

Week 7

1 John 5

Learning Objective

- As believers, we're called to obey God's commands and find freedom in doing so. We can be obedient by loving others, praying for them, and pointing them towards God.

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Read Out Loud: 1 John 5:1-15 (NIV)

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³ In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. ⁶ This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. ⁹ We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

One of the reasons John was writing this letter was to refute a belief that was held by Gnostics. Gnostics believed that there was a special knowledge that led to salvation. They did not believe salvation was through faith in Jesus Christ. They viewed humanity as evil and thus with regards to Jesus, they believed that the 'God person' left Jesus at the cross and returned when Jesus rose again.

Questions for Discussion



According to this passage, what does it mean to be born of God? (vv. 1-3)

Possible Answers: Someone who loves God and Jesus; loves God's children; keeps His commands.

? John tells us that we can know we are loving God's children well by following His commands. What is the connection between following God's commands and loving each other?

Possible Answers: God's commands are primarily based on loving and glorifying Him and loving others. If we are following God's commands we are naturally going to love those around us, who are God's children.

? What commands of God sometimes feel burdensome to you? How does that impact your day-to-day life?

Possible Answers: Loving your neighbor, being patient, honoring your parents, etc. This answer will be different for everyone, but encourage your group toward specificity and application toward everyday things that feel burdensome.

? In vs. 3 John says that God's commands are never burdensome. How can we approach following God's commands in a way that does not feel burdensome? How might this involve both a change in behavior and a change in our attitude/heart?

Possible Answers: Oftentimes everyday things feel burdensome because we aren't taking them as opportunities to follow God and are instead focused on how they inconvenience us or go against what we want. We can experience freedom in these "burdensome" moments by remembering how much God loves us, what He has done for us, and that we are living with eternity in mind. By shifting our perspective and hearts, what might feel burdensome from a worldly perspective can be seen as an opportunity to glorify God and show our love for Him.

There are many views regarding John's reference to "water and blood" (vv. 6-8.) Two views that seem to prevail are:

1. Water and blood refer to Jesus' death on the cross. The only other place that John uses these two words together is to describe Jesus on the cross when He is pierced by the spear (John 19:34). John may be trying to bring attention to the fact that Jesus' death was not an ordinary death, but that there was a greater significance to his death.

2. Water and blood refer to baptism and the cross. When Jesus was baptized (the water) God declared Jesus was His son and the Holy Spirit descended on him. Because he was the Son of God, his death on the cross (the blood) brought us salvation and eternal life. John may be pointing out the significance that not only did the Son of God come to earth, he came to bring us salvation through his death.

? What does it mean to overcome the world? In what ways is this connected to not being burdened by God's commands? (vs. 4)

Leader's Note: Reference 1 John 2:15-16

Possible Answers: It means submitting to God and no longer being controlled by sin and death. We are saved by grace through our faith in Christ, which brings salvation and triumph over the world.

? How does belief that Jesus is the Son of God enable us to overcome the world?

Possible Answers: Because we have a righteousness from God that is apart from the law that comes through faith in Jesus Christ, and it is because of our union with Christ that we are also sealed and given the Holy Spirit who works in us so that we love and obey God.

? Re-read vv. 9-12. What is the testimony of God?

Possible Answers: God has given us eternal life that comes through belief in Jesus, and he or she that has the Son (Jesus) has eternal life.

? Why is it important for Christians—both the original audience and today—to know that they have eternal life? (vs. 13) *Leaders' Note: See earlier note on Gnosticism as it pertains to this particular audience.*

Possible Answers: For this audience—Because there was a wrong belief that was going around that was stating Jesus was not the way to eternal life. John is seeking to refute this belief by emphasizing that Jesus – in all His humanity and divinity – is the one God sent so that through faith in Jesus we may have eternal life. For today—keeps us focused on the fact that our thoughts, actions, heart, etc. have eternal consequences. Helps us through challenging times as we know that we were not meant for this world.

? Optional: Re-read vv. 14-15. How can our prayers provide insight into what God's will is?

Possible Answers: When we pray God may use His answer (or lack of an answer) to show us that something is or isn't His will. It's a cliché phrase, but when we pray "God if it's your will..." we are making our requests with an open hand and acknowledging that His will will be made clear through His answer. With this approach we can have confidence in praying for everything, knowing that God will answer according to what is best for us.

Read Out Loud: 1 John 5:16-21 (NIV)

¹⁶ If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that. ¹⁷ All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death. ¹⁸ We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. ¹⁹ We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. ²⁰ We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. ²¹ Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

? Verse 16 tells us to pray for our brothers and sisters. Why is praying for other people important?

Possible Answers: Because our prayer for one another is a means God has chosen to work through to give people life. This is one way we can fight back against the kingdom of darkness—fight for people in our lives to be free from sin and see the Truth. This also turns our focus away from ourselves.

Leader's Note: Vv. 16-17 can easily hang up your group on evaluating what it means to have sin lead or not lead to death. The bottom line is that all sin ultimately leads to "death" and separation from Christ if we do not choose to follow after Him.

? How does knowing that Jesus protects those who are born of God and that the evil one cannot harm them impact your life? (vs. 18)

Possible Answers: We should be comforted in this truth. The evil one/demons/Satan can't harm our standing with God, our eternal life, our relationship with Jesus—we are children of God. We are secure in God.

? Why do you think John chose to end this letter with another charge to "keep yourselves from idols"?

Possible Answers: Idolatry has been a common theme in this letter—idolatry that looks many different ways (uplifting a false understanding of who Jesus, being self-focused rather than other-focused, etc.). When we place anything above God, everything else quickly falls apart. This is a truth the recipients (and ourselves) needed to take deep root into their lives.

? How do we keep away from idols, or anything that might keep us from following God's commands and take His place in our hearts?

Possible Answers: Constant self-examination, accountability, evaluating where we spend our time/energy/heart, etc.

For Discussion and Accountability

? In what areas are you struggling to obey God's commands? What does it look like for you to move towards obedience?

? Is there something in your life that feels burdensome because you are allowing your attitude to be controlled by sin? How can you shift your perspective/actions to approach this situation with the freedom of knowing you have overcome the world?