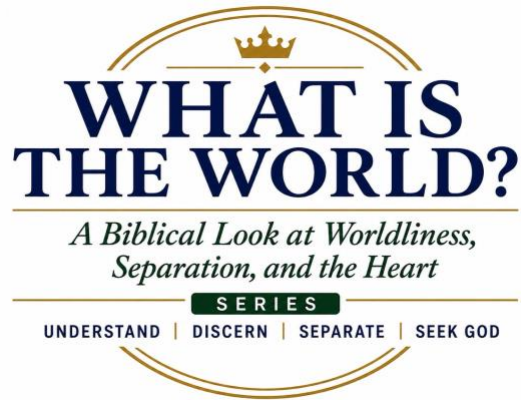




Lesson 2: Plain on the Outside, Worldly on the Inside

1. What Does the Bible Mean by “The World”?	5. The Fear of Man and the Danger of Tradition
2. Plain on the Outside, Worldly on the Inside	6. Modesty, Technology, and Christian Liberty
3. The Sins We Do Not Always Call Worldly	7. Born Amish Is Not the Same as Born Again
4. Hidden Worldliness and the Lusts of the Flesh	8. You Can Leave the Amish and Still Miss Christ

Lesson Overview

Many people can see plain clothing, a horse and buggy, or a simple home. These things may show a choice to live simply, but they cannot show what is in the heart. A person may look humble on the outside while pride, envy, anger, lust, dishonesty, or bitterness are growing within. Jesus warned about this kind of outward religion.

This lesson does not teach that plain clothing or a simple life is wrong. Modesty, humility, and wise limits can be good. The danger comes when we trust an outward way of life to make us holy or to prove that we belong to God. The Lord looks at the heart. Only Jesus Christ can forgive sin, give a new heart, and make a person clean from the inside out.

Main Scripture

Matthew 23:25-28

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. ²⁶ Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

Main Truth

Outward plainness cannot make the heart holy. Jesus Christ must cleanse the heart and change the life from the inside out.

Memory Verse

1 Samuel 16:7

“For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”

Section 1: Plain Clothes Cannot Make a Pure Heart

Amos was known as a plain man. His clothes were homemade, his buggy was simple, and his home had no electricity from the power line. People in his church saw him as a good example. Yet Amos often spoke harshly to his wife and children. He held anger against a neighbor and was not honest in every business deal. His plain life could be seen by everyone, but the sins of his heart were easier to hide.

We often judge by what our eyes can see. God sees much more. He sees every thought, desire, motive, and secret choice. A dark suit cannot cover pride from God. A prayer covering cannot hide envy. A slow way of travel cannot remove anger. Outward choices may affect how we live, but they cannot wash away sin.

The Lord Looks at the Heart

1 Samuel 16:7

“But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”

Samuel once looked at a strong, impressive man and thought he must be God's chosen king. God corrected him. People look at the outside, but God looks at the heart. This truth should make us humble. We may fool our family, our church, or our neighbors, but we can never fool the Lord.

Homemade Clothes and a Hidden Life of Sin

Sarah sewed every dress she wore. She followed the clothing rules of her church and would never wear jewelry. Yet she often compared herself with other women. She became jealous when another family had a nicer home or better horses. She also passed along stories that hurt people. Her clothing was plain, but her words and thoughts were not pleasing to God.

James 3:5-6

“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”

A small spark can burn a barn, a field, or a home. In the same way, a few careless words can damage a name, divide a family, or trouble a church. Gossip, jealousy, and an uncontrolled tongue are forms of worldliness even when the speaker looks very plain. God wants truth and love in our words, not just plainness in our clothes.

There is nothing wrong with sewing clothing, living simply, or choosing not to wear jewelry. The problem is trusting those choices while ignoring the heart. A clean outside does not prove a clean inside. We need to ask God to show us sins that others may not see.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it easier to notice a person's clothing or way of travel than the condition of that person's heart?
2. What hidden sins can remain in a person who carefully follows every outward rule?
3. How did Sarah's jealousy and gossip harm others even though she looked plain and respectable?
4. What is one part of your heart that you need to bring honestly before the Lord today?

Section 2: Outward Religion Is Not the New Birth

Levi believed that driving a horse and buggy made him separate from the world. His neighbor Daniel drove a car, so Levi felt more spiritual than Daniel. Yet Levi was proud, quick to judge, and hard to forgive. Daniel had trusted Jesus Christ and was learning to show kindness, honesty, and mercy. Their vehicles could not tell which man had been born again.

A horse and buggy may be a good choice for a family or community, but it is not Christianity. Homemade clothing is not Christianity. Speaking Pennsylvania Dutch is not Christianity. Church membership, baptism, and family history are not the new birth. Jesus said that every person must be born again.

You Must Be Born Again

John 3:3

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus, a very religious man. Nicodemus knew the law and lived a respected life, but he still needed a new birth. To be born again means that God gives spiritual life to a sinner who turns to Christ in faith. It is not a better outside placed over the old heart. It is the work of God within.

A person may be born into an Amish home, learn the Ordnung, join the church, and still never trust Christ. No family name or church rule can forgive sin. Jesus died on the cross and rose again. Salvation is received through faith in Him, not earned through a plain life.

The Pharisees Were Plain Too

The Pharisees were careful religious men. They wanted others to see their prayers, fasting, rules, and clean appearance. Jesus did not praise them for looking holy. He compared them to graves that were beautiful outside but full of uncleanness within. Their greatest problem was not a lack of rules. It was a heart full of pride and hypocrisy.

Matthew 23:27-28

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

John was a respected church leader. He could quickly point out when a young person's hat, dress, or buggy did not meet the rules. Yet at home he was angry and controlling. He demanded respect but did not show love. It is possible to correct every small outward detail in another person while refusing to face a serious sin in our own heart.

Matthew 7:5

“Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.”

Jesus did not teach that sin should be ignored. He taught that we must first deal honestly with our own sin. Outward religion often makes us compare ourselves with people. The new birth makes us humble before God. A changed heart does not say, “I am better because I am plainer.” It says, “I am a sinner who needs the mercy of Christ.”

Discussion Questions

1. Why could Levi's horse and buggy not prove that he was closer to God than Daniel?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said that a person must be born again?
3. How can strict outward rules lead a person to pride or to judging others?
4. Have you personally trusted Jesus Christ to forgive your sin and give you new life?

Section 3: Jesus Cleans the Inside First

Jesus does more than tell us to look better. He offers to make us new. We cannot scrub sin from our hearts through hard work, church rules, or tradition. When a sinner comes to Christ, God forgives him and gives him new life.

God Promises a New Heart

Ezekiel 36:26

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

A stony heart is hard toward God and resists the truth. God promises what we cannot produce: a new heart. This change begins inside, but it produces new words, choices, love, and a desire to obey God.

2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

A person is not made new by changing buttons, clothing, or vehicles. A person becomes a new creature by being in Christ. Christ within is the root, and a changed life is the fruit.

The Cup Illustration

Imagine a polished cup that looks clean outside but holds dirty water. Would you drink from it? The shining outside cannot make the water clean. The inside must be washed.

Jesus used this picture for the Pharisees. They made the outside look right while their hearts were full of sin. When Christ cleans the heart, our words, work, relationships, money, clothing, and private choices begin to come under His rule.

What Happens When Nobody Is Watching?

Eli followed every rule when church members were near. When nobody was watching, he looked at sinful things, lied to make money, and treated his family poorly. He protected his good name but did not walk honestly before God.

Hebrews 4:13

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

True holiness is shown when nobody else is watching. It is seen in our thoughts, words at home, money, and secret choices. We obey because we love the Lord who sees us at all times.

Plainness Has a Proper Place

Plain clothing, modest dress, simple living, and wise limits on technology may be helpful. But they must never replace the gospel or the new birth. We must ask whether the Spirit of God is producing His fruit in us.

Galatians 5:22-23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

A person may look plain and still be unkind, love money, or be ruled by pride. The true test is whether the heart belongs to Christ and His life is being seen in us. Jesus cleans the inside first and then teaches us how to live.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between changing an outward habit and receiving a new heart from God?
2. What does the cup illustration teach us about outward religion and hidden sin?
3. Which fruit of the Spirit is most needed in your home, church, or daily relationships right now?
4. What step can you take this week to walk honestly with Jesus when nobody else is watching?