November 8/9, 2025

Overcoming the World

Face to Face Series

1 John 5:1-5

Pastor Bryan Clark

In 1 John, chapter 2, John warned us that if we love the world system, then the love of the Father is not in us. Rather than loving the world, we need to overcome the world. How do we do that? That's what we want to talk about this morning. If you have a Bible, turn with us to 1 John, Chapter 5. We've been working our way through 1 John.

John's letter opened with this unveiling of this beautiful picture of what he calls *koinonia* fellowship, this intimate relationship with God and with one another. So, throughout his letter he's talked about various themes. I've talked about the fact that the way John writes is kind of in a spiral or a cycle. He talks about something; he moves on, and then he comes back to it. So with themes like *light* and *love* and *truth* and *obedience*.

So one question that would come out of that would be, "Why doesn't he just group all those together, talk about them, and then move on to the next subjects…maybe more similar to the way Paul writes?" So, a good way to think about it is he's talking about this *koinonia*, this fellowship with God. So think of these various themes or topics as ingredients that are necessary to experience that. Think about when you're cooking something, you're putting different ingredients in a pot, and once you do that and stir them up, they can never again be pulled out and be separate again. They're stirred together, and they will always be part of whatever it is you're making. So you think about this idea of these cycles—and several times I've used this gesture—it looks like I'm stirring a pot. And that's kind of the idea here is that he's mixing these ingredients together to realize it isn't one here and one here and one there. They all get mixed together and are necessary to experience this life. That's the way John is communicating it. In this text this morning—1 John 5:1-5—you'll see that because a number of the themes come together in these few verses. Verse 1:

> **Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.** (*NASB, 1 John 5:1)

So what you have there is two statements in verse one, and it's important we understand what both of them are saying. So the first statement, what John is not saying is that by believing you are born of God. Now that is true, and the Bible says that many times, but that's not what he's saying here. John is clearly writing to believers. He's made that abundantly clear over and over again. He's not telling them how to be born of God.

As a matter of fact, you can confirm that this is the correct interpretation with the grammar of the significant words. So the idea of **born of God** is what's called the perfect tense verb, which means it's something that happened in the past with ongoing effect. So, he's referring to the fact that

somewhere in the past, we did believe, and we were **born of God**. The word **believes** at the beginning of verse one, is a present tense verb, which is talking about everyday, ongoing believing. So this is what he's saying: As a result of being born of God, you have been given what you need to believe it's true each day. In other words, you believe it so much that you actually live like it. John has taught us that to be born of God means that I abide in God and God abides in me. He's giving us His Spirit. He's given us His nature. All of this is now a part of me that gives me what I need to have confidence, to have the assurance. That's the theme that he's been talking about, "How can you be confident that this is true? How do you have the assurance that this is right, so much so that we live that way?

If you were to ask me this morning, "Do I believe that Jesus is the Christ?" my answer would be, "Absolutely yes!" You'd ask me, "How much do you believe that?" I would say, "I believe it with all my heart. I don't have the slightest doubt that's true." So your follow-up question might be, "Well, what are your reasons for believing that?" And I could give you a whole list of reasons, but the top reason would be, "Because I know God personally. As a result of being born of God, I know Him. I abide in Him. He abides in me. He's given me His Spirit, and all of that confirms to me that what I believe about Jesus is true."

Now this is not an argument to convince the skeptic. I wouldn't use it for that. But John is not writing to skeptics. He's writing to believers. He's trying to help them with their assurance. He's trying to help them with their confidence. And so what he's saying is, "As a result of being born of God and all these things that are true, you've been given what you need to believe on a daily basis, 'This is really true.'" That's what he's saying.

The second part of verse one is **…whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him**. It's believed this was some sort of a saying or a maxim or a truism that these people were familiar with. The **father** in the saying doesn't have to be a capital "F". It isn't limited to God. The saying was simply, "If you love a father, then you love the father's children." That's just the way it works. So John is taking that and applying it to God.

All of us who have trusted Jesus as Savior have, in common, the same Father. We're all children of God. We're spiritual siblings. So the idea is: if you love the Father, then you love His children. A good question out of that would be, "Well, how exactly do we do that?" Well, he's talked about that in the letter, but he's going to say something a little different here. Verse 2:

> **By this we know that we love the children of God,** (So how do we do this?) **when we love God and observe His commandments.**

Now that's not what we were expecting the text to say. What's been repeated over and over again in John is, "***If you love God, then you love His children."*** But this turns that upside down and says, "Actually the way to love His children, is to **love God and keep His commandments**." The most loving thing I can do for you is to keep His commandments.

Now this is worth thinking about. Over the last number of decades, it's become common that people that identify themselves as Christian, believed that to be a Christian simply means to love others. And often what goes with that is it isn't necessary to get all hung up on the Bible and what the Bible says. To be a Christian, you just love others. Along with that comes the idea that to love others includes an acceptance…even an approval of whatever their lifestyle is. To love them is to accept that and even approve of that.

It's very important to understand what John is saying is the exact opposite of that. Biblical love means that we not only love God, but that **we keep His commandments.** The only way you can keep His commandments is if you know His commandments. So, biblical love requires a high value on biblical truth, to *know* His commandments and to *keep* His commandments. We've talked about this in our study, but a good reminder is these biblical terms of love and hate aren't primarily emotions. It's not talking about feelings that we conjure up. It's more of a commitment of my will. It's a choice I make. To love someone with a biblical love is a choice to think of someone as more important than myself, to choose to serve someone else, to even disadvantage myself to advantage someone else…just as Jesus did when He laid down His life for us. To hate someone is to be self-absorbed. It is to be so selfish that everything in life is about "me". It's to disadvantage others if I need to, in order to advantage myself.

So think about love as it relates to this. Imagine someone is driving on a road. It's nighttime. Up ahead the bridge is out in the road, and you know that. What is the most loving thing to do? Is it to encourage them down the road, "Have a nice trip," knowing they're headed for destruction? Or is it to care enough to try to stop them and say, "Hey, the bridge is out." To keep His commandments is to recognize this is the road to flourishing. This is the road to life. This is where you're going to find what your soul is longing for. The most loving thing I can do for the people around me is to keep His commandments. It's important to remind ourselves that His commandments do not flow out of cold, dead religion, where you've got a ticket to Heaven. Now you owe Him. Here's the rules; here's the restrictions. That's what you have to do!

Jesus accused the religious leaders in the first century of creating so many rules and regulations, it just becomes a burden. It's become a weight. It's just cold religion. Rather, what we've learned in John is that God is love, and His commandments flow out of His love. He's trying to help us. He's trying to give us the road map to flourishing. It's not loving to encourage people to rebel against the road map.

Back when we were going through Exodus and we came to the 10 Commandments, I referred to them as *The Road Map to Flourishing*. How do you create an environment where all these people in the wilderness can flourish together? The 10 Commandments were God giving them *The Road Map to Flourishing.* Here's how we do it together. It flows out of a heart of love, which gets us to verse 3:

> **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.**

This is not cold, dead religion. It's not **burdensome**. It's not this weight on us. You remember when Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He didn't hesitate. He said, ***"It's to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The second is like it, to love your neighbor as yourself."*** But then He added, ***"By this you fulfill the whole Law."*** The whole Law is about flourishing. To love God, to love my neighbor, is to keep His commandments…because I want to, because it delights me, because this is the path of life!

So over the years, I've done a lot of weddings, and at some point in the wedding ceremony, it always includes the vows. There's always a vow that sounds something like this. "Do you vow to keep yourself only for her until you're parted by death?" Never in all the weddings that I've done, have I ever had a bride or groom at that point say, "Whoa, wait a minute, too much! *(laughter)* That's burdensome. I don't want to do that." Never have I had anybody react that way. Actually, the reaction is just the opposite of that. Because they're so in love with each other, that's the longing of their hearts. That's the whole point. "I want to keep myself only for you, because I know that's the pathway to our marriage flourishing, to experience the love story my heart longs for."

It's the same way we should view the commandments of God. This is the pathway to the flourishing my heart longs for. The most loving thing I can do for the people around me is to keep His commandments. Verse 4:

> **For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.** (Vs. 4)

So John likes this word **overcome**. The Greek word means something like *to be victorious in a contest*, like, for example, some sort of athletic event. So the word **victory** and the word **overcome** come out of the same root word. So, in chapter 2 he told us that the moment we trusted Jesus as Savior, we have overcome the evil one. We have **overcome the world**. This is a settled issue. In that moment, we became a part of "Team Jesus," and Team Jesus wins! There's no question about that.

So this roots back to that conversation. But you notice verse 4 begins with a **For whatever**. Some of your translations may say *whoever* or *everyone*. But it's important to understand that is not correct. It's actually a neuter pronoun. ***Whatever*** could be translated ***everything*** **born of God overcomes.** The reason it's worded that way is John is bending over backwards to make sure we don't misunderstand him. What overcomes the world is not based on you and what you've done. That's why it's not a *whoever.* It's based on what has been done to you, and that ***is born of God.*** The victory is a result of having been born of God.

So here's how verse 4 reads:

> ***For whatever is born of God*** (So that's past tense.) ***overcomes*** (This is present tense, on a daily basis.) ***the world***; (Well, how does that happen?) ***and this is the victory that has overcome the world*** (past tense) your **faith**.

So here's what he just said: The moment you were born of God, you overcame the world. You overcame the evil one. You became part of Team Jesus, and Team Jesus wins, not because of you, but because of Jesus! That's what he said in chapter two. So now in verse 4, what he's saying is, "How do we actually live that way on a daily basis? How do we live victoriously overcoming the world each day?" Answer? "The end of verse 4: **our faith.** Simply understood…*to believe God tells the truth!* That's what faith is…to simply believe God tells the truth.

Now think about all we've learned in John's letter about life, about light, about truth, about righteousness, about obedience, about His commandments. That when we are born of God, He abides in us; we abide in Him. His Spirit lives in us. We've been given a new nature. All these wonderful things we've learned, either they're true or not. Our faith is believing God tells the truth, and as a result of that, I'm able to live victoriously, overcoming the world each day.

So put that together with verse 1: As a result of being born of God, I have everything I need to believe, and by believing, I rise above the world system and live victoriously, overcoming the world each day. He sums it up then in verse 5:

> **Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

John, in a part of his letter, is wanting believers to have assurance, to have confidence, to know this is true…to believe it, to believe it so much you actually live that way! To be born of God…to be born again…to experience new creation…and to believe it so much that you live like it! That's what we celebrate in these baptisms this morning.

> *Our Father, we're thankful this morning for the truth of the Gospel, that based on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we have been born of God. That we, as of that moment, have overcome the world. We've overcome the evil one. We have become Your children, and in the end of the story, we win with Jesus! Lord, help us to believe that, to believe it so much that we actually live that way…victoriously each day! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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FALL 2025 // WEEK 10

Life Group Questions

1 John – Face to Face // November 8-9, 2025

Overcoming the World // 1 John 5:1-5

Introduction

Our passage this week brings the three main topics of John's letter together in summary fashion. Those three areas are truth, light, and love. As we near the end of this letter, it is good to review what we've learned on each of these topics as they relate to cultivating authentic Christian community. Perhaps the reason John uses a spiral to organize his material, rather than a more logical progression of thought, is because he's trying to communicate that these three topics cannot really be separated but melt into one.

Study Questions *(to complete on your own)*

1) Go back and review these texts. See if you can summarize the main point of each text in a simple sentence.

   1:1-4

   1:5-2:6

   2:7-11

   2:12-17

   2:18-29

   3:1-10

   3:11-24

   4:1-6

   4:7-21

2) Read 1 John 5:1-5 in a couple different translations of Scripture. List out everything this passage tells us about love, obedience and faith.

Discussion Questions *(with your group)*

1) In verse 1, it is very important to understand the grammar. Pastor Bryan explained that the phrase "born of God" is in the perfect tense, meaning it is something that happened in the past but has an ongoing effect. **Based on this explanation, if a person is born again, what does that mean they believe about Jesus?**

Is it possible to be "born of God" and believe something about Jesus that is contradictory to what the Bible says? Why or why not?

2) In verses 1-2 the logic seems circular. We love the Father by loving his children and we love the children of God by loving the Father and observing his commandments. **Why do you suppose John reasons this way? Is it possible to love God and not love his children?**

What is an example in your life where you may have struggled to love God's children (fellow Christians)?

3) Verse 3 states that his commandments are not burdensome. **Do you consider God's commandments a burden or a blessing? Why?**

What do you learn about your view of God if you view His commandments as a burden?

4) What do you think it means to overcome the "world" (5:4)? How do we overcome the world?

Based on the text and Pastor Bryan's sermon, how would you define the word "faith"?

How have you experienced this truth (overcoming the world) in your own life?

5) **Did you pursue connection with God through one of the Personal Spiritual Exercises below this session? If so, how did doing so enrich your relationship with God?**

Which of the Personal Spiritual Exercises below might you want to utilize to enhance your relationship with God over this upcoming break from the Life Group session?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so that we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit— we invite you to strengthen your souls with exercises that challenge and stretch you in new ways. Choose one and commit to repeating it until you gain strength in that area.

1) **Scripture Reading: to listen and soak in the Word as an experience of the words washing over you.** Read or listen to the entire letter of 1 John at least twice/week. As you take it in, resist the impulse to study and parse the details. The point is not to gain "head knowledge" but a stirring in the heart as the Holy Spirit brings the Word to life in you.

2) **Memorization: to internalize God's Word.** A key passage for this series is ***1 John 4:7-14***. Commit to memorize it yourself and encourage others in your group to do it with you.

3) **Walk & Pray: to actively engage with the scripture passage.** Write out the passage of the sermon each week on a note card and take it with you on a daily walk.

4) **Journal Reflection: to practice remembering what God has done.** Make time in your schedule to put down in writing the feelings and thoughts that are stirring as you interact with the Word of God.

5) **Self-control Exercise: to help you come to stillness from a busy or hurried pace of life.** Set a timer for 10 minutes. Sit upright but comfortably in a chair with your palms open and upward on your lap. Focus on a word or short phrase about the character of God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When your thoughts wander to the things on your to-do list or other people's needs, redirect them back to the character of God. When the 10 minutes is up, close in a short prayer of gratitude.

Prayer

Praying together in a group is different than praying alone with God. It's a conversation that can help you grow closer to each other as you are in God's presence. One way to pray follows this often-used pattern in scripture – acknowledge who God is, recognize the need we have for Him, and ask to partner with Him on behalf of others. When possible, use the passage of scripture from this week's sermon as your starting point, then form a prayer that follows this pattern:

God, our Father, this week we learned that you are _____ and _____ .

As I looked into your Word, I understood how I need you to _____. Help me to be faithful to _____ in the week ahead.

Other people are on my heart, and I trust that you have put them there for a reason. I ask for your will to be accomplished in their life as they _____. Help me to know how to respond well to the needs of _____, even as my first step is in praying for them right now.

Each group engages in prayer differently. Some groups go around and allow anyone to pray that desires to do so. Other groups have several people pray or maybe 1 person closes the group in prayer. Still other groups split into smaller groups of 2-3 people and those people pray for each other. How you choose to engage in prayer is dependent on your group and your choice to ENGAGE! **We learn to pray by praying and by listening and praying with others!**