

## Entangled in the World

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*No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier (2 Timothy 2:4).*

The world wants your attention. There are an endless number of causes that try to get our attention: political issues, social issues, environmental issues. Much of the news is geared toward getting and maintaining our attention. Mainstream media — any network, take your pick — create anger, outrage, and fear to keep their viewers coming back.

The phones we carry are useful tools, but they, too, are geared toward obtaining and holding our attention. The apps on them are designed to be appealing and even addictive. Their developers understand how certain features cause chemical reactions in our brains, creating a satisfaction that soon abates and leaves our brains wanting more.

Sports, hobbies, and youth activities all have entire industries built around them, providing more games to watch, more gear to research and buy, and more opportunities to play.

There is nothing inherently wrong with those things. There are many causes worthy of attention. Phones are not evil. They're just a thing. News is not all bad. It is good to be informed. Activities are not evil. Some recreation is good and beneficial. There are many of these that we are free to enjoy in our lives and to pay attention to.

But therein lies a challenge. “*No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life...*” The word translated “entangles” means to entwine, interlock, or weave. A good visual is a rope or a basket made of many interlocked strands of cloth or wood. As the pieces are woven together, they, in essence, become one.

As Paul writes these words, he is invoking a metaphor of a soldier engaged in war and his need to be occupied with the war. A soldier cannot entangle himself in the affairs of this life, as it would distract from his duty and purpose. This is a reminder to Timothy to focus on his faith and work for the Lord and not allow the world to entwine itself into his life, distracting him from his work.

That is what the world can do to all of us. All these things are clamoring for our attention, looking for ways to become more and more a part of our lives. They call to us continuously and relentlessly through the news, social media, advertisements, and societal pressures. While many of these things are not bad — some of them even have value — we can become too entangled in them.

The causes we take on, even the worthy ones, can become so a part of us that our thoughts and worries are consumed by them. The news can turn us bitter and angry and have us viewing the world through the lens of their narrative. We can all disappear into our phones. It's easy to fall into the endless scrolling, and instead of investing in meaningful things, we're stuck in a little box of repetition without progress. We can fill our lives so full of activities that we just float from one thing to the next without aim or purpose. These things take up our time; they fill up our minds, and they embed themselves in our hearts.

We all have limits to what we can do in this life. We have limited time, mental capacity, and space in our hearts. Giving time, energy, or effort to one thing leaves less room for other things. It seems that one of

the great challenges in this life is giving the proper things the proper space where we order our lives in such a way that the Lord, His Kingdom, and His work are the priority, and we commit the appropriate time to His word and prayer, actively working to increase our faith.

It is hard to live in the world but not be entangled in it. In the parable of the sower, the third seed falls among the weeds and the thorns and is choked out. Christ tells us that this seed is representative of those who accept the word but have their faith choked out by the cares of this world. The seed cast by the sower needed room to grow. It couldn't compete with the weeds for the nutrients from the soil or the sun. So, too, our faith needs room to grow. That's what we're fighting. All of these things that clamor for our attention can be the weeds choking out our faith.

We need the time in our lives to spend in the word, prayer, and service to the Lord. We need to have the space in our minds to meditate on whatever things are true, noble, pure, lovely, and of good report. And we need room in our hearts to place the proper value on the Lord and His kingdom. With the world pressing for our attention, we must intentionally keep things in their proper place. It won't happen without our devotion to it. Set the patterns in your life that keep your faith growing and meticulously work to keep the things in this world from becoming the weeds that choke out our faith. It's hard work to keep from getting entangled in the world, but as Paul told Timothy, we must resist the pulls of the world to give God His proper place in our lives.