

# JESUS ALONE

Only by trusting the Savior, Jesus Christ, can someone be freed from the bondage of sin and death and enter eternal life with God.



## ➤ UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

USE THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO PREPARE FOR YOUR GROUP TIME.

Imagine being part of a hiking expedition in the wilderness. Instead of listening to your guide, you decide to venture off on your own. Without a guide or a tracking device, you become lost and are badly injured from a fall. Unable to walk, you realize that you won't be rescued as a result of your own efforts. Thankfully, your guide finds you, takes care of your injuries, and carries you to safety.

John knew that unless his readers were confident of their victory over sin through Jesus, they'd be like lost people trying to save themselves by their own efforts yet unable to do so. Because Jesus conquered sin, His power over sin is available to all who receive Him as Lord and rely on His sacrifice through faith, not on their own efforts. John attested to the unique nature of Jesus and His saving work.

False teachers were spreading heretical doctrines about Jesus, which negatively affected the faith community. Apparently, some believers were unsure of their status in Christ and of the impact of His working in their lives through faith. The false teachers denied the true nature of Jesus and His crucifixion, yet John affirmed that it's strictly because of Jesus and His sacrificial death that people can experience life. Faith in Christ is essential for salvation from sin, and faith is demonstrated by obedience to God's commands.

Both Jewish and Roman law depended on clear testimonies from witnesses to determine facts in a legal case. John presented not only the testimony of believers about Christ but also the Holy Spirit's testimony, which is a more significant witness. The Holy Spirit confirms that Jesus is the Son of God who died for the sins of humankind. Moreover, whoever embraces Jesus as Lord receives the gift of eternal life through Him. Unlike the heretics' claims that a mystical experience could enable a person to know God, John stressed that intimacy with God comes only by faith in Christ, who is the only source of eternal life.

"A MAN'S GREATEST CARE  
SHOULD BE FOR THAT  
PLACE WHERE HE LIVES  
LONGEST; THEREFORE  
ETERNITY SHOULD  
BE HIS SCOPE."

—Thomas Manton

## ➤ 1 JOHN 5:1-13

### Think About It

*Circle words and phrases that point to the fact that Jesus is the only way to the Father.*

*Look for the relationship between obedience to God's commands and victorious Christian living.*

**1** Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of Him. **2** This is how we know that we love God's children when we love God and obey His commands. **3** For this is what love for God is: to keep His commands. Now His commands are not a burden, **4** because whatever has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. **5** And who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? **6** Jesus Christ—He is the One who came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and by blood. And the Spirit is the One who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. **7** For there are three that testify: **8** the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and these three are in agreement. **9** If we accept the testimony of men, God's testimony is greater, because it is God's testimony that He has given about His Son. **10** (The one who believes in the Son of God has this testimony within him. The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony God has given about His Son.) **11** And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. **12** The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have life. **13** I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.



## ➤ EXPLORE THE TEXT

### *JESUS ALONE GIVES VICTORY (1 John 5:1-5)*

**<sup>1</sup> Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of Him. <sup>2</sup> This is how we know that we love God's children when we love God and obey His commands. <sup>3</sup> For this is what love for God is: to keep His commands. Now His commands are not a burden, <sup>4</sup> because whatever has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. <sup>5</sup> And who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

John repeated his emphasis on believing in Jesus as the Messiah (see 1 John 4:2,14-15) by stating that all who acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah are born of God. Faith in Jesus is evidence of belonging to God, and the result of such faith is loving not only God but also all God's children. The true test of a regenerate heart is love for other believers. John's language here indicates that the past action of being transformed by Jesus will show itself in the present, continuous action of loving others.

John stressed the importance of being transformed by God's love and demonstrating His love to fellow believers. When a person experiences salvation by faith in Christ, the presence of Jesus in that person's life enables him or her to grow in love for God, which manifests itself in love for others. Love for God and love for others are interrelated. Each supports the other, although God's love is the basis for all other expressions of love.

John stressed that God's commands aren't a burden, nor are they a restrictive weight that people can't bear. While the Pharisees of Jesus' day imposed harsh, irrelevant traditions on others that they themselves didn't keep, John implied that God's commands direct our hearts to Him, changing us from within. Jesus Himself declared that His burden is light (see Matt. 11:28-30). Thus, Christians receive freedom in Christ to experience victory over sinfulness.

John directly stated that anyone born of God conquers the world. The new birth experienced at salvation gives a believer God's presence and power to overcome all negative influences that hinder his or her obedience to God. In John's Gospel Jesus declared that He had overcome the world (see John 16:33). The Spirit of Jesus, who resides in believers, is greater than the evil that's present in the world (see 1 John 4:4). Believers experience victory over the world by demonstrating faith in Christ in their daily lives, which leads to love, obedience, and righteousness.

John asked a rhetorical question about the identity of the one who overcomes the world and the means by which this victory is possible. Genuine faith that saves from sin is founded on the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. By rejecting the shallow arguments of the false teachers and holding on to the truth of the gospel, the believers to whom John wrote could be assured of victory in Christ, and so can believers today.

***Describe the connection of faith, obedience, and love in your life. Which of these three is the most difficult for you? Explain.***

## **JESUS ALONE IS THE SON OF GOD** **(1 John 5:6-10)**

**<sup>6</sup> Jesus Christ—He is the One who came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and by blood. And the Spirit is the One who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup> For there are three that testify: <sup>8</sup> the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and these three are in agreement.**

The importance of a reliable testimony is seen in John's language in 5:6-12. He used a form of the word *witness* (or *testify*) no fewer than nine times to authenticate that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. John gave an unusual description about Jesus in verse 6, saying that He had come by both water and blood. John's original readers no doubt understood exactly what he meant, but interpreting this verse is more difficult for contemporary believers. Given that John was attacking heresies throughout his letter, this reference probably refers to baptism (water) and crucifixion (blood). In other words, Jesus' earthly ministry as the Son of God was confirmed by both His baptism and His crucifixion. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. The Spirit's testimony is trustworthy because He speaks the truth and is the truth (see John 14:17; 16:13).

Some heretics of John's day believed the Spirit of God descended on the human Jesus at His baptism and left Him shortly before the crucifixion. If these false teachers had been allowed to spread their heresy in the church, their message would have reduced Jesus to a mere human. But John connected Jesus' baptism, His crucifixion, and the Holy Spirit's testimony together in 1 John 5:7-8 as three credible witnesses. In the Old Testament two or three witnesses were needed to establish the merit of a legal case (see Deut. 19:15). John was likely influenced by this precedent when referring to the witnesses he mentioned in 1 John 5:8. Far from contradicting one another, these three witnesses all point to Jesus as the Messiah and God's only Son.

***How has the Holy Spirit confirmed your faith in Jesus as the Son of God?***

<sup>9</sup> **If we accept the testimony of men, God's testimony is greater, because it is God's testimony that He has given about His Son.**

<sup>10</sup> **(The one who believes in the Son of God has this testimony within him. The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony God has given about His Son.)**

### KEY DOCTRINE

#### *Salvation*

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

### **BIBLE SKILL**

*Read, reflect on, and emotionally react to a Bible verse.*

Read 1 John 5:4 aloud several times, emphasizing different words or phrases each time you read. For example, in one reading emphasize *born of God*. Then read the verse again and emphasize forms of *conquer* or *victory*. Emphasize still other words, such as *world*, in a third reading. Take note of your thoughts.

How does the verse move you emotionally? What feelings were evoked by the different words and phrases as you emphasized them?

God offers three witnesses to prove His case, and these are the Holy Spirit, Jesus' baptism, and His crucifixion. God has testified about Jesus through these three witnesses, and His testimony is still valid. Whoever concludes that Jesus is God's Son will have the inner witness of the Holy Spirit to confirm his belief in Jesus. When we accept the external evidence about Jesus, our belief in God is strengthened by the internal assurance of the Holy Spirit. However, if we refuse to accept God's testimony about Jesus, we confirm that we don't believe God but consider Him to be unreliable. A person can't legitimately claim to believe in God while rejecting God's teachings about Christ.

***What could you say to someone who claimed that Jesus was just a religious teacher, one of many leaders who taught about God?***

## **JESUS ALONE OFFERS ETERNAL LIFE (1 John 5:11-13)**

**<sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.**

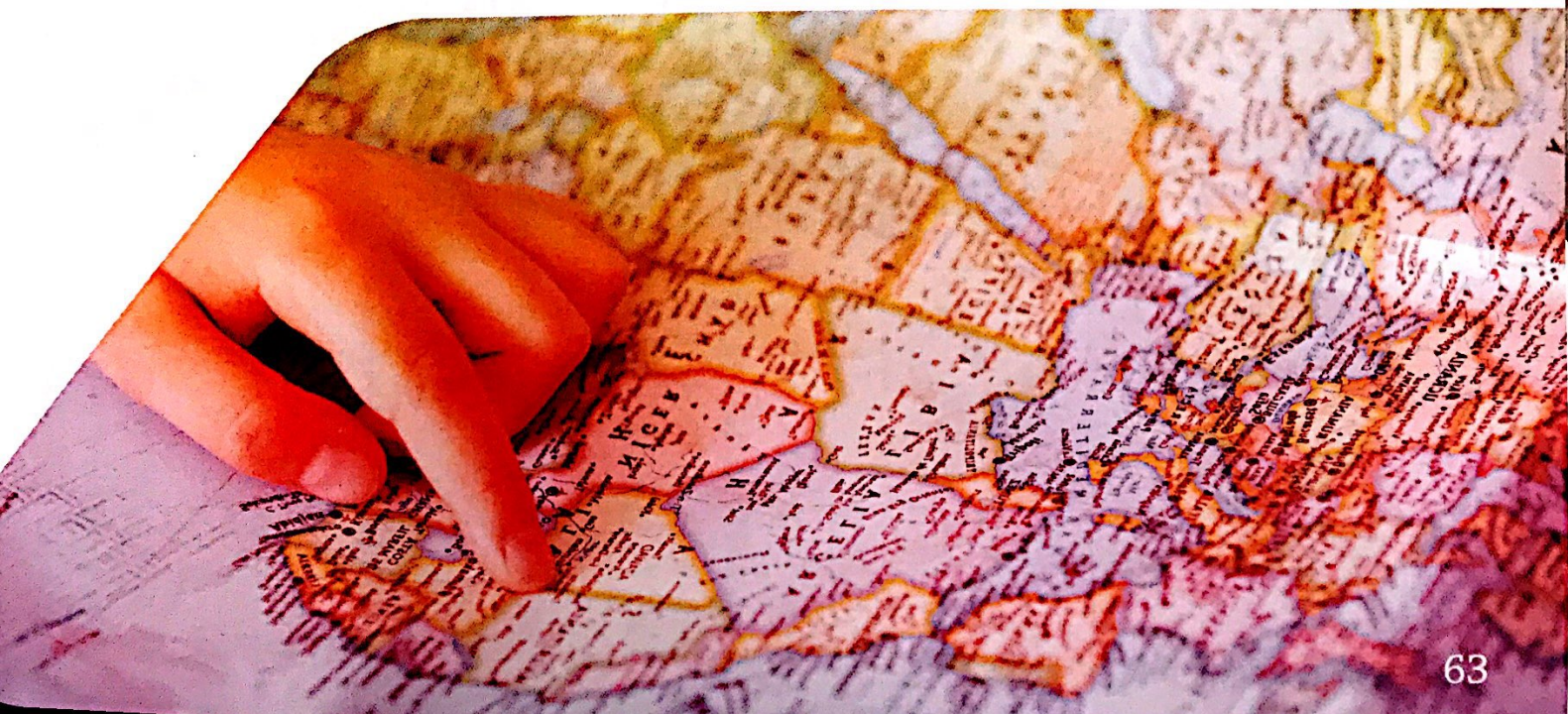
The heretics of the first century taught that people don't possess eternal life in Jesus. God's testimony is that eternal life is available in His Son, a reality that rules out all other supposed paths to God. Jesus promised that all who received Him would become God's children and would receive eternal life (see John 1:12-13; 3:16). Paul proclaimed that the Holy Spirit confirms that believers are God's children (see Rom. 8:16). Christ followers can be confident that in Jesus Christ they've received God's free gift of salvation (see 10:9-10).

***Why is it important for Christians to be exclusive in their belief about salvation in Jesus Christ?***

**<sup>12</sup> The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have life. <sup>13</sup> I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.**

To trust in the Son is to possess eternal life in its fullness. Jesus said He came to give abundant life (see John 10:10), and this life is not only a future expectation but also a present reality. To reject God's Son is also to reject the eternal life God gives. There's no middle ground. You either believe in Jesus as God's Son and receive eternal life, or you don't believe and fail to receive eternal life. Jesus is the only source of eternal life. John began wrapping up his letter by clearly stating his purpose for writing to the Christians he loved so dearly. A true pastor, John desired that through his teaching, people would not only experience salvation but also live confidently in knowing they have eternal life.

***How should the fact that Jesus is the only way to the Father affect the way we pray, what we share, and how we live?***





## ➤ OBEY THE TEXT

Self-sufficiency is an admirable characteristic in some respects, but we can't depend on ourselves for salvation or spiritual growth. When we trust in Christ, we live victoriously over sin by loving God and obeying His commands. A victorious spiritual life is found only in Jesus, the only One who can free us from the bondage of sin and death and bring us into eternal life with God.

*List evidence in your life of God's salvation as identified in 1 John. If you don't see evidence, confess your sin in prayer and receive Jesus' forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9).*

*Discuss ways 1 John 5 counters the teaching that there are many ways to the Father or that all religions are equal. List ways you can use what you've learned to help someone understand the truth that Jesus is the only way.*

*Discuss actions your group can take this week to live out the truth of 1 John 5. Make a list of people you encounter daily who need to hear the message of the gospel and look for ways this week to share with them.*



### MEMORIZE

**"The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have life." 1 John 5:12**

Use the space provided to make observations and record prayer requests during the group experience for this session.

## MY THOUGHTS

Record insights and questions from the group experience.

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## MY RESPONSE

Note specific ways you will put into practice the truth explored this week.

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## MY PRAYERS

List specific prayer needs and answers to remember this week.

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