

OPEN

WATCH

Show Session 5: 1 John 4:17–5:12 (9 minutes).

[illegible]

DISCUSS

Throughout the book of 1 John, we've heard the author's father-like heart for his readers. Chapter 5 is no different. **What aspects of 1 John so far have encouraged you? Comforted you?**

What parts have challenged you or left you with questions?

Leader: *It will be worth your time to anticipate some of the responses to the second question above. Your group may highlight things such as the challenge to love all believers, the difference between loving God's people and loving non-believers, the constant if-then statements in the book that can lead us to believe God won't love us if we don't love first. Prepare ahead of time to remind your group of the previous sessions, and keep them grounded in the truth that we are God's children. Period.*

This last chapter of 1 John brings up a concept he introduced earlier in chapter 2: overcoming the world. **What did we point out about the importance of recognizing overcoming?** (It's accomplished through Christ, and is worthy of celebration even for new believers.)

Dr. Tony Evans introduced this session by unpacking the significance of John's emphasis on overcoming. **What did Tony point out about the world's power over us?** (The world doesn't have the last say in our lives.)

Describe a time in your life where you felt (or feel) that you were trapped by the world. How did you feel in the middle of it?

Leader: *This is a great opportunity in smaller groups to invite members to share about their*

experiences coming to Christ, or coming to terms with their sinfulness and need for God's transforming Spirit. Use good judgment, however, as you don't want to put people on the spot who may not be ready to be vulnerable with the group.

How have you seen the power of God at work in your life to help you overcome the world?

PEEK AT THE GREEK

In verses 4–5 John uses the verb *nikao* three times, which literally means, “to overcome” or “to conquer.” According to the end of verse 4, the “victory” or “conquering power” that has conquered the world is “our faith.” John places this in the present tense indicating that those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (v. 5) experience victory in the here-and-now. Through faith in Christ, we enter into whatever battles we face—temptation, the flesh, the schemes of the devil—under a banner of victory. As the children of God, we have passed from death to life and belong to a new kingdom with a new standard that we devote our lives to in obedience. That is the power of Christ to those who believe.

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Read 1 John 5:4.

What does John set up as the condition for overcoming the world? (Being born of God.)

What's the victory? (Our faith.)

Throughout the last few chapters, John has been making the argument that we know we are children of God by the radical change that happens in our lives: Our attitudes change about our sinfulness, about our ability to determine truth in the world, and about the object of our love. All of it is made possible through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Who, then, truly overcomes the world? (God through the Holy Spirit, made possible by Jesus.)

What part do you play in overcoming the world, according to everything laid out in 1 John? (We allow God to change our attitudes, our minds, and our affections.)

Tony used the illustration of a high jumper versus a pole jumper in the Olympics. **What did the two types of athletes represent?** (The high jumper represented us trying to overcome on our own, but the pole jumper represented God's power in overcoming for us.)

In your experience, what were the results of you trying to overcome the pressures of the world on your own?

Can you describe a time where you leaned on God's power to deal with the world (through a temptation, or a trial, or external pressure)?

How were those two experiences different?

Sometimes, simply remembering that we don't face the pressures of the world alone can make a huge difference in our attitudes. Knowing God stands with us and has gifted us with His Spirit means we vault over trials under His power.

But more than that, our love for each other—our brothers and sisters in Christ—means we face this world together.

Can you describe a time where the love of fellow Christians helped you face a trial, temptation, or persecution in your life? How did those believers' presence in your life affect you?

Leader: *It may be worth taking some time to develop these stories with your group. As the remainder of the session focuses on the concept of bearing a testimony of the power of Jesus, helping your group members recognize that they actually have a story will be enlightening.*

Read 1 John 5:6–12.

In this section of chapter 5, John anticipates some pushback—does the one who believes in Jesus truly overcome? Can Jesus be the one to catapult us to victory?

The world and all of its lies—including the father of lies, Satan—threaten to break our fellowship with God constantly. God has overcome through Jesus, and given us proof of the victory.

What did John identify as the three witnesses proving Jesus gives eternal life? (The water, blood, and Spirit.)

GO DEEPER

Learn more about the water and the Spirit in the following passages:

Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 3:5; Acts 1:4–5.

In these passages, what particular event is in view? (The salvation and baptism of the believer.)

What's the connection between the water and the Spirit? (The water baptism precedes Spirit baptism.)

According to these verses, what does the water and Spirit (markers of salvation) do for the believer?

Have you ever been baptized? If so, how did it affect your Christian life? If not, would you consider it?

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Put yourselves in the shoes of John’s original audience for a moment. These are people who may never have seen Jesus— they’ve only ever heard from the apostles about Him. The world that they’re supposed to overcome hates them, hates God, and constantly threatens to overwhelm the believers.

In that situation, we’d want proof—strong proof—that the Redeemer we’re trusting can come through.

Look at verse 9 again. What does John say about the testimony we’ve received? (The testimony God has given us is even greater than the one we receive through humans.)

Does that mean the testimony we’ve received through the Church is weak or pointless? Why or why not? (No. Instead it means that God has validated what we’ve received by the water, blood, and Spirit.)

Where is this testimony ultimately located? (In the believer.)

Why would disbelieving God mean we’re making Him out to be a liar? (Because God has born witness to Jesus’s power through His blood, and God does not lie.)

Let’s put this all together. The testimony that we as believers have received comes through both human and divine sources. We have the history of Jesus, but we also have the divine Word of God bearing witness to Jesus. On top of all of that, we have the presence of the Holy Spirit pointing us to Jesus’s strength to overcome. And God does not lie—His testimony (the history, the Word, and the Spirit) can and should be trusted.

What does this mean, then, for the dependability of Jesus in overcoming the world?

Describe a time when you've doubted God's ability to come through for you. What led you to feel like God couldn't deliver on His promise?

What did your attitude look like in the midst of that problem?

Now think about an instance where God showed Himself utterly dependable. Were you expecting Him to come through? Why or why not?

What did your attitude look like in the midst of the trouble? What about after God showed up?

The truth is, God doesn't always deliver us from suffering or trouble in the way that we'd like. John knows this, but he pushes us toward an eternal perspective. Read 1 John 5:11–12 again.

What is the promise that God has given us through Jesus? (Eternal life.)

Given what you know or might guess about John's original audience and their lives, why would the promise be so filled with hope?

Tony concluded this session by saying, "You are the overcomer. But He's going to let you go through the battle so that when he holds up your hand and declares you to be the victor, you've victoriously gone through the process, which has only confirmed what He said before you ever got

Pray: Take some time this week and talk to God about the things you feel hemming you in. Take the time to present each pressure, obstacle, or temptation to God and ask Him to overcome in your life.

Confess: Meet with a fellow believer this week and confess those instances where you've doubted God's strength to carry you through temptation or the pressure of the world. Ask that friend to pray with you.

Write: Take fifteen minutes this week and make a list of the times in your life where you've seen God come through for or around you. Use it as a memorial to God's faithfulness, so you can be encouraged in times of need.

Memorize: Work on memorizing 1 John 5:13. John wrote his letter to his readers to help them be confident in the eternal life that's theirs through Jesus Christ. Cling to that promise this week.

Connect: John admonishes us to pray for our fellow believers. Identify one person you can pray for this week, and do so. Then, if appropriate, tell them that you've prayed for them.

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RightNow Presents **1, 2 & 3 John**
LEADER'S GUIDE

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