

LIVING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD

STUDY SEVEN

The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18

Well-informed believers certainly should not be surprised that our times have turned in such a dreadfully wrong direction.

—Charles R. Swindoll

OVER his more than fifty years of ministry, Chuck Swindoll has watched our society embrace some not-so-good changes. And these changes weren't annoying, namby-pamby ones. *They were lethal!* Our great enemy Satan “prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

It seems that Satan's prey includes not only individuals but entire elements of our culture. Humanism, skepticism, and postmodernism have put air under the wings of these troubling changes.

Humanism champions creature over Creator. Skepticism chips away at God's truth. And postmodernism welcomes all kinds of mental, moral, and societal chaos. One philosopher lamented the insecurity of our times, saying that in our postmodern world “everything is possible and almost nothing is certain.”¹

To better understand the consequences of these changes, we need to extend our exposition of the previous study's passage. In this study, we'll dig deeper into John's warning, “do not love this world” (1 John 2:15), by analyzing the disturbing realities of our times.

We'll expose the false ideas that fuel the world's corrupt system and then get our first glimpse of the “anti-Christ” (2:18)—the enemies of Christ about whom John warns. Only when we know what we're up against can we make the difference in our world that Jesus calls us to make.



www.insight.org | www.insightworld.org

Copyright © 2009, 2020 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Ever since the serpent's lie to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, humans have been victims of deception. Thankfully, God's Word teaches us how to guard against deception. That's one of the many benefits of studying it. Before you embark on this study, pray God would give you a firmer grip on truth and a keener mind to spot spiritual lies.

Every time we open the Scriptures, we seek the voice of God. We want Him to use it to speak to us personally and address us in our unique circumstances. —Chuck Swindoll



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

After nearly six decades, John could still remember seeing Jesus on the Mount of Olives and hearing Jesus' words from His Olivet Discourse: "many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people" (Matthew 24:10–11).

Jesus unmasked the author of deception, Satan "the father of lies" (John 8:44). His lies persuade people to magnify themselves and dismiss God from their thinking and values. Satan opposes Christ and wants others to do the same.

John knew better than most the hostility of this world. That's why he wrote, "do not love the world" (1 John 2:15). Before we can make a positive difference, Chuck wants us to understand it. And to this task we now turn.



The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18



Observation: Analyzing the World

Review what John wrote about the world and deception in *1 John 2:15–17*. Observe how many times John uses the word, *world*, in this passage.² In what ways did John say the world appeals to our cravings (1 John 2:16)?

Love for the world leads people down a primrose path—a way that looks good, feels good, and promises power . . . but fades away in the end. What are the characteristics of the world?

Characteristics of the World

By “world,” John meant the organized system and culture of fallen humanity. This system is headed by Satan as “the commander of the powers in the unseen world” (Ephesians 2:2). The world:

- Leaves God out
- Is hostile toward Christ and Scripture
- Magnifies humanity as the supreme measure of all things
- Models depravity

Have you witnessed these characteristics of your world? In what ways?



The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18

Understanding Our Times

In John's day, Gnosticism undermined apostolic teaching about God and His Son. Today's postmodern attitude also rejects established biblical truths. It has led to an assault upon the Christian's spiritual life and has shredded Western society's moral fabric.

By embracing postmodernism, our society has blurred the sharp line between right and wrong. Biblical knowledge has fizzled. And our nation is now a *post-Christian* society. What are the results?

In his message, Chuck logged ten disturbing consequences that flow from postmodernism's poisoned spring:

- 1) *No authority is valid.* All opinions are *right* even if they contradict each other.
- 2) *No rules are valid.* Make up your own rules. Do what works for you.
- 3) *Style is more important than substance.* Appearance confirms truth. No need to test authenticity.
- 4) *Morality is a matter of choice.* Do what's right for you. Right and wrong are relative to person, circumstance, and culture.
- 5) *Tolerance is the cardinal virtue.* You should be open to and accepting of everyone's opinions or practices.
- 6) *Words have no inherent meaning.* Words mean what you want them to mean. Truth has no influence on the terms we use.
- 7) *Western culture is oppressive.* Objective truth, logic, democracy, inalienable rights—all should be tossed out of our vocabulary and practice.
- 8) *The line between truth and entertainment is removed.* Movies and media offer truth as valid as the Bible.
- 9) *Images and fantasy reflect reality.* What you find in video games and novels is just as real as the world we live in. Go ahead and take counsel from them.
- 10) *What you believe is right.* Ground your convictions in what you feel and imagine to be right.³



The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18

Awareness of the world’s ways shouldn’t alarm us as much as remind us that, as John taught, we’re living in the last days in which those who oppose Christ will have great influence. Who are these powerful people and what is the role they play in the end times?



Interpretation: Defining “Many Such Antichrists”

In the observation phase of the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible Study, we focus only on the scriptural text. In the interpretation phase when we’re searching for the author’s intended meaning for his original audience, we can consult commentaries by Bible scholars.

To help with the answers in this section, feel free to consult [Chuck’s commentary](#), the online commentary, [Constable’s Notes](#), at [NetBible.org](#), or other reliable Bible study resources you may own.

Read [1 John 2:18](#) and write down what you conclude about the relationship between the Antichrist and “many such antichrists.”

Because of the “antichrists” in his day, John claimed the last hour had come (1 John 2:18). Author and pastor Warren Wiersbe elucidates this claim:

All of Old Testament history prepared the way for the work of Christ on the Cross. All history since that time is merely preparation for “the end,” when Jesus will come and establish His kingdom. . . . “The last hour” began back in John’s day *and has been growing in intensity ever since*. There were ungodly false teachers in John’s day and during the intervening centuries they have increased both in number and in influence. “The last hour” or “the last times” are phrases that describe a *kind* of time, not a *duration* of time. . . . In other words, Christians have *always* been living in “the last time”—in crisis days.⁴



The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18

Think over your Christian journey. Do you remember occasions when spidery false teaching tried to lure you into its web? What falsehoods were proclaimed? How did you know they were false? What negative outcome would they have created in your life?



Chuck's Commentary Insight

First John Theme: Antichrist

According to John, this “last hour” between Christ’s first and second comings is like an inky predawn inhabited by shadowy agents of evil. He calls these figures “antichrists” (2:18). The Greek term *antichristos* [500], used here for the first time in Christian literature, is a compound of two words: *anti* [473], meaning “in place of” or “against,” and *christos* [5547], “Messiah” or “Christ.” The ambiguity may be purposeful. While all “antichrists” are opposed to Christ and His teachings, some antichrists go so far as to claim to be a messiah, thus opposing the true Christ by seeking to replace Him.⁵

According to 1 John 4:1–3, how did John instruct Christians to test Christian teaching?

I am not a witch hunter. I don't see the devil behind every bush. But you need to know there is a conspiracy going on. There is an invisible war being waged. If you don't see that, you will be hopelessly confused. —Chuck Swindoll



The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18

Though the serpent that tempted Adam and Eve died and degenerated, its spirit lives on. That's why Paul told us to keep a white-knuckle hold on the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

Have you felt any of the “disturbing realities of our times” above pulling you away from Christ and Christ's truth? Pick one or two and explain how their presence can splinter a society, diminish one's spiritual life, and frustrate the church's mission.

I remind you that deception is on the loose. Unless you're aware of it, you'll be led right down that primrose path. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Difficult Times Ahead

John's voice accompanied the other apostles' voices which cautioned Christians about the difficulties of living in the “last hour.” Paul gave an earnest warning to Timothy in 2 Timothy. Paul fired off the letter because he would soon pay the ultimate price for following Christ: a blade to the neck.

Eugene Peterson painted a vivid word-portrait of Paul's warning in his Bible paraphrase.

Don't be naive. There are difficult times ahead. As the end approaches, people are going to be self-absorbed, money-hungry, self-promoting, stuck-up, profane, contemptuous of parents, crude, coarse, dog-eat-dog, unbending, slanderers, impulsively wild, savage, cynical, treacherous, ruthless, bloated windbags, addicted to lust, and allergic to God. They'll make a show of religion, but behind the scenes they're animals. Stay clear of these people. (2 Timothy 3:1–5 The Message)



The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18

How does 2 Timothy 3:1–5 complement John’s teaching about the world and the antichrists in the end times?

The sons of Issachar understood their times (1 Chronicles 12:32). They knew how to spot the difficulties, make wise decisions, and honor God. Through the Word of Truth, we have access to a better understanding of our times than did the sons of Issachar. Furthermore, the Spirit of Truth grants us access to an increased level of spiritual power to make wise decisions and honor God.



Application: Surviving These Troubled Times

Based on John’s warnings, Chuck wants you to keep two truths with you:

- 1) *Biblical discernment will keep you from being disillusioned, deceived, and duped.* Study your times. Know your Bible. Think deeply. Don’t fret.
- 2) *Biblical direction will enable you to make hard decisions. Stand on your biblical convictions.* Don’t swerve. Lead your family. Speak your mind. Model truth. Live righteously.

By doing these studies, you already seek God’s heart and truth. Do you need to develop a better knowledge of your times? Or is the Spirit leading you to make an inconvenient decision? Write down below your plan for applying what you learned in this study.



The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18

It's no accident Jesus has placed us where we are. Every single Christian has a unique, God-given purpose for their lives on this earth. God can take us anytime He wants. But now we are here. He's with you. Be strong and courageous.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, no matter how outnumbered or intimidated I am, may I discern, speak, and act for Your glory. Christ has won the war. My hope rests secure. Your church marches forward. Your Spirit is in me. May I do what You have called me to do. In the strong name of Jesus, I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Vaclav Havel as quoted by Woodrow Kroll, *Back to the Bible* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2000), 80.
2. To review Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website sts.insight.org. If you do not have Chuck's *Living Insights* commentary on 1 John in your library, *grab a copy* at the Insight for Living Ministries web store.
3. Adapted from Woodrow Kroll, *Back to the Bible* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2000), 85–91.
4. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Real* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1972), 84–85.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2018), 62.

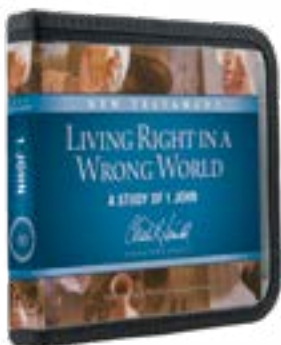


The Disturbing Realities of Our Times

1 John 2:15–18



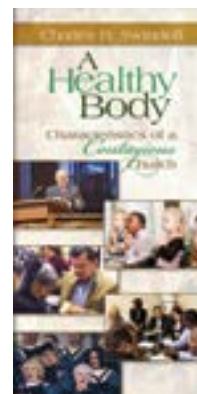
Tools for Digging Deeper



Living Right in a Wrong World
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



Swindoll's Living Insights
New Testament Commentary
Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude
by Charles R. Swindoll
Hardcover book



A Healthy Body: Characteristics of a Contagious Church
by Charles R. Swindoll
Softcover book

For these and related resources, visit www.insightworld.org/store
or call USA 1-800-772-8888 • AUSTRALIA +61 3 9762 6613 • CANADA 1-800-663-7639 • UK +44 1306 640156

For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

