Thoughts from Richard

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Sometimes I wonder what all this internalising of the world without stepping out into it is doing to us, and especially our kids.

There's an old saying that we need to be 'in the world, but not of it". Very wise. Isn't it something that Jesus said?? Of course, I googled it to find the verse.
But there is no verse.

Jesus didn't say it.

What I did find was a blog post by John Piper:

On the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus prays to his Father in John 17:14–19,

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Let's all agree it's clear that Jesus does not want his followers to be "of the world". Amen. He says that he himself is "not of the world," and his disciples are "not of the world."

It's Going Somewhere

But notice that for Jesus being "not of the world" isn't the destination in these verses but the starting place. It's not where things are moving toward, but what they're moving from. He is not of the world, and he begins by saying that his followers are not of the world. But it's going somewhere. Jesus is not huddling up the team for another round of kumbaya, but so that we can run the next play and advance the ball down the field.

Enter verse 18: "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." And don't miss the surprising prayer of verse 15: "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."

Sent into This World

Jesus is not asking his Father for his disciples to be taken out of the world, but he is praying for them as they are "sent into" the world. He begins with them being "not of the world" and prays for them as they are "sent into" the world.

So maybe it would serve us better — at least in light of John 17 — to revise the popular phrase "*in*, but not *of*" in this way: "not *of*, but *sent into*." The beginning place is being "not of the world," and the movement is toward being "sent into" the world. The accent falls on being sent, with a mission, to the world — not being mainly on a mission to disassociate from this world.

Crucified to the World — And Raised to It

Jesus's assumption in John 17 is that those who have embraced him, and identified with him, are indeed not of the world. And now his summons is our sending — we are sent into the world on mission for gospel advance through disciple-making.

Jesus's true followers have not only been crucified to the world, but also raised to new life and sent back in to free others. We've been rescued from the darkness and given the Light not merely to flee the darkness, but to guide our steps as we go back in to rescue others.

So let's revise the popular phrase "in, but not of". Christians are not of this world, but sent into it. *Not of, but sent into*.

Interestingly, google also suggested Romans 12/1,2:

"I appeal to you therefore brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

In summary,

Do something - Do give up the use of your body for good service (time, resources, energy)
Don't do something - Don't be squashed into the world's ways (thinking like the world, being like the world) but do something else - be renewed in your mind so you can know Gods will (what he wants you to do).

Both Jesus in John 17 and Paul in Romans 12 emphasise how this equipping to be sent is accomplished:

"Sanctify them in the truth, your WORD is truth" - We need to be washed in the Word

"be transformed by the renewing of your mind", this can only occur through the work and witness of the Spirit, ie. sanctification, and Jesus just said that we are sanctified through the truth, and he has given us the Word which is truth!

In Hebrews 4/12, the Lord tells us that:

"for the word of God is LIVING and ACTIVE, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart"

How can the 'word of God' be living? The word translated 'living' means containing the fullness of life, in all righteousness and completeness, the same word that is used to describe the 'living' God! The word 'active' is from the Greek word Energes, literally 'in work'. We get the word energy from it. It also implies power and effectiveness.

So the bible, the testimony of the Spirit of Truth, is full of life and working powerfully to accomplish the will of God in our lives.

The implication is that if we open up our bibles and seek Gods transformation for our lives, we will be blessed with just that. We have that promise in James 1/23, Revelation 1/3, 2 Peter 1/4,5

Jesus said, *"the words I speak to you are spirit, and they are life",* John 6/63

I am challenged every day to give up some screen time and open up a real book. THE real book! Let's do it...

Your servant in Him
Richard