

## SESSION 9 – WEEK OF 14 MAR 2021

### BORN TO OVERCOME

SCRIPTURE: 1JOHN 5:1-5:13

**Theme:**

Last week, we talked about what it means to love an unseen God. Through acknowledging God's love and loving the people around us, we have the means to love God and to complete His love. In today's passage, the Apostle John reminds us again that the true marks of being a child of God is to love our fellow brothers and sisters. This is by no means an easy task. But our Heavenly Father provides us the faith to overcome sin and love our fellow brothers and sisters.

**Key Verse:**

"In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.' 1 John 5:3-4

Read 1John 5:1-5:13

#### Core Questions for Discussion

(If your group meets fortnightly, combine Core Questions of two sessions and choose one Further Question from either session.)

1. The Apostle John talks about the testimony of God about His Son. Ask your group members to brainstorm and summarise the testimony of God/the Gospel in two short sentences and share it with the group. Encourage them to be as creative as possible!
2. In this week's passage, the Apostle John lists out 3 signs that someone is born of God. How many of these signs can you find in the text? How many of these signs can you find in your own life?
  - People who are born of God:
    - o Believe that Jesus is the Christ/Son of God. (v.1)
    - o Loves other people that have been born of Him (v.1)
    - o Overcome the world (v.4)
  - It's very easy for us to say that we are children of God but do we truly believe that?
  - When we believe in God's love, His love transforms our lives. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says that "anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

- The Apostle John has given us 3 signs of what this new and changed life entails. Do we live lives that reflect our heavenly sonship?
- In previous weeks, we have taken time to discuss what it means to believe that Jesus is the Christ and what it means to love other children of God. If you have some time, catch-up with your group to see what changes they have made to better reflect these signs?

3. What hope/encouragement does the Apostle John give in overcoming the world? (v.4)

- In previous sessions, we discussed what the Apostle John means when he refers to "the world." John describes 3 things: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." (2:16) that come from the world and not from the Father. Thus, the Apostle John encourages us that the children of God will overcome sin.
- Sin and the world stand in opposition to God and love. Thus, we obey God's commands to continue in love and to flee from sin.
- Both Jesus and the Apostle John understood the challenges of keeping God's commandments while living in a sinful world. However, the Apostle John encourages us by saying that these commandments are not something that should be burdensome or that weighs us down.
- We face temptations daily and even struggle with sin. At times, we may find it a challenge to obey God's commandments. However, we need not doubt whether we will overcome sin and find victory over sin. The Apostle John guarantees that the children of God will find victory over their sin.
- The faith we place in God enables us to keep God's commandments and find victory over sin. When we place our faith in Jesus, God provides us with the Holy Spirit, a helper to keep God's commandments and to love Him. Jesus describes the Holy

What role does water, blood and Spirit play in the testimony of God?

The Apostle John says that Jesus Christ came by water and blood and these two testify about Him. Water and blood are two symbols that give evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

The water symbolises the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan. When Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, a voice appeared from heaven and said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

The blood symbolises Jesus' death on the cross, where he shed his blood that cleansed us from our sin. Only the death of the sinless Son of God could fulfil the requirements of justice for sin and pay for the penalty of sin for all mankind. When we partake in the sacraments (Holy Communion and baptism), we remember the testimony of God that through His work on the cross, we can have eternal life.

The Spirit continues to act as living proof of our salvation and God actively working in our lives to sanctify us. While we may not have seen Jesus' baptism and death on the cross physically, Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to act as a helper until Jesus comes again. Experiencing the Holy Spirit on a daily basis is a reminder to us of our eternal life with Jesus.

Spirit as an “advocate to help [us] and be with [us] forever— the Spirit of truth... We know him, for he lives with [us] and will be in [us]” (John 14:16-17)

- When we have faith and rely on the Holy Spirit for faith and guidance, the Holy Spirit enables us to overcome sin and have victory over sin in the world.
- Take some time to discuss with your group over any struggles or doubts that they may have over their victory in sin. Provide space for people to share (in smaller groups if necessary) what temptations or struggles with sin they may have and encourage them with the Apostle John’s encouragement of their guaranteed victory in Jesus.

4. Why do you think it is important for someone to accept the testimony about God in the Bible, rather than one’s own ideas about God?

- The Apostle John’s epistle was written to disciples during a period when many false teachings were being circulated and promoted. Many of these false teachings included a belief in the idea that God existed but they gave many different portrayals of God and offered different means to access salvation. Some of these texts taught that one had to obtain a hidden and secret knowledge (*gnosis*) so that one’s immaterial soul could find salvation and escape from the material world. As we saw earlier in 1 John, the Apostle roundly rejects such notions when he affirms the importance of the Incarnation, the Son born in human flesh.
- Hence, the Apostle John taught that to gain eternal life, one could not believe in any vague conception of a divine being. To gain eternal life, they had to believe in the one true God who gave His Son to die for our sins.
- Today, you might have come across beliefs like “All religions lead to God.” or “I have my own unique understanding of God.” However, as the Apostle John highlights there is only one testimony of God that is true. It is important for us to ground ourselves firmly in this truth for us to gain eternal life. God has given us His word to understand this truth deeply and as we read His word daily, may He continue to reveal His truth to us every day.

#### Further Questions for Discussion

(Optional question for discussion if time permits. Do allocate adequate time for prayer and fellowship.)

5. *If you have time ...*

Are you usually aware of the link between obedience to God and loving Him? Or do you often struggle to make the connection between the two? Why is that the case? What are some challenges you face when obeying God’s commands?

- Take some time to discuss how these two ideas tie together with your group. Do we see obedience and love as separate things? Perhaps obedience has become something burdensome, where we see God as a taskmaster whom we obey

grudgingly. Open the floor to your group for them to share some of their frustrations/struggles when it comes to obedience.

- Ultimately, may John's encouragement change your perspective and soften your heart to obeying God as a means of loving Him. Remember that obedience is the fruit of receiving God's love and is not how we earn God's love and salvation.

## Prayer Suggestions

6. Would you consider praying for:

- a. A revelation of the true testimony of God and an overwhelming sense of His love as you continue to journey with God daily. May God reveal His fatherly love for you as His child and may you look in wonder at the love he has lavished upon you.
- b. Softening of hearts to be obedient to His commands. May this obedience be an outpouring of your love for Him. When we are faced with temptations of sin, may You rely on His Holy Spirit and remember that those who believe in Him will overcome the world.