



# **DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH**

## **SERIES: GOSPEL TRUTH FOR LIFE TOGETHER •**

### **1 JOHN 5:1-21 • 11/12/2023**

## **MAIN POINT**

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Jesus is who God says He is, and life is found in Him.

## **INTRODUCTION**

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What are some things that people call their “everything”? (I.e. Baseball is everything. Music is everything. Pizza is everything. She is my everything.)  
What, for you, would complete the sentence?

Would you say that you have a passion for living each day or that you’re typically just trying to get by? Why?

When you come to the end of your life, what kind of things do you want to have been true of your life?

1 John 5 helps us understand what it means that Jesus is everything. Life is about more than just getting by and trying to survive. Life in Christ is meaningful and abundant, both right now and for eternity.

## UNDERSTANDING

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**READ 1 JOHN 5:1-5.**

**Why is loving people one of the clearest indicators of a person's love for God?**

**Another indicator John mentioned of a person's love for God is obedience to His commands. How are love for God and obedience to His commands related? What is it like trying to be obedient apart from love?**

The Jewish people struggled under an enormous load of religious expectations and legalities that were laid on them by their religious leaders. Jesus, on the other hand, offered them a life of freedom. While following Him still requires the work of obedience, it is work that is motivated by love for Jesus and a desire to serve Him.

**How does your obedience to God affect your love for others?**

**In your own words, how are belief, love, and obedience intertwined?**

We only live the best life possible when we walk in belief of Jesus and obedience to God. The certainty of victory in Jesus assures us that, in dependence on God's power,

we can love God and His children and obey His commands. Our faith enables us to live victoriously in Christ by loving God and obeying His commands.

**READ 1 JOHN 5:6-15.**

**Why is it so important that we believe Jesus is God? What changes if we don't believe that?**

One of the main reasons John wrote this letter was to address the false teachings of his day that made a distinction between Jesus the man and the divine Christ. Fellowship with God and with other believers is based on a correct understanding of who Jesus is and why He came. John emphasized that we can believe Jesus is God because God Himself testifies to this truth.

**What is the significance of the water, the blood, and the Spirit all testifying that Jesus is God?**

The water is a reference to Jesus' baptism and the blood is a reference to His death on the cross. Both water and blood refer to historical events in the life of Jesus on earth. John was claiming that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, truly was baptized and died on a cross. Historical facts, divine testimony, and Christian experience all testify that Jesus is God's Son.

**In 1 John 5:14-15, what did John teach us about how to pray?**

**John instructed us to pray in line with God's will, but how can we know what His will is?**

God has given us two ways to know His will—Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Decisions in line with God's purposes will glorify Christ, bring us into conformity with His

image, and free us for ministry. We can be confident that God will answer our prayers when we pray in faith, according to His will, and prompted by His Spirit.

**READ 1 JOHN 5:16-21.**

**John stated that believers are not to continue in sin. How is that possible?**

**John reminded his readers that they were children of God. How should your identity as a child of God impact the way you live today?**

**John emphasized that our faith centers on Jesus Christ. Without Jesus and His work on your behalf, what would your relationship with God be like? What would your struggle with sin be like?**

John was not presenting tentative suggestions but bold affirmations of the truth. He thought it vital that every Christian be able to claim as truth their power over sin, their identity as a child of God, and their relationship with Jesus.

**Read 1 John 5:21 again. Why do you think John ended this letter with a warning for his readers to guard against idols?**

## **APPLICATION**

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Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Based on 1 John 5, what would it look like for Jesus to be your everything this week? What needs to change for that to happen?**

How can this group pray for you in that? How might you seek to support others in the group as they pursue Jesus as well?

How would living in this way point others to the truth about Jesus?

## PRAYER

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Thank God for the blessed assurances He gives us so that we can be confident in who we are in Christ and know abundant life, even here on earth. Ask Him to show you how to live in His victory this week.

## COMMENTARY

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1 JOHN 5:1-21

5:1. We hear it again—one who believes in Jesus is born of God—but with a new twist: the person who loves the Father loves God's child as well. This is an appeal to the natural order of things. If we love our parents, we should also love his children, our siblings. Conceivably, a person might love his parents and not love his brother or sister. For the Christian, this is a test of regenerate character: if you love God, you will love your brothers, too. These extreme and stark terms were demanded by the seriousness of the situation in Ephesus. The antichrists were apparently acting hatefully toward Christians, so the Ephesians needed the contrast of love with hate, not perfect love with imperfect love. We do not have to love our brothers perfectly to manifest a regenerate heart. We may love them imperfectly as we all do. If we hate them, as the antichrists did, we cannot have any confidence that we are born again.

5:2-3. These verses present the opposite of what we expect—that we know that we love the children of God by loving God and carrying out his commands. We expect to hear that we demonstrate our love for God by loving our brothers. The opposite appears. This demonstrates that love is a central characteristic. As a genuine mark of a born-again heart, it goes both ways: toward God and toward our brothers. This love for God, then, is most clearly demonstrated by obeying him: “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love” (John 15:10). Obedience does not always bring cheer to our hearts, so a profound statement follows: his commands are not burdensome. This stands contrary to what most people think. Certainly, God’s commands are not always the path of least resistance in life. In that sense, it is often easier to disobey God than to obey him. If obeying a command of God is harder than disobeying, the consequences are easier. For example, if it is harder to remain faithful to one’s spouse (obeying the command not to commit adultery) than to give in to passion (disobeying a command), then the consequence of obeying (not committing adultery) will be much easier than the consequences of not obeying (committing adultery). In other words, sin has a price. When it is paid, we see it would have been easier not to have sinned. So in the long run, obeying God’s commands is not burdensome. This is why Jesus could say his yoke is easy and his burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

5:4-5. Some Christians see their weakness regarding temptation and sin and decide their victory over the world is incomplete. They conclude that since they have not “overcome the world,” they must not be truly Christian. This is not an accurate understanding of this verse. John has already encouraged his readers that they are from God and have overcome ... because [he] who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world (4:4). The victory is already won. We won it (past tense) with our union in Christ, and we win it (present tense) by our refusal to deny him. Faith is the basis of our victory. When we place our faith in Jesus, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:37-39; 1 Cor. 15:57). No forces of evil can conquer the person who trusts in Jesus. Instead, the believer is victorious over the world because of his faith in Christ. Seen this way, this verse is not a matter of discouragement or fear that because we struggle with sin in our lives, we may not be Christians. Rather, it should be a matter of encouragement because in spite of our struggle with sin in our daily lives, the victory is already won. Our salvation is secure in Jesus.

5:6-15. The phrase water and blood (v. 6) automatically makes us think of the incident during the crucifixion of Jesus when the soldier pierced his side and water

and blood came out (John 19:34). However, this is probably not a reference to that event, but to Jesus' baptism and crucifixion. Cerithus, a false teacher of that time, taught that Christ was a spiritual being who came down on the man Jesus when he was baptized, but left him before he was crucified. That way, Christ came through water (baptism) but not through blood (crucifixion). To correct this lie, John wrote that the one whom believers acknowledge to be the Son of God (v. 5) came not by water only, but by water and blood. The one who hung on the cross was the same person who was baptized in the Jordan River.

Our witness of what we have seen and heard (1:2, 4:14) is important, but there is a greater witness—the Holy Spirit (see John 15:26–27). The witness of the Spirit is joined to the witness of the water and blood, so that the three are in agreement. The witness of the Spirit may be understood as the testimony of God (see v. 9) through the prophets (including John the Baptist) and the Scripture. All witnesses converge—the testimony of the Spirit through the prophets and Scripture, and the testimony of the historical facts of Jesus' life from the beginning of his ministry (baptism) to the end (crucifixion).

If human testimony is accepted on the basis of three witnesses, how much more should God's testimony be accepted (vv. 9–11). Two points are made before specifying God's testimony in verses 11–12. First, divine testimony should be accepted because it is greater than human testimony, which everyone accepts. Second, willful unbelief is sin. If we trust people to be true to their word, why would we not trust God, who is more trustworthy than humans? If a person accepts the testimony of God, he has an internal (in his heart) assurance that what he has believed is actually true. Reformers called this the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*, or the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is given in addition to the historical evidence (Rom. 8:16). Anyone who rejects God's testimony has made him out to be a liar. There is no middle ground. You are either with God or against him.

So what is being testified to? That eternal life comes from God through his Son Jesus and through no other way (vv. 11–12). This statement is very likely directed at the antichrists who charged that the readers did not really have eternal life through Christ. Scripture makes it clear that we do have eternal life through Jesus. To deny this is to deny God's testimony and to call God a liar.

Toward the end of his first epistle, John stated his purpose for writing it: That you may know that you have eternal life. First John is written to those who are Christians

to give them assurance that they are saved (v. 13).

The Christian may have confidence in approaching God in prayer (vv. 14–15). Our confidence in prayer is a natural consequence of our assurance that we have eternal life (vv. 12–13). We may ask anything according to God’s will, and we will receive it. This leads many Christians to ask, How can I know what the will of God is? Sometimes Scripture will tell us what the will of God is, either explicitly or in principle. It may take spiritual maturation and discernment to learn which principles of Scripture should guide our prayers.

5:16–21. In verses 14 and 15 John gives the reader assurance that God will answer prayer. Now he gives a specific encouragement to pray that God would restore a fellow believer (“brother”) who is sinning. There is, however, one limitation to such a prayer. If this person’s sin involves a “sin that leads to death,” prayer should not be offered. John has often mentioned the theme of sinning in this epistle (e.g., 1:710; 2:2, 12; 3:35, 89; 4:10). The believer is not without sin (1:8), but at the same time he is not characterized by an ongoing sinful lifestyle (3:89; 5:18). When a Christian “sees” his brother sinning a sin that does not lead to death, he is to pray for that person. The verb translated “he should pray” is a future tense verb (lit., “he will pray”), which expresses the Christian’s inevitable and spontaneous reaction. The result is that God will grant the sinning brother life.

But not every sinner is granted life as a result of answered prayer. The praying Christian can have confidence if the person’s sin is not of the sort that leads to death. John does not strictly forbid prayer for such a person, but it is clear that he is in doubt about its efficacy. What exactly is the “sin that leads to death”? A few suggestions about the nature of the “sin to death” include the following: total rejection of the gospel, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, or a specific, deadly sin. We cannot be sure of the correct interpretation of the “sin to death.” Thus, we need to focus on the positive point: we are to pray for our sinning brothers. This is certainly in line with God’s will. Jesus prayed for Peter on the night Peter betrayed him (Luke 22:32), and we should do the same for one another.

John brings his first epistle to a close by summarizing three final affirmations, each introduced with the phrase, “we know”: 1) A person born of God does not continue to sin and is kept away from Satan’s harm. Jesus keeps him safe. The believer is secure in the grace of God, and Satan cannot take his salvation from him. 2) We are children of God, not under Satan’s control as the world is. This reinforces the distinction



between the satanically-controlled world system and the Christ-controlled body of believers who have been delivered from its power. 3) The Son of God has come into this world to give us understanding which leads to salvation. This strikes a one-two blow against the false teachers, the antichrists who claimed to have special inner knowledge of God and salvation apart from Jesus. God can be known in only one way—through Jesus. Truth can be known in only one way—through Jesus.