

Lesson 7 | April 14, 2024

Live Victoriously in Christ

Study Text: 1 John 5:1–21

Central Truth: Christians can live confidently and victoriously in Christ.

Key Verse: 1 John 5:4

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (KJV).

Every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith (NLT).

Learning Objectives:

- Students will recognize that believing in Jesus and depending on Him will help them live victoriously.
- Students will live securely and confidently in the knowledge they have eternal life.
- Students will guard their hearts against anything that might take God's place.

Introducing the Study

Say: As children of God, we can live victoriously in this world. Through our faith in Jesus and dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome temptation and experience the life Jesus came to offer us. Let's look closely at 1 John 5 and discover how we can live victoriously in Christ. But before we get started, let's get to know a little more about one another by hearing some victories we experienced as children.

Opening Activity—You Win!

Ask: What childhood memory can you share about winning something? Describe that feeling of victory. Examples may include a win at a sporting event, art/music competition, spelling contest, game, or random drawing of their name. Ask students to describe the feeling of victory.

Say: At times, life seems like a battle and we're longing for victory. We experience conflict with our fleshly desires and temptations. We fight illnesses and the physical effects of aging. We have struggles in our relationships. Life can feel like an uphill challenge. Thankfully, we can live victoriously through Christ. As our key verse says, "Every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith" (1 John 5:4, NLT). (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The last chapter in 1 John describes the victories we have over evil and sin, the assurance that Jesus is God's Son, the promise God hears and answers our prayers, and the blessed hope of eternal life with God. John concluded his letter with a challenge to "keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts" (1 John 5:21, NLT).

Part 1—Victory over the Evil World

His Commands Are Not Burdensome

1 John 5:1–3

Say: Up to this point in his epistle, John has written about loving and obeying God. Here he focuses on the importance of believing in the Son. “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children too” (1 John 5:1, NLT). John quickly tied together the truth that obeying God’s commands is the way for believers to love others. God’s Spirit dwelling in us gives us the desire and the ability to do what He commands. This is not a burdensome task, but one that produces life and joy. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Matthew records these words of Jesus:

Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light. (11:28–30, NLT)

As we enter into relationship with Jesus and walk closely with Him, we can allow Him to lead us. His direction isn’t just for major life decisions, but for every moment-by-moment interaction. Jesus can strengthen us against temptations, give us wisdom as we interact with others, help us in our tasks, guide us in our decisions, comfort us when we are grieving, heal us when we’ve been wounded, and so much more. When we truly live dependent on Him, Jesus lightens our load in every way. The joy of closeness with Jesus overshadows any sacrifice of dying to our flesh. This is why John could write, “Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3, NLT).

Discuss

- ? How does love for God and others produce righteous behavior?
- ? How would you contrast the momentary pain of dying to our flesh to the lasting joy of obeying God’s commandments?
- ? How can we remember the joy of obedience in times of temptation? How can we rely on Jesus when we are tempted?

Win This Battle

1 John 5:4–5

Say: As long as we are living in this world, we will be in a battle. We fight our fleshly desires and the temptations brought into our lives by the enemy of our souls. We also struggle against the impact of sin. Because of the initial act of sin (see Genesis 3:1–19), there is sickness, loss, conflict, strife, and brokenness all around us. So how can we win this ongoing battle? By believing that Jesus is the Son of God! We must believe He is

alive, He loves us, He forgives us, and He can be trusted completely. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Resource Packet Item 1: Believe and Know

Distribute the worksheet and allow time for students to read through the passage. Ask them to underline the word *believe* and circle the word *know* each time they see these words in the chapter. Then discuss the questions together. If time is an issue, encourage students to use this worksheet for personal Bible study during the week.

The apostle John used the words *believe* and *know* many times in the conclusion of his first letter. He wanted his readers to understand the importance of believing Jesus is the Son of God. As the writer of Hebrews explains, “It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him” (Hebrews 11:6, NLT).

There are vast rewards for those who believe in Jesus and sincerely seek to know Him—peace, wisdom, guidance, joy, forgiveness, hope, and the knowledge of His constant presence with us. He also gives us forgiveness for our sins and freedom from condemnation and guilt. Jesus is there to help us with every battle we face.

Discuss

- ? What does a lack of dependence on God reveal about our belief in Him?
- ? How does knowing God and depending on Him bring victories into our lives?
- ? How would you describe the rewards awaiting those who sincerely seek Him?

Part 2—Those Who Believe Have Eternal Life

The Greater Testimony

1 John 5:6–10

Say: Each of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) records the baptism of Jesus. Matthew wrote: “After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy’” (Matthew 3:16–17, NLT). God spoke aloud and confirmed Jesus as His Son. In fact, all three persons of the Godhead made themselves known in this moment—God the Father spoke aloud, God the Son came up out of the water, and God the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove. Not only was Jesus’ deity proclaimed at His baptism, but it was confirmed through His death and resurrection. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Not only do all three synoptic Gospels record the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22), but all record the Transfiguration as well (Matthew 17:1–9; Mark 9:2–10; Luke 9:28–36). At each of these events, God revealed himself in a supernatural way, verbally affirming Jesus as His Son. The apostle John witnessed these events and encouraged his readers in this way: “Since we believe human testimony, surely we can believe the greater testimony that comes from God. And God

has testified about his Son. All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son" (1 John 5:9–10, NLT). John was declaring the testimony of Jesus' deity he had heard firsthand from God himself and challenging his readers—including us—to believe as well.

Resource Packet Item 2: When God Speaks Aloud

Distribute the worksheet and allow time to read the Scriptures about Jesus' baptism and transfiguration. Then discuss the questions together. This worksheet could also be used for personal study during the week.

Discuss

? How are you encouraged by hearing or reading about the supernatural events surrounding Jesus' baptism?

? How will you respond to God's instruction, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him" (Matthew 17:5, NLT)?

So That You May Know

1 John 5:11–13

Say: Let's focus on 1 John 5:13: "I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13, NLT). Here, John revealed his purpose for writing this letter—so believers would know they have eternal life. The apostle shared the same truth in his Gospel: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, KJV). (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The only way to experience abundant life in this world and eternal life in heaven is to believe in Jesus, repent of sin, and follow Him. Some would like to think there are many paths to knowing truth, experiencing God, and gaining access to heaven. However, Jesus tells us clearly He alone is the way to the Father and the life He offers (John 14:6–7). As John puts it in his epistle, "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life" (1 John 5:12, NLT).

Real life happens when our sins are forgiven and we are becoming more and more like Christ. The ultimate reward for our belief in Jesus is the opportunity to spend eternity with Him. The same apostle who wrote the letters we are studying also wrote the Book of Revelation, which includes this beautiful description of heaven: "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever" (Revelation 21:3–4, NLT). This is the reality for all who believe in Jesus; however, a different future awaits those who don't believe. "Cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death" (verse 8, NLT).

Discuss

- ? How can we respond to people who say there are many paths to God?
- ? After reading 1 John 5:11–13, how would you encourage a believer who is doubting the reality of eternal life?
- ? Why is it important to remember the promise of eternal life with Jesus? How can it change our view of temporary struggles?

Part 3—Live Confidently in God

Prayers That Please Him

1 John 5:14–17

Say: As believers, we can be assured of eternal life. In addition to that, “we are confident that [God] hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him” (1 John 5:14, NLT). We can make our requests known to Him, fully believing He hears us when we pray. God always answers our prayers according to His will and purposes. And when the answer is more than we might hope, we can rest in the knowledge of His love for us. God is working all things together for our good, even if we don’t understand His response in the moment (Romans 8:26–28). (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In 1 John 5:16, the apostle shifted from instructions regarding personal prayer to instructions about intercession for other believers. We should pray for the people we love. John went on to explain that the way to respond to other people’s sins is to pray for them, knowing God hears our prayers and cares for others even more than we do.

In this passage, John drew a distinction between a sin that leads to death and one that does not. Many scholars debate the meaning of this passage. Based on details found in the original language, “a sin which is not unto death” (verse 16, KJV) most likely refers to a repeated, observable sin being committed by a fellow believer. John’s epistle has made it clear that a genuine Christian will not continue a pattern of sin, so we are to pray God will restore that person’s spiritual life and fellowship with Him.

However, when someone is engaged in a “sin unto death” (verse 16, KJV), believers are not to pray for forgiveness, because it would not be in accord with God’s will. This type of sin that leads to death is not described, but it may refer to believers who persistently sin to the point of incurring God’s judgment by physical death (see Acts 5:1–11; 1 Corinthians 11:30). Or it may refer to heretical teachers and their followers whose death resulting from sin would be spiritual in nature. In either case, believers are not instructed to pray God would forgive unless there is genuine repentance on the sinner’s part.

John was emphasizing the gravity of all kinds of sin when he wrote, “All wicked actions are sin” (1 John 5:17, NLT). God longs for everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Yet John concluded that “not every sin leads to death” (1 John 5:17, NLT). So we should pray for the people we know to willingly repent and turn away from whatever sin they

are engaged in, so they can experience salvation and the life-giving relationship Jesus offers.

Resource Packet Item 3: Prayer Focus Journal

Distribute the worksheet for students to use in the coming week. Encourage them to begin their times of prayer by recognizing God's goodness and provision in their lives. Every good thing we experience comes from God (James 1:17). When we take time to acknowledge God's activity in our lives, it pleases Him and strengthens our faith. This prayer focus journal helps students pray with a different emphasis every day instead of trying to pray for everything on their hearts every day.

Discuss

- ? How does 1 John 5:14–15 encourage you to pray?
- ? Read the account of Jesus praying in Gethsemane on the night He was arrested (Matthew 26:36–45; Luke 22:41–44). How can we follow Jesus' example and pray according to God's will?
- ? How can we trust God's love for us when we don't understand the way He responds to our prayers?
- ? Read 2 Peter 3:3–9. How does this passage encourage you to pray for those who need to repent of sin?

Prioritize Relationship with God

1 John 5:18–21

Say: The final four verses in this letter contain a great deal of truth and encouragement for us as believers. John uses the word *know* four times in this brief passage. He wants us to know that, as God's children, we do not have to make a practice of sinning, because the evil one cannot touch us. He reminds us that we can know the true God because Jesus has helped us understand Him. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Jesus came so we could know who God is; if we know Jesus, we know the Father. Not only can we understand who God is, but we can also live in fellowship with Him—the One who gives us eternal life. This is the greatest news of all! You can hear the apostle's love for his audience in the final sentence of this letter, and it is an important challenge for us as well. He instructed his readers to keep away from idols, which the *New Living Translation* renders, "Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts" (1 John 5:21).

The apostle James wrote, "Come close to God, and God will come close to you" (James 4:8, NLT). What a beautiful assurance. Every believer should prioritize knowing and loving God, because it is the single most important pursuit of life. We should order our daily schedules so we can meet with Him through Bible reading and prayer. Some people meet with God first thing in the morning, others use their lunch hour, and others prefer the evening. The time of day a person chooses is less important than their consistency. Reading God's Word daily can shape our thoughts, attitudes, and

behaviors. If we take time to privately seek Him, we can turn our attention to His ever-abiding presence in the busyness of our day. And when we are aware of His presence, we can strive to honor and please Him in everything we do. The fellowship God offers us is all-encompassing. He wants us to depend on Him each moment of the day, believing He will supply our every need.

Discuss

- ? How do we practically prioritize our relationship with God?
- ? What are some indications we have allowed an idol to take God's place in our hearts? How should we respond if we recognize this has happened?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: God wants us to know Him by getting to know Jesus. He invites us to believe in His Son, repent of our sins, and live a life free from the bondage of sin. He promises to hear us when we pray and answer those prayers according to His will and purposes. He wants us to depend on Him in every situation and experience the victorious life Jesus came to offer. The fellowship God offers us begins here on earth and extends throughout eternity. If you aren't following Jesus yet, today can be the day you start! I would love to talk to you about that after class. For the rest of us, let's remember what the Scripture says: "Warn each other every day, while it is still 'today,' so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. . . . Remember what it says: 'Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts'" (Hebrews 3:13,15, NLT).

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Ask Jesus to show you the depth of His invitation in Matthew 11:28–30. Prioritize learning from Him every day through prayer and Bible reading.
- Examine your motives, attitudes, words, and behaviors and ask Jesus to help you rely on Him for victory in the areas where you are struggling.
- Look for an opportunity to share what you know about Jesus with someone who is not a believer.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Living in Covenant with God.
Genesis 17:1–10

Tuesday:

Confidence in God.
Psalm 20:1–9

Wednesday:

Trust in the Lord.
Jeremiah 17:5–8

Thursday:

Overcoming Evil.
Matthew 5:38–48

Friday:

Power to Overcome Evil.

Luke 10:17–20

Saturday:

Overcome Evil with Good.

Romans 12:14–21