



RELATE

ADULT CONNECT  
CLASS CURRICULUM

DONALD J. WILLS  
SENIOR PASTOR

APRIL 2020



first baptist  
FORT WORTH

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *A Note From Our Pastor*

Dear Church Family,

During recent weeks, we've all likely spent more time at home with our family due to the response to this pandemic sweeping the globe. We pray that you and your family have used this time to grow closer to the Lord through prayer and Bible study, having meaningful conversations with one another which have led to more fruitful relationships, and found innovative ways to reach out to extended family and others in the church with whom we can't fellowship in person regularly. Although we may have to find new ways of relating to others, we must return to principles of old established from the foundation of the world so that we don't become selfish in our outlook and our relationships become strained. When we seek the Lord, He will give the proper perspective and help us view ourselves in the proper light so we can relate to the world around us in righteousness!

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

As we have learned over the last few weeks from 1 John, we ought to abstain from sin and practice righteousness in love as we relate to God and to others. This month we will look at how some individuals in Genesis relate to the Lord in their walks. On one hand, we will see how sin separates, causes dysfunction in all our relationships, and leads to death; on the other hand, we will see how God responds with grace, rescues those who turn to Him in righteousness and obedience, and fulfills His promise to give life to those who seek Him. In a world devoid of hope and certainty, we have somewhere we can turn if we would only acknowledge our dependence upon the Lord and allow Him to guide all our relationships! Therefore, let us relate to the Lord in humility, faith, righteousness, and obedience so that we can lead our families in the way that He has called us and grow closer to Him in all our relationships.

-Blessings  
Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

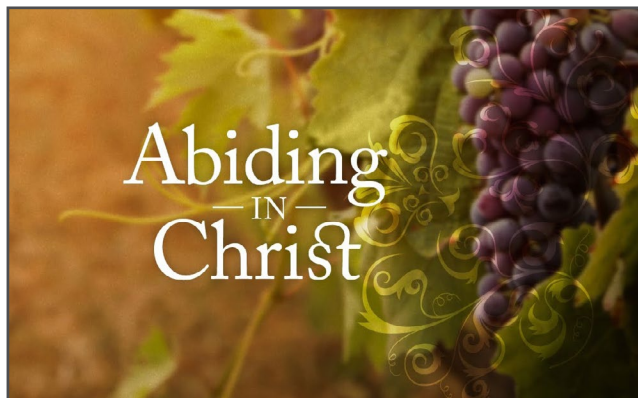
**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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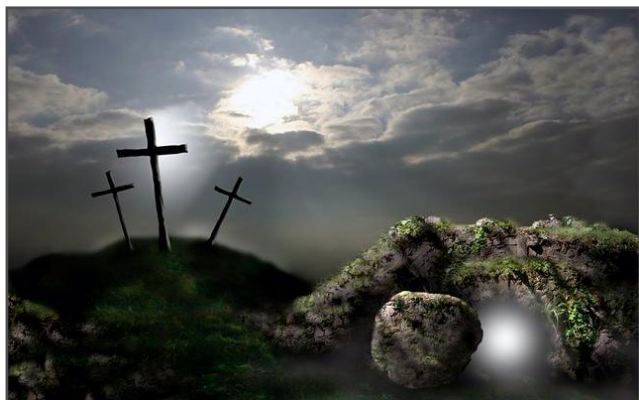


**April 5, 2020**

Abide in the Savior

[1 John 4:12-21](#)

17



**April 12, 2020**

Acknowledge the Sacrifice

[1 John 5:1-8](#)

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**April 19, 2020**

Accept the Son

[1 John 5:9-13](#)

45




**April 26, 2020**

Abstain from Sin

[1 John 5:14-21](#)

*April 5, 2020 (Palm Sunday)*



Abiding  
— IN —  
Christ

*Abide in the Savior*

*1 John 4:12-21*

Focal Verse:

“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.”

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1 John 4:14

## Introduce

Almost two thousand years ago this week, perfect love was on full display in the crowded streets of Jerusalem as religious worshipers began gathering to celebrate one of the holiest festivals of the year—Passover. As an annual reminder of God’s gracious deliverance of the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt, people flooded the city focused on tradition and ritual in anticipation of sharing a meal together that memorialized the blood shed by an unblemished lamb that would cause the Lord to pass over and spare their firstborn when applied to the doors of their residences. Like many festivals and religious practices, many participated out of habit because it was simply something they did every year. Outside of these grandiose celebrations, they exhibited little devotion to the Lord in their daily lives, showing that the meaning of the festival had become obscured by ritual and tradition and had little impact upon the people as a whole. Perhaps, however, some of us can identify with these worshipers because we too only attend services around Easter and Christmas or we participate in Sunday worship merely out of habit—showing little to no devotion to the Lord in our daily lives.



In the week leading up to this monumental event, something unusual occurred as people spontaneously broke into celebration when a man entered the city riding on the back of a young donkey. In joyous celebration as He rode into town, the people began to lay their coats and palm fronds upon the ground in front of His processional to show their honor and respect. Then, the people in the crowd began to shout, “Hosanna to the Son of David. ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest” ([Matt 21:9](#)). In great ignorance of what would happen that Friday, the people yelled “hosanna” which means “Lord, save us” in Hebrew. Indeed, their salvation had come into town that very day—in fact the salvation of the entire world had come. Yet, many of these same people had simply become overwhelmed with emotion by the crowd because their shouts of “Lord, save us” would turn into

## Introduce

shouts of “crucify Him!”

Love was strongly evidence when adoration turned into accusation and Jesus remained faithful to the Father’s plan, knowing that it would cost Him everything. Whereas most of the world misunderstood His purpose, Jesus clearly knew from the beginning and never once deviated in His purpose or love for us! At the end of this week, Jesus would become the perfect Passover Lamb who willingly shed His blood so that we could have deliverance from our sin. His sacrifice was so perfect and so great that it was once-for-all-time; we need nothing else nor do we have any other way to attain life and salvation, except through this one act alone! In that one act, love became visible to us, so we have an example to emulate.

Like the fickle members of this crowd who got caught up in emotion, many people may cry to the Lord for salvation, but they don’t truly know how to obtain it. Those who claim to be religious may try to attain life by what they do, but never find it because they don’t have a relationship with the Lord. They may say that they love God, but no evidence of that love exists in their lives because they don’t truly love others; thus, they too cry out, “hosanna” at the same time as “crucify Him” in response to an innocent man because they go along with what’s popular or fashionable at the time. On the contrary, when we have God’s love instilled within us through a personal relationship with His Son, we will display this same kind of perfect love and we will have nothing to fear. In Christ, we won’t receive condemnation, but life. And that life we now have becomes evident in how we love others as Christ has first loved us; therefore, let us abide in Christ and display that same kind of love!

Key  
Question

How is God’s love perfected in us?



### 1 John 4:12-16

#### ***THE EVIDENCE OF LOVE:***

From the beginning of this letter, John has stated with unwavering confidence that he and the other apostles “have seen with [their] eyes” and “looked upon” Jesus who is our eternal God and Creator in the flesh ([1 John 1:1](#)). Now, however, he declares that **no one has seen God at any time** (v. 12). If Jesus is God and they have physically seen and touched or interacted with Him, then John seems to contradict himself in this statement. Yet, the interpretation and understanding of this passage doesn’t depend so much upon the meaning of the individual Greek word translated as “see,” but upon the larger context of the immediate passage as well as Scripture as a whole. When John asserts that **no one has seen God**, he isn’t referring to His physical attributes in Jesus, but rather to His character, nature, or complete state of being. In other words, **no one** can fully know or understand God from our finite, limited human perspective apart from Jesus.

Jesus’ own response at the Last Supper to Philip who requested, “Show us the Father,” will help us to better understand John’s statement here in verse 12. In answering Philip, Jesus replies, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not *known* Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father” ([1 John 4:19](#)). The disciples who had been with Jesus the better part of three years still didn’t truly know or comprehend who Jesus was even though they had seen Him and interacted with Him physically and intimately. The same applies to us.



We cannot fully know God even though we have a personal relationship with Him. It’s impossible in our human mind to conceive of God’s attributes in totality; we can only understand in part.

Furthermore, the Old Testament refers to God in much the same way by showing our limited ability to comprehend who He truly is; people, at times, physically see part

## Instruct

of God ([Exod 33:23](#)), observe Him seated upon His throne ([Isa 6:1](#); [2 Chron 18:18](#)), or speak to Him face to face ([Exod 33:11](#); [Gen 32:34-40](#)). References such as these help us relate to God by giving Him human attributes, so that we can begin to comprehend His position and character as our divine, sovereign Creator. So, in this context in 1 John, the apostles physically saw Christ and could touch Him, but they could only comprehend a little of His character. For example, they, and we too, could observe the love Christ demonstrated, but they could never fully understand the depths of that love! For this reason, even Paul writes, “To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge” ([Eph 3:19](#)). Therefore, John doesn’t contradict himself, but he is merely lamenting the difficulties about knowing an infinite, mighty, and sovereign God through the eyes of a human being.

In what ways have you seen God work in your life that has helped you to begin to understand who He is?

Question  
# 1

Although no one in this world can fully comprehend God, we can still know Him intimately and see evidence of His divine character through the **love** that He has displayed and demonstrated toward us. Consequently, our lives then become a living testimony which display God’s love visibly to the world around us in two primary

Love One Another

By this all men will know that you are My disciples  
if you have love for one another.

John 13:35  
ἰωὴν 13:35

ways: 1) through the salvation He offers and 2) through the transformation He has produced within us that allows us to **love** supernaturally like He does. First, John acknowledges that we have first-hand knowledge of God’s **love** and **we can testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world** (v. 14). In [4:9-10](#), John has already explained how Jesus’

sacrifice constitutes the greatest demonstration of **love** this world has ever known. In Christ, we have a visible display of **love** and an invitation for an eternal relationship which we can attain only through Him; therefore, **whoever confesses that Jesus is the**

**Son of God** and responds to the gospel instituted through Him can have eternal life (v. 15).

Second, God's **love** becomes manifest through us by enabling us to love others just as He has lavished **love** upon us. In this way, we become a conduit for God's **love** in a selfish and darkened world. Having a restored relationship with the Father through Christ, **His love** can now flow through us in how we live, how we relate, and how we serve others unselfishly in order to point them to Christ. When **we love one another**, John reveals that **God abides in us** as His children. As a result, others should "see" the evidence of God's **love** in the way we honor and represent Him as well as how we treat and respond to those around us. To say that **love has been perfected** means that it has become mature or complete in Christ; therefore, we will exhibit a mature practice of **love** which distinguishes us from the world. However, we can only practice this type of mature **love** when we have a relationship with Christ and the Holy **Spirit** resides within us (v. 13).

How should others see Christ in the way that we love?

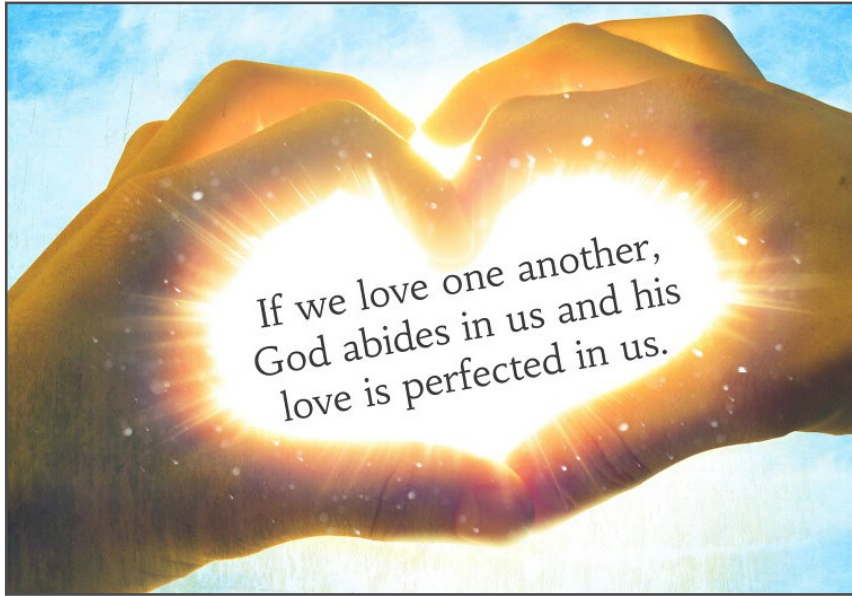
Question  
# 2

For this reason, John explains that we can see evidence of God's work in our lives **because He has given us His Spirit** who helps us to abide **in love** just as He does (v. 16). At the moment we confess and turn from our sin, we receive the Holy **Spirit** in full who dwells in our hearts, guiding us and aligning us with God's will. However, **the Spirit** most often doesn't receive all of us because we fail to surrender every area into His control and maintain a worldly perspective. In order to display that **love** which **has been perfected** by God, we must allow **the Spirit** to have full access to our lives! When we do, He will produce fruit in our lives that matches God's character—the first of which is **love** ([Gal 5:22](#)). In Christ, **love** is made perfect or complete because we find satisfaction and contentment in Him rather than looking to the temporal things of this world which leave us longing for more. Our priority, therefore, becomes pleasing and serving Him which transforms the way that we relate to the world and how the world in return views us.

As a single person, people sometimes jokingly tell me how blessed I am to have the freedom to do what I want (within moral bounds) without first having to check with my wife. I can go wherever I want, do whatever I desire, and buy whatever strikes my fancy—which is somewhat of a farce because I still have a job and other obligations!

## Instruct

Personally, however, I don't view life that way. I wouldn't lose my "freedom" or forsake



my interests if I got married, but my wife would become my priority after Christ. Nevertheless, I no longer would view things in terms of "me" alone, but develop a perspective which seeks the best for us—finding ways to support, serve, and sacrifice to show my **love**. Others, then, can see that **love** visibly reflected in our relationship. **Love** made perfect

in Christ functions in the same way when we make Him the priority of our lives. Others will see it maturely reflected in our relationship with Him because it becomes our joy and privilege to serve and sacrifice for Him!

How does the Holy Spirit enable us to show God's love to the world around us?

Question  
# 3

## 1 John 4:17-19

### THE EFFECT OF LOVE:

After reminding us of the evidence of God's **love** through **His Son** which we also should manifest as His children by loving one another, John turns to describe the effect of **love**. For those of us who have a relationship with Christ, John notes that **love has been perfected among us** (v. 17). In other words, God has made us complete through **His Son**; we no longer need to search the world for our purpose and place to find acceptance and satisfaction because we now have found them in Christ and His **love**. Christ has cleansed us from all unrighteousness, restored us, and made us acceptable to fellowship with the Father. As a result, we can have **boldness on the day of judgment** because He has made us in right standing! Therefore, the phrase **as He is so are we in this world** signifies that we have been made holy and righteous through Him, so that when we stand before the Father on **judgment day** we have nothing to **fear** (v. 18). John continues to remind us that **perfect love casts out fear** because it involves

**torment** (v. 18). If people **fear**, then they **have not been made perfect in love**. In other words, **fear** should only exist when one doesn't have a relationship with Christ. Because they have rejected Christ and remain in their sin, they will receive the penalty in full which is a second death and separation from the Lord where they will spend eternity in **torment**. For those of us who have a relationship with Christ, we don't have to **fear** like a criminal standing before a judge awaiting a sentence. God has served our sentence for us and expunged our record by what Jesus did for us on the cross! Therefore, we can rejoice in what He has done for us and celebrate the victory over death that He has graciously provided. Yet, why do people still **fear**?

How does perfect love cast out fear?

Question  
# 4

One early evening just after dinner, Billy sat in his vehicle dabbing the sweat from his forehead with a cloth—not because it was a sweltering day typical of Texas in the summer, but because he was parked in front of Destiny's house. He had known her since high school and wanted to ask her on a date, but fear had seized him. As he sat contemplating, he went through every scenario in his mind; he wondered whether she would accept his invitation, but most of all feared that she would reject him. He had already planned out what he would say, how he would ask, and even anticipated the responses that she may make—just short of writing everything on note cards lest he forgot! He wanted everything to be perfect, but doubted whether he would have the ability to execute his plan flawlessly enough to hear the much desired response. Eventually, he mustered up enough courage to get out of his car and begin walking up the sidewalk which seemed to continue for miles. This long trek gave him even more

time to think. He pondered, "What if I don't meet her expectations?" As he neatly repositioned his hair which had become disheveled by a sudden gust of wind, he thought, "What if she doesn't like how I dressed, my selection of cologne, or even the place where I've chosen to take her?" Yet, he somehow continued and found himself pressing the doorbell. As



## Instruct

the door opened, Billy almost fainted because it was her father holding a shotgun with a cleaning rag to prepare it for hunting season. Wondering if he had an ample supply of buckshot too, Billy stuttered and stammered, "Sir, um, sir, is Destiny home?" Inviting him inside, Billy continued to be gripped by **fear** as he paced back and forth in the foyer waiting for Destiny.

Unlike Billy, we don't have to **fear** as believers. Billy's **fear** was predicated upon three primary things: rejection, expectation, and the unknown. In Christ, we need not **fear** rejection because His invitation to salvation and life is open to everyone who will accept His gift ([1 Tim 2:4](#); [2 Peter 3:9](#)). On the other hand, we separate ourselves from Christ when we reject Him and refuse to repent of our sins ([Matt 10:33](#)). He always stands ready to receive us and reconcile with us if only we would ask! In addition, we shouldn't **fear** His expectations because from Scripture we know that we all miserably fall short ([Rom 3:23](#)), but He still loves us anyways and gave His life as a ransom for our sins so we can be in right standing ([Mark 10:45](#)).

When we **fear** expectations, we worry about what we can do ourselves to meet them and how we can control our own fate. Rather than trust in Christ, some people trust in what they can do to appease their sin debt: their works (earning salvation), their righteousness (being a good person), and performing rituals and following traditions (baptism or church membership). None of these things can meet Christ's expectations! On the contrary, He

has fulfilled the expectation for forgiveness through His own sacrifice. Therefore, we must trust in what He has done for us!



What are some things that you fear or worry about most in life?

Question  
# 5

Many of you are probably wondering what happened with Billy and his potential date with Destiny. I intentionally didn't finish the story because it doesn't matter! Billy

feared the unknown with Destiny, but we as believers don't have to. In Christ, we know the end of the story because we have life in Him. We shouldn't **fear** the unknown because we know the One who holds the future in His hands! As human beings, we may have limited knowledge and not know what tomorrow may hold in store for us, but we know that whatever happens we have victory in Christ—we can be assured of that! What then is there to fear? Absolutely nothing! In times where we're tempted to **fear**, let us remember that **we love Him because He first loved us** (v. 19). Since God's **love** for us never ceases, we can always depend upon Him and know that He wants the best for us. We just need to make Him the priority of our lives and seek Him first above everything else.

How does Christ help us to overcome fear?

Question  
# 6

## 1 John 4:20-21

### THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE:

John concludes this section with a familiar refrain that reminds us the importance of showing **love**. He begins by highlighting the hypocrisy in which someone can claim to **love God**, but then **hate his brother** (v. 20). He brands the one who lives in this manner **a liar**. Twice already in this letter John has dealt with this subject. He reminds us that those who fail to show **love** remain in darkness ([2:9-10](#)) and he equates hatred with murder ([3:15](#)). Here, in 4:20-21, he asks a rhetorical question to put this incongruity into perspective: How can one **not love his brother whom he has seen** and **love God whom he has not seen**? Based on what we studied previously in [4:12](#), John's discussion about "seeing" God refers to intimate knowledge through a personal relationship. Those who do **not love** do not have fellowship with Christ!

John basically posits then, "How can someone say he has an intimate relationship with Christ if he hates **his brother** here on earth with whom he does have a relationship?" Since God is **love**, we ought to reflect His character when we have a relationship with Him. Therefore, John relates a **commandment** which he has heard directly from Jesus: the one **who loves God** will **also love his brother** (v. 21). John spends much time on this topic in his letter because we have the propensity to become self-centered. The world in which we live promotes selfishness in every sense and it's easy for us to follow that pattern unless we carefully prepare ourselves by focusing on Christ and imitating Him by becoming a conduit for His **love**.

Like John, we must continually remind ourselves that we ought to love others rather

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than follow the pattern established by this world of placing ourselves first. **Love** should



become our second nature, so to speak; it should come naturally to us! When we abide in our Savior, **love** will always motivate our actions in any situation regardless of our circumstances. We won't let anger, hatred, bitterness, vengeance, or any other sinful emotion rule our lives and dictate our responses, but we will always look to Christ! Let us, therefore, seek to abide in Him and reflect His **love** to the world around us, so that they too might come to have a

personal relationship and know Him intimately.

How does love which has been perfected overcome selfishness? How did Christ exemplify this kind of selfless love?

Question  
# 6



This week we celebrated Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem which marked the beginning of His last week before His crucifixion. Fortunately, the story doesn't end in death, but it is the beginning of life! Next Sunday, we will celebrate the most monumental event which has shaped all human history: the resurrection. Love motivated the Lord in all these things. He loved us so much that He Himself provided the way that we can have eternal life. We pray that you have a personal relationship with Christ and have experienced the full benefit of His love. If you do, then look for practical ways to share the love of Christ this week. Don't discount the simple or small acts of kindness and love that we may show others, but make sure they know why you do them! Take time to verbally tell them how Christ has changed your life and given you hope in Him. Share the gospel and invite them to join you in corporate worship at church to celebrate the resurrection.

Let us not simply go through the motions of celebrating Easter as a ritual and holiday we do each year. Many had turned the Passover into such a ritual that it had become somewhat insignificant. Let us remind ourselves what Christ has done for us and communicate it with others who do not have a relationship with Him! Let's not be excited only about this one day and then go back to business as usual. Allow the love Christ has lavished upon us and the magnificence of the resurrection to change us so completely that we live every day in God's love so that we become a living testimony to the world around us.

## ***Incorporate***

How do we see the evidence of God's love in the church? How do we become the testimony of God's love to the world around us?

In what practical ways can we as a church show love? Why should all these ways be paired with a presentation of the gospel?

Why should we as believers not be crippled by fear? How does love help us to overcome fear?

## ***Journal: Document God's Work***

*April 12, 2020 (Easter)*



# *Acknowledge the Sacrifice*

## *1 John 5:1-8*

Focal Verse:

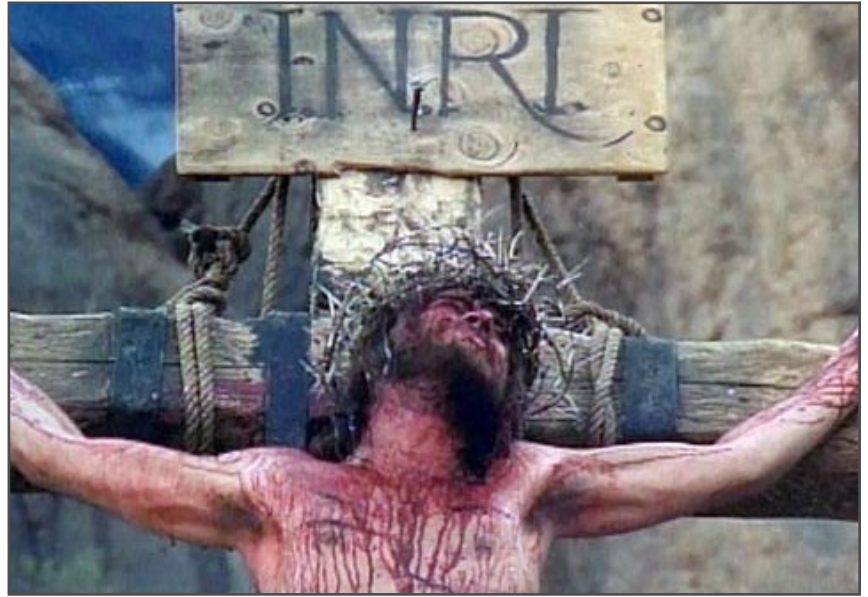
“This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

1 John 5:6

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## Introduce

We may come to church to escape the violence that pervades our world in order to find hope and encouragement. When we open the pages of Scripture, however, we are confronted with the most-violent act in history perpetrated upon an innocent victim who never once sinned! Yet, through this single act, we find hope in the death of this one man. Words on a page or images on a movie screen cannot capture the pain and torture He endured on



our behalf. In many ways, we have become desensitized as a culture in seeing death, gruesome gore, and gratuitous violence on television or at the movies. We should never forget, devalue, or downplay the violence inflicted upon Jesus who endured not only the cross, but also beatings and lashings so that we wouldn't have to. Before His illegitimate trial at the hands of the Jews, Jesus took His disciples to the garden where they would watch and pray. While He prayed, Jesus underwent so much severe stress that He began to sweat blood in a known medical condition called hematidrosis ([Luke 22:44](#)). After His arrest while standing before the high priest, Jesus was slapped by a guard for His perceived insolence ([John 18:22](#)). This began the physical violence against Him which would only intensify. The men who held Jesus in captivity struck and beat Him ([Luke 22:63-64](#)) and spat upon Him ([Matt 26:67](#)). From the Old Testament, we know these beatings left Him in a state barely recognizable as a man ([Isa 52:14](#))!

At His public trial before Pilate, Jesus was sentenced to a whipping in which they would employ a flagellum which had sharp objects interwoven into leather strands ([John 19:1](#)). Each of these tentacles would dig into the flesh, lacerating the back so much that it would often expose one's organs. Most usually died during this phase of the punishment, but Jesus continued to live! Continuing to mock Him, soldiers placed a crown of thorns upon His head and a purple robe while striking Him with their hands ([John 19:2-3](#)). This bramble of thorns would have spikes more than an inch long that would have scarred His temple. With such tremendous loss of blood, Jesus couldn't

## Introduce

finish carrying His cross beam to the place of crucifixion ([Matt 27:32](#)).

After reaching the site, Jesus' wrists and ankles were nailed into place, so the cross could be hoisted in place. Unlike common thought, those who endured crucifixion died from suffocation when they grew too tired to press up to get a breath of air. While hanging on the cross, they stood upon a small platform which enabled them to use their legs to press up for air, but consider the pain of Jesus' lacerated back scrapping against the untreated, rough wood of the cross. If you've ever had "excruciating" pain, this would have been how it felt. In fact, we get the word excruciating from the Greek word "to crucify." In all this, Jesus remained obedient in fulfilling the purpose of the Father because He loves Him and He loves us!

In [1 John 5:6](#), John writes, "This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood." We must remind ourselves of the tremendous price that Jesus paid to come by "blood." For without that payment, we would have no hope; we would have no forgiveness for sin. We needed someone perfect and unblemished to die in our place as the greatest Passover Lamb who forever took away the sin of the world. Fortunately, however, the story doesn't end with the death of our Savior. It's only the beginning. On the third day, Jesus rose victoriously from the tomb, defeating sin and death forever! For this reason, on Sunday this week we can gather to celebrate life—the life and hope that our Lord gave to us through His sacrifice!

Key  
Question

Why is the shedding of blood so important for salvation?

### 1 John 5:1-5

#### **OVERCOME THROUGH OBEDIENCE:**

In recent years, it has once again become fashionable to trace our family's ancestry to know our heritage and history. With this renewed interest, companies have begun advertising a more modern way to get quicker results rather than painstakingly searching marriage certificates and birth records. Using a genetic sample sent by mail, these companies begin to link us with other distant descendants based upon our DNA profile.

From the science classroom to the forensic courtroom, we know that our DNA not only determines our physical and psychological (i.e. personality) traits, but it also shows to whom we are related even if somewhat distantly. Through our parents and other relatives down



the line, we receive our genetic profile that determines our dominant characteristics and uniquely influences who we are. Just as we have physical DNA, we also have spiritual DNA which shows from whom we have descended—either from Christ by virtue of being “born again” ([John 3:3](#)) or from the enemy of this world, the devil ([1 John 3:10](#); [John 8:44](#)).

As we have learned throughout this letter, we become God's children when we have fellowship with Him through Jesus Christ His Son ([1 John 3:1](#)). This week we are celebrating that fellowship made possible through His death upon the cross which brings life culminating in His resurrection from the borrowed tomb! If we have accepted that gracious gift of life He freely gave, then we are His children ([John 1:12](#)) and as His children we bear His DNA spiritually. In fact, five times John references how those “born of God” ought to conduct themselves in contrast to the secular world ([2:29](#); [3:8](#); [4:7](#)) and in these verses in chapter 5 he neatly reminds us by way of summary how we ought to live ([5:1, 4](#)). From this passage, therefore, we can identify three traits of our heavenly Father's DNA that we ought to bear prominently in our lives: 1) love,

## Instruct

2) obedience / faithfulness, and 3) holiness / righteousness.

How evident is God's spiritual DNA in your life?

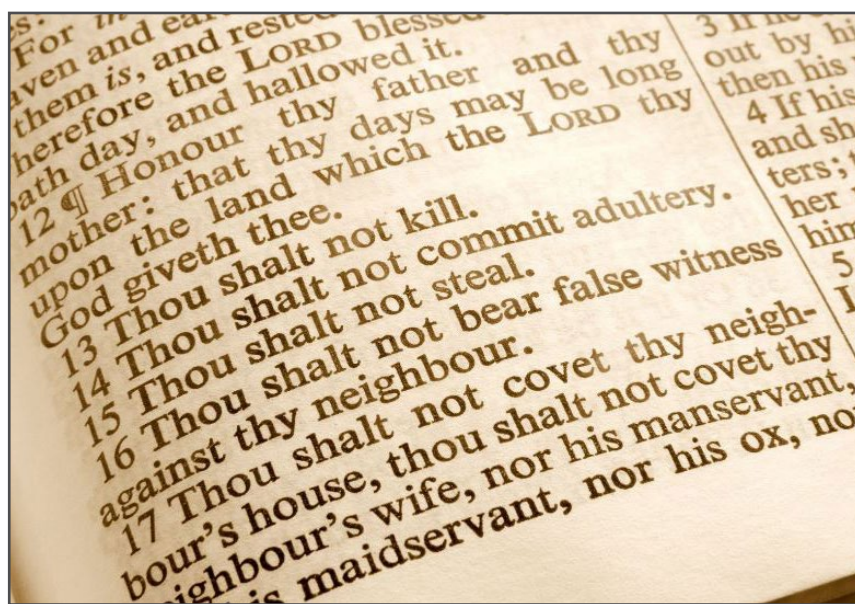
Question  
# 1

First, as we have studied in recent weeks, **love** characterizes who God is ([4:8, 16](#)) and by extension identifies us as His children when we **love** others ([2:10; 3:10-15, 23; 4:7-12, 20-21](#)). Continuing to show how **love** should characterize the lives of believers in our actions, John shifts his discussion from loving other human beings (literally “brother”) to loving God by loving the Messiah whom He sent. In loving God, therefore, we must recognize the foundation of our faith rests in a person and a relationship—not upon what we can do ourselves. As a result, John reminds us that **whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ) is born of God** (v. 1). It's not mere mental assent, however; this relationship begins by surrendering to Christ and showing our **love** for Him through confession of our sins and repentance whereby He puts us in right standing with God the Father. When we believe in Christ as the only way to attain life and accept His gift, it will show in our **love** for Him! Thus, John notes that **everyone who loves the Father** (i.e. the One **who begot**) **also loves the Son** (the One **who is begotten of Him**).

How can we express our love for God / Christ in practical ways?

Question  
# 2

The second spiritual characteristic that marks us as belonging to the Father is our



obedience and faithfulness. We express that obedience in two primary ways: 1) **we love God** and 2) **we keep His commandments**, particularly the command to **love** one another (v. 2). Again, John introduces nothing new, but he has stressed the need for obedience and living a righteous life devoid of sin throughout this letter ([2:3-8; 3:22-24; 4:21](#)).



Yet, he does offer further insight as to why we should faithfully adhere to God's **commandments**. John explains that our obedience demonstrates our **love** for **God**, but he also reminds us that **His commandments are not burdensome** (v. 3). People who do not have a relationship with Christ cannot truly understand this concept; they view God's commands as legalistic, unfair, and even a hindrance. They see Christianity as a **burdensome** set of rules rather than a relationship that frees and leads to life when we follow the prescribed boundaries He has set!

To help us better understand how God's **commandments are not burdensome**, we must differentiate between legalism and a lifestyle. Legalistic views of God's boundaries see them as a checklist predicated upon fear. We fear making mistakes because we view the commands based upon what we can do ourselves rather than what God does through us. In doing so, we try to earn favor with God rather than showing our love and devotion to Him. On the other hand, a lifestyle signifies a way of life that comes naturally to us. We don't have to think about living rightly all the time; we simply live that way as the Spirit leads. This doesn't mean that we totally disengage our minds, but that living by these boundaries becomes a natural way of life that we do automatically—just like breathing!

To illustrate the point, we can look at the actions of Captain Chesley Sullenberger, III and his crew who landed a crippled passenger airliner on the Hudson River. In speeches since that day, Sullenberger attributed the successful landing to a "lifetime of training and decisions, as well as team-building efforts with the crew."\* When landing the plane, they certainly thought about every option to land and made conscious decisions on what to do. But in the actual moment of landing on the river itself, which none of them had ever done, their training immediately came back to them and influenced their actions. They maintained the right speed, the right pitch, and landed the plane safely as they had been taught. They did this instinctively as they had been trained!

### ***In Reference***



Ryan Morgan, "[Sullenberger Attributes 'Miracle on the Hudson' to Culture of Teamwork](#)" (August 11, 2017), available from [www.ksl.com](http://www.ksl.com).

In the same way, obedience to God should come instinctively for us as believers! Like the crew of that doomed US Airways flight in 2009, God has offered us extensive training through Scripture; He has given us a manual with everything that we need to

## Instruct

know for His expectations on how to navigate life! Therefore, we need to study God's



Word and prepare ourselves spiritually, so that we will know how to respond when the time comes. Moreover, the Lord engages us in a “culture of teamwork” whereby He has sent His Holy Spirit to guide us; we don't have to walk through life alone. The Spirit will

remind us of the principles in Scripture that we ought to apply in our lives. To say that we must obey God in every facet, consequently, is not legalism, but a lifestyle. As part of our spiritual DNA as believers, therefore, obedience is who we are in Christ which influences what we do.

Why should we study both the Old and the New Testaments? Why do God's principles for living transcend time and culture?

Question  
# 3

In conjunction with our obedience, we ought to live holy and righteous lives which should be the cornerstone of our transformed character. For this reason, John states that whoever **is born of God overcomes the world** (v. 4). In other words, we won't act as **the world** does, but we will mimic the character of our heavenly Father. We can only **overcome the world** and have **victory** when we place **our faith** in **Jesus as the Son of God** (v. 5). **The world**, as defined by John, has rejected the salvation Christ offers and continues to live in sin and darkness ([2:15-17](#)). Thus, **the world** hates rather than loves and continues to live mired in sin without remorse and repentance. Believers, on the contrary, should stand in stark contrast! We ought to exercise integrity in everything we do just as Christ lived among us in sinless perfection. Although we will never attain that sinless perfection in this life, we should still strive to imitate our Father and His Son. John will now turn to Jesus' example in which He models these three principles for us: love, obedience, and holiness.

## 1 John 5:6-8

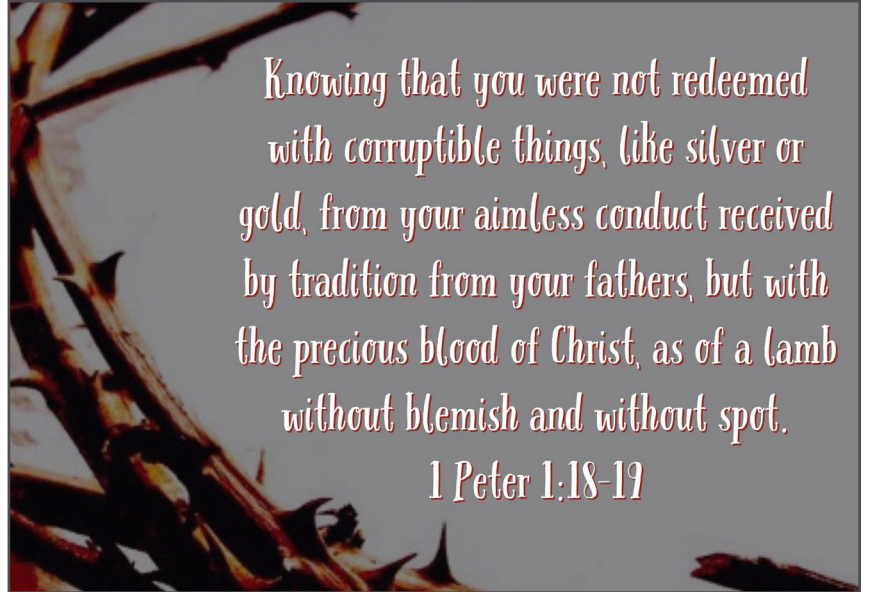
### OBEDIENCE THAT OVERCAME:

Through His unceasing devotion and unwavering obedience to the Father's preordained plan, Jesus overcame sin and death which had seized and altered the course of this world. With His triumphant resurrection on the third day, He

permanently defeated sin and death, offering the entire world hope through the life He now provides. In summarizing Jesus' ministry and purpose here on earth, John attests that **Jesus came by both water and blood** which revealed Him as the Messiah (**Christ**). For those of us who live far in time from the original context of this letter, this phrase

proves puzzling. Many scholars and interpreters have offered countless solutions as to what John could actually mean, but to know with reasonable certainty we must understand the historical situation of the church to which John wrote. When we understand the historical context, it will become clear that John is referring to Jesus' baptism (**water**) and death (**blood**) to show the entire scope and purpose of His life and ministry.

At the very beginning of our study of this letter, we learned that John and the early church faced a serious doctrinal threat to the gospel known as Gnosticism (the Greek word for wisdom). Those who held this errant view regarded the flesh (i.e. physical nature) as inherently evil; with the flesh being evil, a holy and righteous God couldn't have physically come to earth to dwell among His creation. Therefore, they wrongly taught that the "man" Jesus became "God" at His baptism when His Spirit descended from heaven and landed upon Him. They continued to think errantly that the Spirit of "God" remained upon Jesus only throughout His ministry, empowering Him to perform miracles and teach us how to transcend fleshly desire. At the crucifixion, however, they again wrongly surmised that the Spirit of "God" left the "man" Jesus to die on the cross; thus, Jesus, as God, didn't die! He was only an ordinary person like we are! The Bible never teaches this false doctrine in any shape or form and, in fact, John uses verses 6-8



## Instruct

here in his letter to reveal its flaws and correct these egregious errors.

To correct this misunderstanding of the Gnostics, John carefully demonstrates the purpose of Jesus coming by both **water and blood** (v. 6). He even reinforces that idea by explaining Jesus did **not** come **only by water, but by both water and blood**. In other words, Jesus did not become God at His baptism and return to the status of an ordinary man on the cross before His death. Jesus, therefore, is not a created being or one who became divine at any point, but He is our eternal and sovereign God who created the universe. Jesus was, is, and always will be God even though He also came in the likeness of human flesh! In the scope of Jesus' ministry, His baptism accomplishes two primary things. First, it provides the opportunity for God to reveal Him Messiah as promised through Scripture. Second, it proves Jesus' obedience to the Father's command and sets an example for us to follow.

Moreover, what the Apostle says next in verse 6 gives us the context by which we can understand this as a reference to **water** baptism. He asserts that **the Spirit bears witness because He is truth**. At Jesus' baptism, if we recall, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus as a dove and remained upon Him as a sign to John the Baptist that this was



indeed the long-awaited Messiah. In other words, the Spirit confirms Jesus' identity as the Messiah and Son of God. In [John 1:33-34](#), John the Baptist declares, "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is

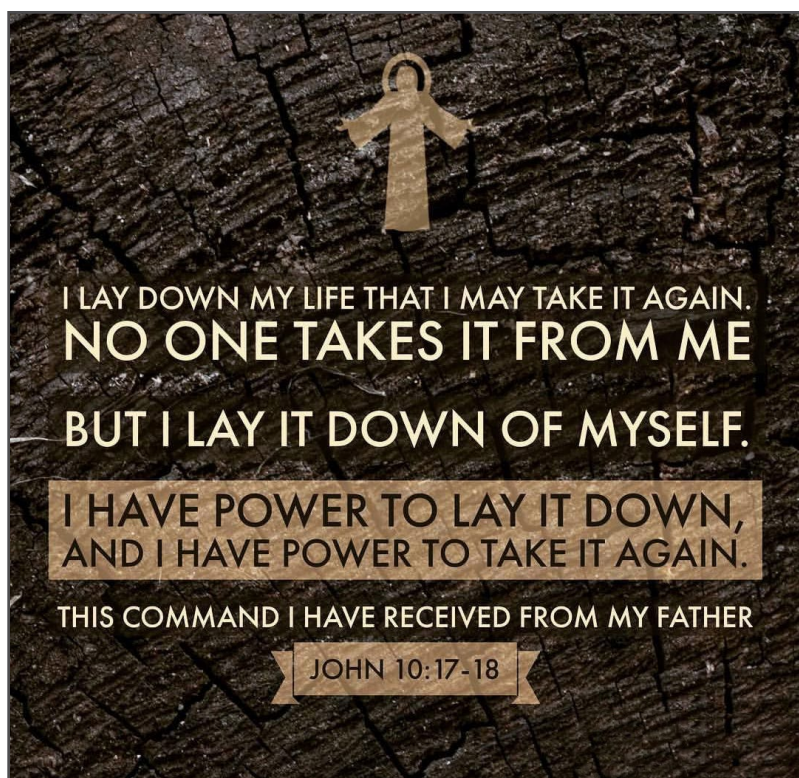
the Son of God." Thus, through the baptism, the Father reveals the Messianic role of His Son publicly. Furthermore, Jesus' obedience to the Father's command will ultimately foreshadow His obedience even unto death on the cross ([Phil 2:8](#)).

What is the purpose of baptism for us? How does Jesus' baptism provide an example for us to follow?

Question  
# 4

Over the course of these three verses, John highlights those things which serve as a **witness** to Jesus' role as Messiah and Savior of the world: **in heaven, the Father**, Scripture (**Word**), and **Holy Spirit** testify while **on earth, the Spirit, water, and blood** communicate the divine plan accomplished through Jesus (vv. 7-8). Next week, we will delve more into the theme of these witnesses, but this week we will focus on one **witness—the blood**—since through it we can have eternal life! Obviously, the reference to **blood** refers to Jesus' death on the cross which we examined in detail in the introduction. When God established the boundaries by which Adam and Eve should live, He specifically noted that the penalty for ignoring them and disobeying Him was death. Because they sinned, death, both spiritual and physical, entered into the world and everyone ever since has followed that same path by his or her own choice. The only way to overcome this sin and death is by a Savior who would pay the penalty in our place. Someone had to die for us! Scripture clearly states that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission”—no forgiveness of sin ([Heb 9:22](#)). Moreover, the penalty for our sin couldn't be paid by just anyone or anything. The blood of bulls and goats, for example, was only an annual reminder of sin; it couldn't cancel our sin debt ([Heb 10:3-4](#)). The **blood** that could permanently remove the guilt of sin had to come from a perfect individual who would willingly give His life for our sake ([John 10:18](#)). Living a sinless life in complete obedience to the Father's will ([Heb 4:15](#)), Jesus the Christ paid that penalty once and for all ([Heb 10:10](#))! Enduring excruciating torture and pain, Jesus shed His own **blood** on the cross, so that we might have life by reconciling us with Him.

Fortunately, the story doesn't end with death, but it actually begins there. Through death in this one case, it brought life! After being removed from the cross before sundown on Friday, His body was placed in a borrowed, unused tomb. To His followers and everyone present at the time, it looked as if death had defeated Jesus and dashed the hopes of a Messiah who would deliver. Yet, something miraculous happened that



## Instruct

third day prior to dawn! A tomb guarded by a detachment of soldiers and well-known among the citizens of Jerusalem was found empty. The body had not been removed by human intervention, but instead He was raised from the dead. A physical body once gripped by death walked out of the tomb that day alive as a glorious declaration that God's plan to redeem the world had succeeded. In one of the greatest statements in all Scripture that should bring joy and jubilation, angels assert, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee" ([Luke 24:5-6](#)). We have hope! We have forgiveness through His **blood** and find life in the resurrection!

How has the resurrection impacted your life?

Question  
# 5

Victory comes with a price. Although the victory that we have obtained in overcoming the world and conquering sin and death didn't cost us anything, it cost Christ everything. He paid with His life, so that we might be reconciled and restored into a right relationship with the Father through Him. Apart from Him, we have no hope; we can't have salvation and forgiveness for our sins through what we can do. Before He spoke the world into existence and breathed life into the nostrils of man, God had a plan to redeem a wayward creation that would rebel against Him. That plan required a perfect sacrifice which would take our place. Only one sacrifice could ever be found worthy to accomplish this. God sent His one and only Son to die for you and me. With this one magnanimous event, God overcame sin which had long gripped the world! Through His Son, God graciously offers the gift of reconciliation if only we would receive it. If you haven't, there is no better day than today to receive the gift of salvation. Once we take our last breath on this earth, the decision that we have made whether to accept or reject that gift in Christ will determine where we spend eternity. Since we're not guaranteed to live tomorrow or even to finish reading this sentence, we need to make the decision to follow Christ right now! If we choose to follow Him, accept the sacrificial gift of atonement He paid on the cross, and believe that God raised Him from the dead, we can have eternal life. To receive eternal life, all we must do is acknowledge that we have sinned and fall short of God's standard, ask forgiveness for our sins, and surrender our lives to a Savior by repenting or turning from a lifestyle of sin, and we will be saved. If we already have a relationship with Christ, let us constantly remind ourselves of the sacrifice which He paid on our behalf and worship Him for the life we can now live in Him.

## ***Incorporate***

Why is it not legalistic to say that we must obey the Lord? What does our obedience say about our relationship?

How does Christ help us overcome the world and sin? In what way(s) does He empower and equip us to resist temptation and remain pure?

How does your life serve as a witness or testimony to Christ?



## ***Journal: Document God's Work***

*April 19, 2020*



# *Accept the Son*

*1 John 5:9-13*

Focal Verse:

“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

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1 John 5:12

## Introduce

In May of 2019, Mrs. Eva Cook went home to be with her Lord at 98 years old. We were blessed to have her as part of our church for almost a decade after she came to live with her son, Bro. Fulton. Mrs. Cook and I had a wonderful, yet unique, relationship to say the least. She was ambitious, tenacious, and outspoken which made for some entertaining conversations, but she loved me and usually listened to me though at times we'd disagree on some non-essential things. Out of all the people I've known, however, Mrs. Cook had the strongest burden and an unquenchable desire to share the gospel with everyone



she met, especially children. In her early 90s, she still attended activities once a week at the YMCA where she would tell Bible stories and share the gospel with elementary-age children; she also guided children in their memory verses at our Vacation Bible School (VBS). She wanted everyone to know her Savior—the One who loved her so much that He died for her! So, it didn't matter who she met; she always told them Jesus loves them and shared with them how to have a relationship with Him.

As much as Mrs. Cook did in ministry as a pastor's wife, teaching children in VBS, training women, and taking care of her family, these things didn't give her confidence. What gave her unwavering confidence and security was what Jesus Christ did for her. She had that confidence because as a young girl she confessed her sins, accepted Christ, and surrendered to Him at a "brush-arbor" revival meeting in Arkansas. Over the years that I've known her, she told me her personal testimony repeatedly, boasting in what the Lord had done for her. She feared nothing in life nor in death! Although she wanted to live to be 100, she also knew that she was prepared for that day whenever it might come because she had a relationship with Christ. She knew beyond doubt what John meant when he wrote, "He who has the Son has life" ([1 John 5:12](#)).

Later in life as death became more real and evident, Mrs. Cook would sometimes tell me that she was scared. She didn't know what would happen when the door of death would finally open. She began to have doubts at times. Of anyone, Mrs. Cook should

## Introduce

have had the most assurance with everything that she had done. However, salvation never depends upon what we do, but what Christ did! Having heard her testimony often, however, I would ask about that revival meeting and if Jesus had indeed forgiven her sins when she invited Him into her heart. She would always reply, "Yes." I would then remind her about these verses in 1 John which tell us that we can *know* that we have life. We don't have to guess; we don't have to depend upon our works or our own goodness because these certainly wouldn't merit enough favor with the Lord for eternal life. It *all* depends upon the Son. If He lives in us, then we have eternal life. That is what gives us confidence and assurance!

At times, we may all have these kinds of doubts whether death is near or far. We may wonder what will happen to us after we die. We may ask ourselves whether Jesus truly loved us so much that He paid all our sin debt upon the cross and we owe nothing in return. We might ponder how sinners such as we could receive such a marvelous gift from a person who never once sinned. We may think that this is *too simple*. Can it really be that easy as receiving a gift in Christ Jesus despite everything that we've done? In 1 John 5:9-13, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, reveals that salvation is that easy! If anyone would know how to have life, John would because He heard it directly from the teaching of Jesus Himself! Christ did it all and it all depends upon Him! When we call upon the name of the Lord, confess our sins, believe in the sacrifice that He made for us, and surrender to Him, we can have eternal life; we will be saved through what He has done on our behalf!

Key  
Question

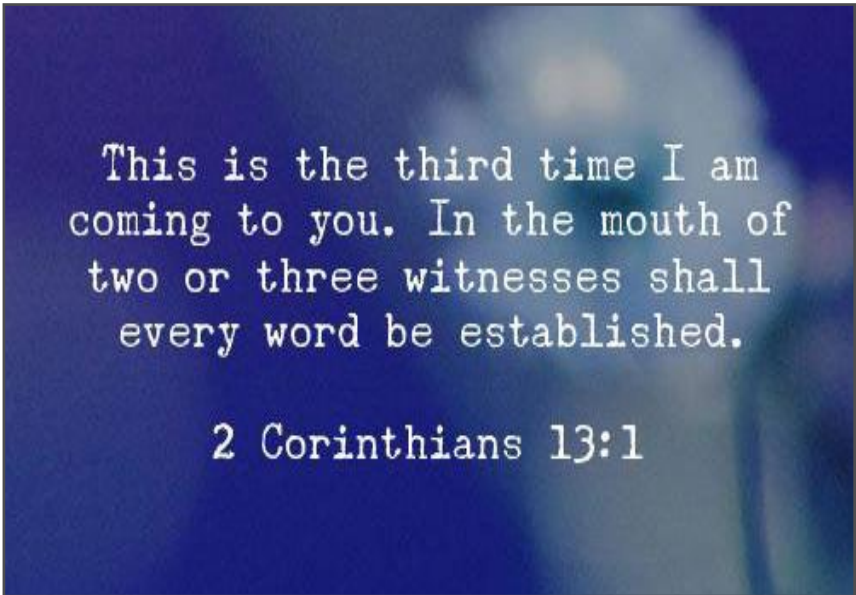
When you have experienced doubts about your salvation or eternal destination, how has Scripture helped to comfort and reassure you?

### 1 John 5:9-10

#### **GOD'S PROMISE FULFILLED IN HIS SON:**

Toward the end of last week's lesson, we learned that God has provided witnesses to validate Jesus' identity as the promised Messiah who would bring salvation to the whole world. In [5:7-8](#), John lists two series of three witnesses each **in heaven** and **on earth** that substantiate Jesus' purpose. **In heaven**, God **the Father**, Scripture (**the Word**), and **the Holy Spirit** all **bear witness**; on earth, **the Spirit**, **water**, and **blood** testify together as well. Since we dealt primarily with the witnesses **on earth** last week and saw how the Spirit at Jesus' baptism (**water**) along with His death (**blood**) revealed God's divine purpose through His Son, we will concentrate on the witnesses **in heaven** this week to see how they testify about Jesus from the very beginning. In verse 9, John establishes the superiority of all six of these witnesses by offering a comparison to put it into perspective about how reliable they all are; therefore, he argues that **if we** readily **receive the witness of mere man, the witness of God is** that much **greater**.

In Scripture, God mandates the need for two or three eyewitnesses to corroborate any charge brought against an individual and validate any evidence presented in the case ([Deut 17:6](#); [Matt 18:16](#)). In fact, He specifies that "one witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established" ([Deut 19:15](#)). God abides by this same principle when presenting Jesus as the Messiah. Altogether, He calls six witnesses to testify, doubling the minimum standard! Like any good human prosecutor or defender, God calls a definitive expert **witness** to the stand—Himself—because no one **greater** exists to testify! He can offer proof older than human existence itself that Jesus is the Messiah



This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

2 Corinthians 13:1

who would take away the sin of the world and bring eternal life. When we look at the evidence carefully and objectively, therefore, it overwhelmingly supports and confirms

### Jesus' identity as the Messiah—**the Son of God**.

What evidence does God give that validates Jesus as the promised Messiah?

Question  
# 1

Throughout Jesus' ministry on earth, religious leaders desperately tried to figure out who Jesus was even though God had already made it abundantly clear in the Scriptures they claimed to know, teach, and live. Jesus often disputed with these Jewish leaders about His relationship to God the Father and He presented testimony that He was indeed **the Son of God!** In fact, Jesus lists three witnesses that testify to His identity besides Himself which parallel those cited here in 1 John: the Father ([John](#)



[5:37; 8:15](#)), Jesus' own works or miracles ([John 5:36](#)), and Scripture ([John 5:39](#)). For a moment, let's enter the gallery of the heavenly courtroom in which God has taken the **witness** stand in defense of His Son. In His opening statement, the Father begins, "Long ago after the first man sinned as I was implementing punishment in the form of a curse, I vowed to the

serpent that he would experience defeat through the promised 'Seed' of this woman. Through this 'Seed,' I would overcome sin and death forever and offer people a way to avoid the same fate of the serpent—exile and separation from Me" ([Gen 3:15; Isa 59:1-2](#)).

After pausing for a moment, God continues to speak, "Though some years would pass, I didn't forget My promise, but I remembered and advanced it through a man named Abraham. I promised to bless the nations through him. Because he chose to follow Me, I sent the Messiah through His descendants to fulfill my promise" ([Gen 12:2-3; Heb 6:13-20](#)). "Some people see Me as slow in My work, but I'm not," He asserts, "I just wait for the perfect time, so that people can have time to accept My plan for them" ([2 Peter 3:9; Gal 4:4-5](#)). "After making this verbal promise to Abraham, I sent prophets to proclaim My Word—not only verbally, but also by writing it so that every generation would have a

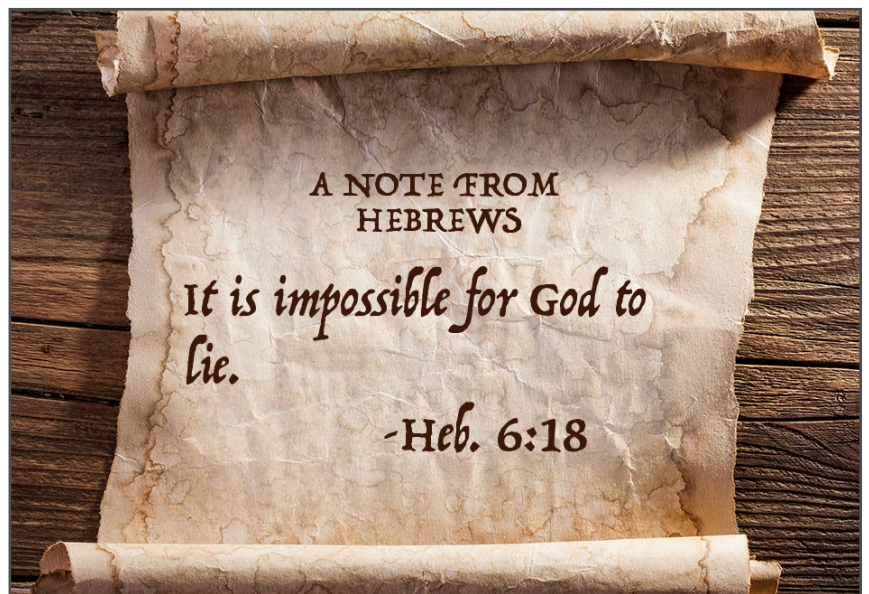
record of My promises," He reminds the gallery, "You see, My Word is very specific about My promises and details everything about the Messiah from His heavenly origin to His earthly heritage and lineage" ([John 1:1, 8:58; Col 1:15-16; Isa 7:14, 9:1-7, 11:1; Micah 2:5](#)). Looking at us squarely in the eyes as we sit in the gallery, God announces, "I even detailed everything that would happen to My Son, the Messiah, during His stay here on earth through these prophets I sent." "It would be no easy task, but He would endure pain and suffering beyond any man which would lead to His death; His death, however, would result in life for anyone who accepts the gracious sacrificial gift He provided" ([Isa 52:13-52:12](#)). He continues, "Because I love My Son, I revealed this plan to Him, so He told His followers that He must suffer 'many things' to the point of death, but that He would rise again on the third day" ([John 5:20; Luke 9:22; Ps 16:10](#)). Leaning forward, God triumphantly notes, "The resurrection of My Son from the grave as foretold presents the strongest evidence because through it I 'declared' Him 'to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit'" ([Rom 1:4](#)). With that God rests His case!

To what other Scriptures can we point that show God's plan and purpose in Christ from the very beginning?

Question  
# 2

Having journeyed through Scripture paraphrased and summarized in this courtroom scene, we can observe the historical and theological proof that Jesus is the promised Messiah from the foundation of the world. In addition to the proof that God the Father offers, we ourselves are also living proof of this promise! Therefore, John acknowledges that those of us who have a relationship with Christ and believe He is **the Son of God** have **the witness in** us too (v. 10).

We can know assuredly that Jesus is the Christ and the only way to receive forgiveness and eternal life because He has transformed our lives—a point which we will examine further when we get to verse 13. In the meantime, John pointedly declares that the one **who does not believe** makes **God a liar because** he has rejected and **not believed the testimony that** He Himself has provided about **His Son**. In other



## Instruct

words, we call God **a liar** when we don't accept His testimony. When we reject His Word, it has dire consequences for us which John will clearly describe in the coming verses when He compares the only two paths which can take in life: following **the Son** or rejecting Him.

How do we know God's testimony (or Scripture) is true?

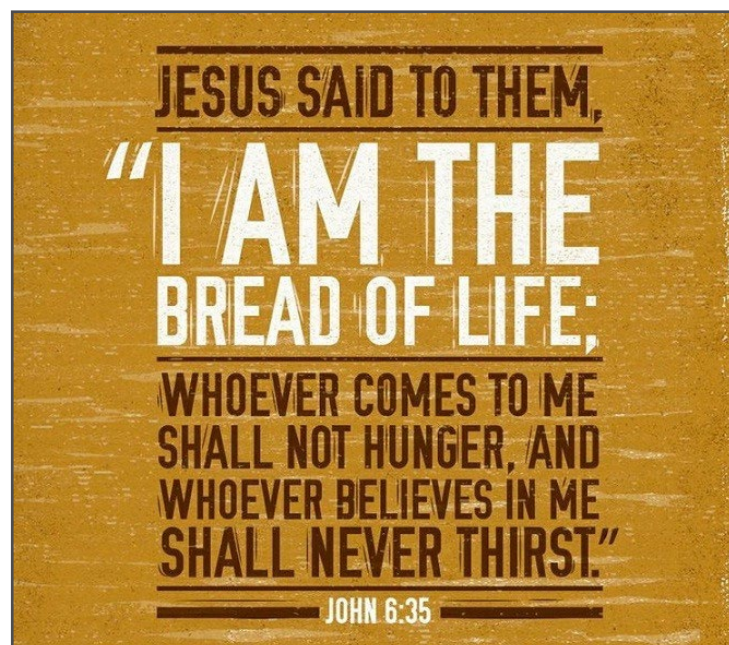
Question  
# 3

## 1 John 5:11

### **GOD'S PROMISE OFFERS SALVATION:**

Having spent several verses talking about the historical and theological witnesses to Jesus' identity, John now clearly and succinctly summarizes the content of **the testimony** (v. 11). He reveals that **God has given us eternal life** which can only be found **in His Son**. During His ministry, Jesus demonstrated His power over life and death in dramatic fashion in a way in which only God could have acted, thereby offering further proof He was indeed the Messiah. After receiving word that Lazarus had become deathly sick, Jesus delayed in traveling to Bethany during which time His beloved friend died ([John 11:6](#)). In fact, he had already been dead four days when Jesus arrived ([John 11:17](#)). In grief, Martha lamented that if Jesus only had come earlier that He could have healed her brother and he wouldn't have died ([John 11:21](#)).

After explaining to and reassuring Martha that Lazarus would rise from the dead, Jesus



announced, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" ([John 11:25-26](#)). Jesus then inquired whether Martha believed this to which she replied rightly, "Yes, Lord, I believe You are the Christ, the Son of God who has come into the world" ([John 11:27](#)). At that point, Jesus wept, but then did something miraculous that only God in the flesh could have done—give life by



raising Lazarus from the dead ([John 11:38-44](#))! Later, to His disciples at the last Passover meal, Jesus explained explicitly that life can only come through Him. He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” ([John 14:6](#)). As Creator, only Jesus has the right and power to grant **eternal life** to all those who believe in Him and accept His sacrifice on the cross! By His own resurrection from the dead, Jesus guarantees our own bodily resurrection after His own example if only we would turn from our sins and surrender our lives to Him.

From what other verses in Scripture can we deduce that Jesus gives life?

Question  
# 4

### 1 John 5:12

#### ***GOD’S PROMISE IS SIMPLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD:***

God’s plan and promise in Christ is simple and straightforward: either we have life through a relationship with Christ or we don’t. John states it this way: **He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life** (v. 12). People, however, tend to overthink and make the plan harder than it truly is. They make it harder by adding man-made traditions and rituals or by adding their own works and goodness into the equation. God’s plan is black and white—so crystal-clear that even a child can understand and accept it ([Matt 19:14](#); [Mark 10:15](#); [Luke 18:17](#)). We attain **eternal life** on His terms. Salvation is His gift to us; all we must do is accept it. We must acknowledge that we need a Savior, confess and turn from our sin, and surrender full control of our lives to Him by making Him the priority. Let’s not make salvation any harder than it needs to be, but let us follow the plan that God has outlined in Scripture through **His Son**.

How do people, especially those who claim to be educated, tend to overthink salvation and make it more difficult than it really is?

Question  
# 5

### 1 John 5:13

#### ***GOD’S PROMISE PROVIDES SECURITY:***

John concludes this section by stating another of his purposes in writing this letter. In writing to those **who** already **believe in the name of the Son of God**, John wants to encourage them and reassure them in their faith even if they may have doubts (v. 13).

## Instruct

He has **written**, therefore, so that they, and we for that matter, **may know** they **have eternal life** and **continue to believe in** Him. Through Christ, God provides security and reassures us that we have **eternal life** in Him. Yet, how do we *know* for sure that we have this life? We don't have to wander through life by trial and error, guessing or even hoping that we might somehow attain **eternal life**. God has clearly spelled out the conditions for **eternal life** in His Word. A simple story can illustrate how we can *know* confidently that we have **eternal life** in Christ.

In the mid 1800s during the height of westward expansion, Solomon K. Matthews owned and managed a general store in Independence, Missouri which travelers used frequently to buy their last supplies and restock before setting out on the Oregon Trail. Stocked with an ample supply of every kind of good imaginable, his store sold



everything from nails to wheat, flour, and sugar priced by the pound and measured on his scales. Although few travelers knew the reputation of Solomon, the local townspeople knew him as a notorious cheat. Unbeknownst to most who were about to embark on their cross-country journey, Solomon had the scales altered so that the pound they measured was actually 15% less

than the actual standard. Even though he only swindled what amounted to a few cents per transaction, it totaled a great amount over time.

One year, an itinerate evangelist held a revival meeting in a tent pitched on the outskirts of town. Everyone in the area had come to hear this famous preacher, including Solomon. At the invitation, surprise sprang upon the congregants as Solomon K. Matthews came to receive Christ as his Savior. That week, he became the talk of the town and even those gathered at church on that next Sunday focused on this unbelievable event. Most couldn't believe it; they couldn't understand how this unethical businessman could now have a relationship with Christ. Those in the audience still remained skeptical to the point that someone even asked aloud, "How do we know he is saved?" At that point, a voice answered from the back, "I know 100%. Everything that I sell by the pound is actually a pound at my store!" Solomon had snuck

inside without anyone even noticing. He could *know* and declare assuredly that he now has a relationship with Christ because he could see tangible proof in his life by the transformation of his actions and desires.

Through the transformation in his life, Solomon had become a living testimony to the power of Christ to save and give life! Like Solomon, we too can *know* that we have **eternal life** through three simple tests which we can apply to our lives. We must ask ourselves these three questions: do we see transformation in our character, have our desires changed, and do we experience conviction when we sin? First, every one of us will experience some type of transformation in our character. We cannot have a relationship with Christ and remain in our sinful lifestyles without

any change. For some of us, the change may be radical and clearly evident from sins like habitual lying, theft, sexual immorality, alcohol or drug abuse, or any other type of addiction.

On the other hand, some of us may have lived respectable lives according to the world's standards or experienced salvation in Christ at a young age, but we will still have evidence of transformation in our lives whereby we rid ourselves of selfishness, jealousy, anger, bitterness, and much more as we grow closer in our relationship with Christ and conform to His image. Not all transformations, however, are "big" or radical as defined by the world, but some are more subtle. Nonetheless, we all will still see evidence of growth and maturation in our relationship with Christ. Not everyone is like Paul who went from murderously persecuting the church to being severely persecuted for the sake of Christ in a radical moment of conversion. Some of us are like John who wrote this very letter; he was a young man who lived respectably and honorably by all accounts and followed Christ early in his life. Whether we can see a "radical" transformation or a more "subtle" one, transformation still exists and occurs at some level!



How do you see the transformation of Christ in your life?

Question  
# 6

## Instruct

In addition to transformation, we can also know that we have **eternal life** because we will see a change in our desires as they conform to Christ rather than our own selfish, fleshly desires. Change in our desires certainly overlaps significantly with transformation in our actions, but it truly signifies how we become more aware of the world around us and view it through Christ's eyes. For instance, we will express compassion, not just for other's physical needs, but also to share the gospel with a hopeless world so they can know how to have **eternal life**. Prior to a relationship with Christ, we may have acted compassionately when we saw a physical need, but most of us were primarily concerned with our own needs and desires—if we're totally honest with ourselves. Our lives centered around what gave us the most pleasure, what we wanted to do, and what benefitted us the most; at heart, we were all selfish in our perspectives. In Christ, however, we now want to serve Him by serving others and by obediently following His will for our lives—not out of a sense of duty, but because we love Him.

How has Christ changed your perspective of the world around you?

Question  
# 7

Finally, we can know that we have **eternal life** in Christ when we experience conviction and correction for wrongdoing. As believers, the Holy Spirit has come to reside in our lives in order to guide us and keep us on the right course. If we don't receive correction from the Lord when we sin, then we do not have a relationship with Him ([Heb 12:5-](#)



[10](#)). Some newer cars have a built-in safety feature called lane assist which alerts drivers when they drift over the centerline or edge lines on the road by beeping or even shaking the steering wheel. In addition, roadways also have rumble strips along the edge lines as an external warning which alerts drive to impending danger if they continue along this same course. In

either situation, we can have two responses: 1) pay attention and re-focus by returning to the right course or 2) choose to keep going and wreck, suffering the consequences

of our choices. For the non-believer, the Holy Spirit exists to draw them into a relationship with Christ, but He does not live within them; therefore, God uses external circumstances, like these rumble strips, to warn the world of the danger of life without Him. Yet, as non-believers go through life, they cross these boundaries so often that they become desensitized and ignore them; they have seared their consciences and deadened them from discerning right from wrong ([1 Tim 4:1-2](#)). Because the Holy Spirit doesn't live within them and they have continually rejected His warning, He will eventually abandon them to their own lusts and desires and no longer remind them that they have transgressed His boundaries ([Rom 1:26](#)).

As believers, however, the Holy Spirit serves as that built-in feature who warns us when our lives go off course and stray from God's standards; the moment we confess, repent, and surrender our lives to Christ the Spirit comes to live within us. Consequently, He always will correct us when we err to keep us from destruction, but some wrest control from the Lord and continue to follow their own desires. Yet, in the back of believers' minds, they still experience conviction and correction because they wrestle with their disobedience to the Lord. With believers, therefore, there is always that sense of conviction and that compunction by the Holy Spirit to repent and return to the Lord when we err! As a result, through these three tests—transformation of our behavior, change in desire, and correction and conviction—we can know assuredly that we have a relationship with the Lord and have **eternal life** found only through His Son! We don't have to worry or doubt, but we can **know** that we **have the Son** and **have life!**

How has the Holy Spirit corrected you when you've strayed from the path of the Lord?

Question  
# 8

Death is inevitable and it can affect any age from the very young to the old. Just as physical death is permanent, so is the choice that we make here on earth about where we will spend eternity by either accepting or rejecting Christ. We won't receive a second chance to repent and surrender to the Son once we pass from this life to the next. Therefore, how we respond to Christ here on earth is the most critical decision that we will ever make. Fortunately, God has given us a clear path to eternal life through His Son, so that we don't have to guess or wonder if what we do or the human philosophies we hold can lead to eternal life. We know that if we have a relationship with Christ by responding to His sacrificial death through confession and repentance, then we have life! It's that simple, so we can be confident in what He's already done for us on the cross!

At times, however, we may all have doubt or fear about what will happen to us after we die. This is natural for anyone. Yet, we have a place to turn from which we can draw reassurance: Scripture. God's Word helps us to know that we have life, so that we don't have to fear like those who have no hope or no direction in life. Through His Word, we can see how God has transformed our character to match His, changed our desires to coincide with His, and corrected / convicted us when we erred. This all serves as evidence that points to what God has done in and through us! We should be able to see Him at work! Hopefully, every one of us can point to a specific time in his or her life in which he or she has repented and turned to the Lord. As we look back on our lives, we should be able to see tangible proof or fruit of Christ living within us. Therefore, let us place our confidence in the Lord and accept the sacrifice of His Son and allow Him to work in our lives, conforming us to His image.

## ***Incorporate***

How can we *know* that we have eternal life? What should we do if we have doubts about our salvation?

How can God's promises in Scripture give us reassurance about our salvation? How do they offer security for us in the midst of an unstable world?

How can we communicate to the world around us the simplicity of the gospel for the means of salvation without changing or distorting the message?

*April 26, 2020*



# *Abstain from Sin*

*1 John 5:14-21*

Focal Verse:

"We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him."

1 John 5:18

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## Introduce

A buzz of excitement filled the air as a piece of paper circulated amongst seventh grade students at Lincoln Middle School. Waiting for his turn to view the document, Ruben I. Paschal could barely keep his composure until it finally made its way into his hands. When it arrived, he shuffled the paper a bit and pressed it upon his desk to smooth the creases that had come from its constant handling. At the top of the paper, in block, capital letters, it read: PETITION. Underneath, it contained a paragraph written in the best seventh-grade legal jargon possible. It stated, "We, the undersigned students of Lincoln Middle School, do hereby petition our beloved parents to remove any and all restrictions upon



our bedtimes whereby they infringe upon our personal rights to choose a time most convenient and satisfactory to us." Ruben hurriedly used his best cursive to sign it, date it, and write his initials to confirm it—R.I.P.

After the majority of students had signed the petition, they requested one of their teachers to copy it, so they could take it home and show their parents. Upon receiving his copy at the end of the day, Ruben ran home as quickly as possible. With a smile, he handed it to his mother. Glancing at it, she smiled and chuckled. "That's nice, even cute," she added as she gave it back to him. Excitedly, Ruben asked, "So does this change anything?" "No," she said, "Your bedtime is still 9 pm on school nights." He cried, "But mom, everyone signed it!" His mom then began to explain, "This isn't a democracy, Ruben. Your dad and I set boundaries for you and your sister because we love you and want what's best for you."

Dejected, Ruben really didn't understand yet; he just saw a list of rule and restrictions that limited what he could do. Like Ruben's parents, God wants the best for His children, so He wants us to abide by His will and live according to His boundaries. Here in [1 John 5:14-21](#), the apostle explains how God wants us to pray and express our needs to Him, but according to His will. With God, we don't live in a democracy in which we try to sway Him with our viewpoint. He has given us boundaries by both to live and to

## Introduce

pray. When we pray, we should seek His will—not our will, the will of the people, or the popular will of the culture! We don't "petition" the Lord as if we can change His mind to get what we want.

So why pray at all if God's will is to be done? We pray so that we can have intimate fellowship with Him, know His will, and draw closer to Him by becoming more like Him in our thoughts and actions. Therefore, we should pray that He would help us abstain from sin by making petitions according to His will, pleading on behalf of others, and participating in purity. Let us seek to know Him and follow His will as obedient children!

Key  
Question

Why is it not unloving for God to set boundaries and ask us to follow His will?

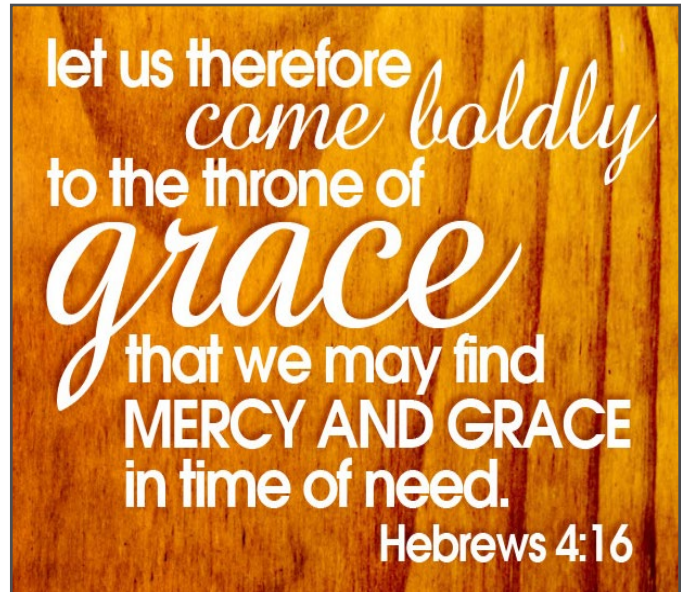
### 1 John 5:14-15

#### PETITION ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL:

Just as we can know that we have eternal life with God the Father through a relationship with the Son ([1 John 5:9-13](#)), we can also **have confidence in Him** when we pray (v. 14). When we pray or **ask anything according to God's will**, we can have complete assurance that **He hears us**. Knowing that **He hears us**, then, we can **have confidence** that **whatever we ask according to His will** He will grant those **petitions** (v. 15).

Through these two verses, we can discover three principles about how we ought to pray. We ought to pray with *dependence*, *direction*, and *discernment*. First, John points to our *dependence* upon God. In verse 14a, he states emphatically that our **confidence** is **in Him** (the Lord) and not in what or how we **ask**! Our **confidence** should rest squarely upon God to determine the most advantageous course for our lives and to supply our most basic provisions to meet our daily needs. We must trust that He alone knows best!

Too often, however, people approach God with a list of demands that they have deemed best for themselves. Rather than trust in the infinite knowledge and authority of the Lord, they trust in their limited perspective to determine what's best for themselves! Through prayer, they somehow hope that they might convince God to conform to their own will and desires rather than seeking to conform their desires to His will. As a result, they often experience disappointment or even blame God for their misfortune when He doesn't bend to their expectations and answer their prayers in the ways that they want! Moreover, they will even sometimes say that God didn't answer their prayers at all—when in fact He did. He just said, "No, that's not My perfect plan for you. Seek Me first and I'll take care of all your needs" ([Matt 6:33-34](#)). To pray with **confidence**, therefore, we must depend wholly upon the Lord.



According to Scripture, for what things does Christ teach us to pray?

Question  
# 1

Second, John teaches us how to pray with direction when He instructs us to **ask anything according to God's will** (v. 14b). Unfortunately, many people often distort biblical teaching on prayer by removing statements like this from their context. John does not say that God will give us **anything** for which **we ask**, but he clearly teaches here in this context that we should **ask according to His will!** When we truly have a relationship with Christ, our desires will change and conform to His will. We will want the same things He wants. We will love the same things He loves (holiness) and hate the things that He hates (sin). Therefore, we will lovingly and obediently follow the plan He has for us. Frequently, however, people take passages like [Psalm 37:4](#) and use it out of context to make their personal desires seem legitimate apart from the directives of the Lord. They quote the last part of the verse and overlook the first part. We need to hear the whole verse if we are to live by it! David writes, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart." To "delight" in this sense means to take joy in following Him and conforming to His ways. His desires will become our desires; consequently, He will give us the desires of our hearts when they match His! In fact, we ought to note that this psalm comes from the hand of David who is identified as "a man after [God's] own heart" ([1 Sam 13:14](#)).

To understand God's will, we must also pray with *discernment* and seek the **petitions** for which **we** ought to **ask** (v. 15). First, Scripture gives us the boundaries by which



we should pray because it reveals the character and mind of God as well as His expectations about how we should conduct ourselves. Second, the Holy Spirit guides us in what and how we should pray. In [Romans 8:26-27](#), Paul reminds us that "the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray as we ought . . . Now He who searches the hearts and knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Simply stated, Paul is saying that we must listen

to the Holy Spirit when we pray because He knows God's **will** and guides us to pray accordingly. Therefore, we must spend time studying Scripture and listening to the Spirit in order to discern God's **will** and to know for what we ought to **ask** when we pray.

How has God helped change your desires and shape your perspective through prayer?

Question  
# 2

## 1 John 5:16-17

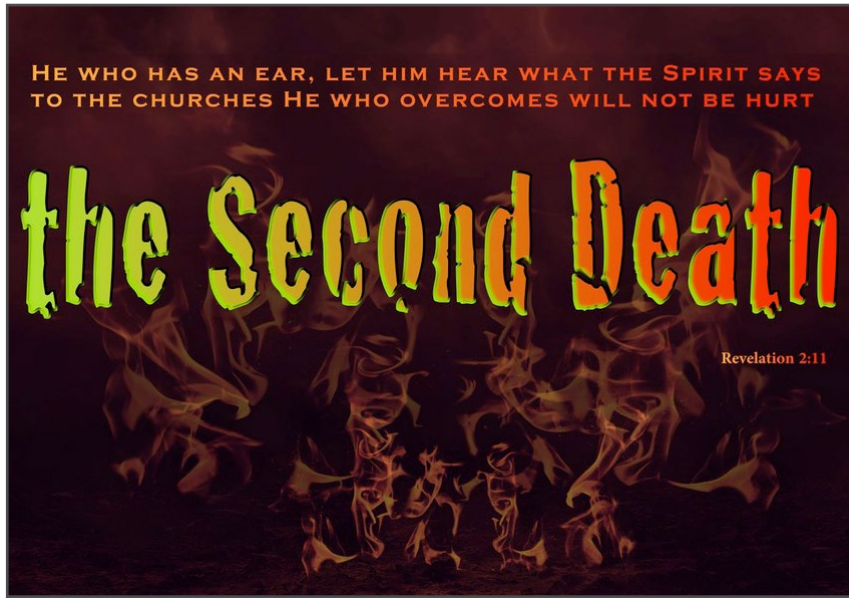
### PLEAD ON BEHALF OF OTHERS:

Next, John gives an example for which types of things that we ought to pray. For instance, he reveals that we should pray for *deliverance* from **sin**—not only for ourselves, but also on behalf of others (5:16-17). In addition, we should also pray that both they and we might have the *determination* to participate in righteousness and purity rather than succumb to a lifestyle of sin and idolatry (5:18-21). Following the model prayer that Jesus gave His disciples, John urges us to pray for *deliverance* from **sin** on behalf of others, so that they may come to their senses and be restored to right fellowship with the Lord. In the model prayer, Jesus instructs us to pray that we would “not” be led “into temptation,” but that God would “deliver us from the evil one” ([Matt 6:13](#)). In 1 John 5:16, John expands upon this teaching and applies it to the one who is currently sinning. Therefore, he implores us that if we see **our brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death** we should ask the Lord who gives **life**.

John goes on to contrast this **sin which does not lead to death** to **sin** which *does* lead **to death** and specifies that he is **not** telling us that **we should pray** about that **sin**. He then identifies **all unrighteousness** as **sin**, but again qualifies and emphasizes that there is **sin** which does **not** lead **to death** (v. 17). What does John mean by all this? For those of us who live far in time from the original context of this letter, these statements are difficult to comprehend and people have proposed many solutions as to how we should interpret them. However, we should look to Scripture as a whole and the specific context of this letter to understand what these phrases mean.

Technically, all **sin** leads **to death** apart from Jesus Christ; the penalty for **sin** is spiritual death and eternal separation from God ([Rom 6:23](#)). Scripture is clear on this point! Despite our sinfulness, however, we still have hope of salvation in Christ who will restore us into right standing and fellowship if we turn to Him! John has already promised, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to

cleanse us from all unrighteousness” ([1 John 1:9](#)). We can have forgiveness in Christ



from any sin; through His death in our place, we can have **life!** Through the Son, God has made salvation freely available to all, but not everyone will freely accept it and turn from **sin** to find **life** in Him. This is the very point that John makes in 5:12: “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

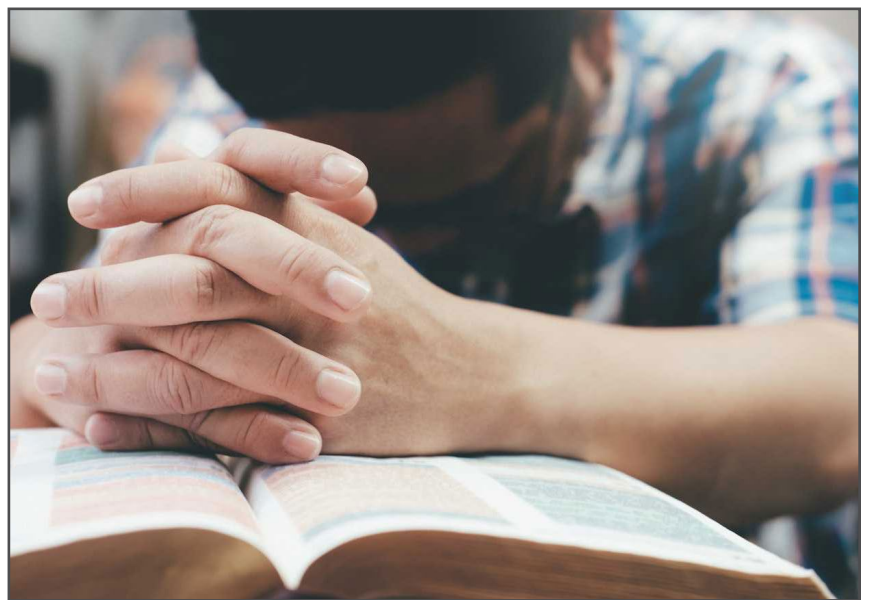
Therefore, there is one sin which cannot be forgiven and will ultimately lead **to death**: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit ([Matt 12:31-32](#)). Jesus asserts, “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men” (Matt 12:31). From the context, we know that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit means the rejection of His call to respond to the gospel. Although people may seem outwardly religious and even appear as “good” people to the world, the gospel requires a relationship established through repentance of **sin** ([Matt 12:33-37](#)). The Holy Spirit convicts people and urges them to repent by accepting the true source of salvation: Christ. Yet, people harden their hearts by their own free choice and refuse to repent, missing the opportunity to have **life**.

Through the direction of the Holy Spirit, God graciously and patiently offers forgiveness, but there comes a time when people’s hearts will become so obstinate and stubborn that they won’t turn to the Lord no matter what may happen in life. We see this in the book of Revelation when people defiantly blame God for the misery they have brought upon themselves and they refuse to repent regardless of the physical calamities that inundate the earth ([Rev 9:20-21; 16:11](#)). This attitude doesn’t only occur in the latter days, but it has occurred from the very beginning. We see Esau refuse to repent ([Heb 12:16-17](#)), Pharaoh refuse to submit to the Lord ([Exod 8:32](#)), Israel give up hope and follow the desires of their hearts ([Jer 18:12](#)), and the Jews in Rome steadfastly refuse to repent ([Rom 2:5](#)). This refusal to repent and rejection of a relationship with the Lord always leads **to death**.

Even here in 1 John, we have seen people associated with the church reject the gospel and use elements of it to develop their own teaching and beliefs. They polluted the gospel and made it ineffective for salvation because they added to it errant human philosophy. If they would have listened to the direction of the Holy Spirit, they would not have followed their misguided beliefs. These false teachers, however, did not lose their salvation, but they never had it in the first place because they refused to repent and believe in Christ! Consequently, John writes that “they went out from us, but they were not of us” ([1 John 2:19](#)). Based upon the context of Scripture, therefore, the **sin which leads to death** is the rejection of the gospel and the refusal to heed the conviction of the Holy Spirit to repent from one’s **sin**.

How should we pray for those committing **sin not leading to death** then? We must remember the immediate context in which John has already instructed us to pray by asking “anything according to [God’s] will” (v. 14). When we earnestly seek the Lord, He will guide us how to pray and reveal how we ought to intercede for those individuals living in **sin**. Although we cannot see a person’s heart, know their thoughts, or even recognize their true motives, God can, so we should seek discernment on how we ought to pray for these individuals by listening to the direction of the Holy Spirit. God desires all people to come to repentance, but He doesn’t force them ([2 Peter 3:9](#)). Consequently, we should pray that people hear the Lord speak and acknowledge His requirement to repent of their **sin**.

Generally, we can pray for direction in three specific ways. First, we should pray that these individuals would recognize their **sin** and the need for repentance by listening to the guidance and conviction of the Holy Spirit so that they do not become desensitized and harden their hearts ([1 Tim 4:1-2](#)). Second, we should pray that God would give them insight into Scripture which would help them recognize their **sin**; at the same time, we should also pray that God would grant us insight into Scripture to which we could gently point them



and the words by which we can encourage them to return to the Lord. Third, we should

## Instruct

pray that God would send someone, including us, to point them to restoration in Christ ([Gal 6:1](#)).

In what other ways can we pray for someone that we know is living in a lifestyle of sin?

Question  
# 3

Although we should pray for another believer who is currently sinning, John states that he does **not say that we should pray about sin leading to death**. This probably sounds strange to our ears when someone tells us that we don't have to pray about something. The way this phrase is composed in Greek doesn't mean that we can't pray about it, but it emphasizes the burden of the person to respond. While we can and should pray that they would hear God's call to repentance, we cannot pray them into heaven if they persistently refuse to respond to the gospel neither can we seek forgiveness on their behalf. They must respond to Christ on their own; it's their personal decision to make! We can't offer **life**, but we know the One who does, so everything we do and say ought to encourage them to hear the Lord and respond to His call.

When both praying for others and sharing the gospel, we must exercise discernment and follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. For example, we don't have to pray about whether we should share the gospel since Jesus has already expressly commanded it, but we should pray that He grants us opportunities, gives us the words to say, and leads us to those whose hearts are receptive. Although we should share the gospel with everyone, we will find some who remain resistant and have closed their minds; they may still be polite, but nothing that is said or done will change their minds. They won't have a true dialogue because they refuse to listen to the Lord. As we have seen already, there comes a time when someone can harden his heart so much that he will never repent. On our own, we can't know when that time has come, but the Spirit does and He will direct us to share elsewhere and spend time in prayer for others that will bear more fruit.

How has the Spirit given you discernment through prayer about specific situations?

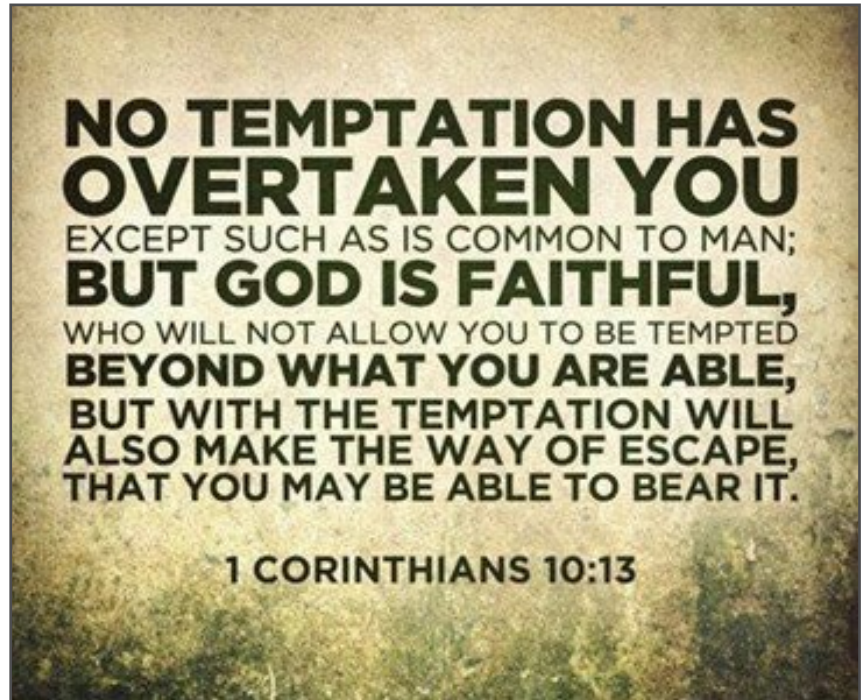
Question  
# 4



## 1 John 5:18-21

### ***PARTICIPATE IN PURITY:***

Not only should we pray for *deliverance* from **sin**, but we should also pray for the *determination* to participate in righteousness and purity. Through these four verses which conclude the letter, we can identify four specific ways that we can pray. We should pray for a *restored* relationship with Christ (v. 18a), the *refusal* to follow the world (vv. 18b-19), the *recognition* of the truth (v. 20), and *resistance* to idolatry (v. 21). Once again, John delves into a theme which he has interwoven throughout his letter. He reminds us that **whoever is born of God does not sin** (v. 18a; see [1 John 3:9](#)). As we learned previously, this phrase refers to living a lifestyle of habitual sin; as believers, we'll still sin at times, but we won't repeatedly continue sinning without conviction from the Lord. Instead, we will mature in our faith and continually seek to conform to His image. For this reason, John states that **the one born of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him**. When we sin, we need to pray for forgiveness and a restored relationship with Christ ([1 John 2:1-2](#)). In addition, we should pray that God would help us overcome temptation and that in times of weakness we would turn to Him for strength ([1 Cor 10:13](#)).



How has God strengthened you through prayer to resist temptation and bear His image and character?

Question  
# 5

Too often, we may find ourselves trusting in our own power to overcome temptation or relying on our own wisdom to guide our choices, but inevitably this leads to failure. When left to follow our own devices apart from Christ, we will typically follow the errant way of **the world**; therefore, we need to pray that we would refuse **the world** which **lies under the sway** (control) **of the wicked one** (v. 19). Along these same lines, we

need the ability to distinguish the path which is **true** and leads to **life** from the one that leads to destruction; therefore, John reassures us that **the Son of God has come and has given us understanding** so that we may know the truth and comprehend how to have **eternal life**. Therefore, we need to pray for both the ability to refuse the way of the world and the ability to recognize the truth in Christ.

Sin is crafty and deceptive in its promises. Without a perfect standard by which to judge things, sin will make it seem as if we have the choice to decide what's best for us and determine right and wrong for ourselves individually. To illustrate the problem, let's say that we have a disease that requires a pill that would cure it 100%, but on the table before us are two different kinds of pills. Both have the same color capsule, but the



contents inside are very different. On the surface they look the same, but the one on the right contained the ingredients that would cure the disease whereas the one on the left had arsenic which would lead to certain death. So how would we decide which one we should take? We would need an expert to tell us; we would need a standard by which to judge since

we ourselves couldn't tell by virtue of the outer coating. Sin is the same. We need Christ to tell us which path leads to life and which leads to death. Only through Him can we distinguish death from life and refuse the way of the world which ultimately leads to death! Therefore, let us pray that we might recognize the truth in Christ through Scripture and refuse **the world** which has been taken captive by the **wicked one**.

Finally, we should pray that we would always place Christ first in our lives and resist the temptation to participate in idolatry. Thus, John warns us to **keep** ourselves free **from idols**—a grave warning with which He ends this letter! On the surface, we tend to view idolatry as more of an action than an ideology. Certainly, **idols** would include anything that we place in priority over the Lord—whether physical objects, finances, hobbies, or even family or other people. Yet, idolatry also includes what we believe. Consequently,

we must safeguard the gospel and keep it unstained from mere human interpretation and philosophy which the church here in 1 John was currently facing.

These false teachers denied Jesus was the Christ or the Son of God in the physical flesh and that He did not die on the cross or rise from the grave. However, they would have still claimed that they served Jesus; yet, in reality, they did not serve or have a relationship with the true Messiah. Instead, they served their version of Him and denied the saving power which He brought about through His death and resurrection. As a result, we must be also be careful to know, apply, and abide by what the Bible teaches rather than giving our own opinion or communicating our own understanding; we must also place Jesus above everything in our lives for all this constitutes idolatry if we change who Jesus is or we don't give Him the priority He rightly deserves!

How is changing or adding to Scripture idolatrous? In what ways have some religions or cults changed the person and work of Jesus Christ?

Question  
# 6

In the introduction, we saw how seventh graders petitioned their parents for something they desired, but in the long run it wasn't necessarily good for them. Parents have a responsibility to provide for their children, but also to help shape their understanding of the world so that they make appropriate choices in life. As believers, we don't live in a democracy nor do we serve a dictator who exploits us for his own personal benefit. Serving the Lord may seem like a list of rules to some people, but God has instituted these things for our protection and benefit because He desires us to make the appropriate choices which lead to an abundant life. Through prayer, we can have understanding and direction of the best way that we ought to conduct our lives because the Lord reveals His will to us through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, as we pray, let us take time to listen and seek the Lord rather than come with a list of things that we've assessed we need on our own.

To live a fruitful life, we must abstain from sin and conform our character to the Lord and His will. We should desire what He desires and detests what He detests. Prayer helps keep us grounded and centered in this endeavor because it enables us to cultivate a close relationship with the Lord when we engage fervently rather than shallowly. Through prayer, let us build a strong community here in our local church in which we seek to abide by God's will and encourage one another to abstain from sin and live righteously. Let us lift one another up in prayer, so that God can strengthen our families in the midst of world that bombards us with the wrong choices. As a community, let us seek to honor the Lord in all that we do and who we have become through His Son.

## ***Incorporate***

How have you seen God answer prayer in your life? How did you respond when He said “no” or you didn’t receive the answer “you” wanted?

How regularly do you pray for others spiritually and not just physically? How can we as a church pray more fervently for strong families in the faith so that they can abstain from worldly influences?

What kind of idolatrous beliefs do you see in our world today? How can we as a church effectively combat them?

## ***Journal: Document God's Work***

APRIL 2020

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FORT WORTH

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