through this world, it will beckon to us. As we engage in prayer (and the enemy will fight us there too), let us ever be mindful of Christ’s victory:

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” ([John 16:33](#) ).

Because he is victorious, so are we! [Hallelujah!](#)