

1 John 5:1-5

“Obey and Overcome”

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Intro. For a rocket to escape the earth’s gravitational pull it must travel about 25,000 mph. The earth has a tremendous pull in the gravity realm, and the world has a tremendous attraction in the spiritual realm. God’s children overcome the world through faith in Christ evidenced by love and yielding to God. What does it mean to overcome the world, and what difference does it make?

Subject: How to overcome the world

Object: Love and live for Jesus

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes

the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? [1 John 5:1-5].

What does the world refer to?

We see the term “world” three times in two verses [4-5]. The “world” refers to a system of values apart from God. Some of the values of the world are: worship of creation rather than the Creator, worship of self rather than God, rebellion against God, opposition and resistance to God’s kingdom, denial of moral truth, and eat drink and be merry for tomorrow you die. The primary value is to live for this life, because there is no real basis for a life to come or any life with God. The world suggests that you can discover contentment without having to submit to God’s authority, but doesn’t deliver on the promise ...

The world has a seductive gravitational pull, and the impact on our affections may be greater than we realize, or want to admit. This is why John previously urged us to stop loving the world [1 John 2:15-17]. The love of this world is an obstacle to experiencing the love of God in this life and the life to come.

So, how can you overcome the world?

1. You need to become a child of God [1]

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God... You become a child of God through believing that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) [1]. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” [John 1:12]. Belief or faith is more than intellectual assent. Belief flows from proper identification of Jesus and relationship with Jesus. Belief involves committing your life to Jesus as Lord. *Faith is hearing God speak and responding with actions of obedience, and an attitude of dependence upon Him.* Being born of God relates to a spiritual birth. When you submit your life to Jesus you receive the Holy Spirit, or are born-again. Jesus declared that unless you are born-again you cannot experience the kingdom of God [John 3:3].

2. How you know that you are a child of God [1-3]

Love for God and other believers [1]. *Everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him [1].* Those who have experienced a spiritual birth have a love for God *and* a love for other believers. You not only love God, but you also love your siblings in the family of God. In essence, there are new affections. The awareness of a growing love for God and other believers reflects spiritual life.

Love for God and obedience to His commandments [2-3] John offers a profound test, *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when*

we love God and keep His commandments” [2]. You can know that you have love other believers by your true love for God proven by obedience to His commands.

Contemplate this idea: the best thing that you could do for people you are called to love (e.g. family, neighbors, other believers, and enemies) is to love God and obey Him. Refusing to obey God hurts you and others that you influence.

A claimed love of God is proven by a lifestyle that seeks to respect God’s boundaries, “*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments*” [3]. The Greek tense could be translated “continue to keep ...” and thus implies a general lifestyle of seeking to obey God. Jesus gathered His disciples in the Upper Room shortly before the cross, and after they had been with Him for three years, and declared, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” [John 14:15]. The Greek could be translated, “Since you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” The essential idea is that obedience is the primary evidence of a life-giving relationship with God and genuine love for Him and others.

John reminds us that *His commandments are not burdensome* [3]. When following Jesus’ commandments have moved from a sense of duty to delight, you know there is development or spiritual growth. Of course,

obedience is challenging in light of our flesh (old nature) and the temptation of the world. Nevertheless, Jesus' commands are not burdensome for several reasons:

First, God has empowered us by His Holy Spirit to enable us to obey Him. The power of the Spirit provides the thrust to overcome the gravitational pull of the world and to follow Christ.

Second, love lightens the load so that obedience is a joy. For example, Jacob labored for seven years for Rachel to be his bride, but because of his love for her it seemed as only a few days [Genesis 29:18]. Similarly, a parent caring for a baby undoubtedly experiences challenges but their love makes it a blessing not a burden. God's love for you and your growing love for God produce joy in following Jesus.

Third, God-given faith helps you to trust that God's boundaries are best for you, and that obedience results in blessing not burden.

Fourth, His commands are not religion, but produce rest for your soul [Matthew 11:28-30, 23:4].

3. God's children overcome by trusting in, loving and living for Jesus [4-5]

God's kids overcome, or have victory over the world [4]. The world tends to tempt us away from God. The world exalts temporal material life,

rather than spiritual and eternal life in Christ. The world system is contrary to God and is truly the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life [1 John 2:15-17]. Four times we see the terms “overcome” and “victory.” In each instance, it is a derivative of the Greek *nikao*. Nike (nee-kay) was the Greek goddess of victory, and conquest. What is the key to victory? It is not your intellect, your ingenuity, your discipline or your diligence, but your faith in Jesus [4-5]. The ongoing, growing reliance and trust in Jesus allows you to overcome [1 John 2:13-14]. “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” [1 John 4:4]. You’ve been born of God, received the Holy Spirit, and have a new power, a new nature, and most important new affections. The world is tempting, and we would be wise to realize the subtle seduction to pursue our contentment in the world rather than in Christ. The world never satisfies, but is an ever-present obstacle to true contentment in Christ. The danger is that the love of this world is an obstacle to experiencing the love of God in this life and the life to come. The answer is not removal from the world, monastic living, or blinders, but growing in trust and love for Christ so that we seek to live for Christ not this world.

As you grow in Christ, you grow in faith, and you overcome this world to receive a better one.

Study Guide Qs

Q1 What are some ways the world influences Christians?

Q2 How does obeying God's commands demonstrate love for others?

Q3 Describe a command that may have seemed difficult or burdensome, but that you've discovered has been a blessing and not a burden.

Q4 How would you like to apply this lesson to your life? Consider areas in your life where you may be more in love with the world than you previously realized.

Digging Deeper

1. Four times in this brief letter, John encourages believers that they are overcomers [1 John 2:13, 2:14, 4:4, 5:4]. Review these references, and consider what you're learning about overcoming.
2. Jesus encouraged His followers that although they would experience tribulation in the world, they could be of good cheer,

because He had overcome the world [John 16:33]. How does this truth provide peace to you?