

The Way of Love: The Victory of Love

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[0 : 0 0] All right, all right. Okay, again, my name is Jesse, one of the pastors, and it's a huge privilege. Thank you so much for coming again. And for those of you who aren't here that are probably going to be listening to this online, we absolutely missed you and glad that you're able to catch up with us and stay in step with us through the wonders of technology. So we are finishing out the series we're in. We've been in the book of 1 John, and the series has been titled The Way of Love, and you can't go through the book of 1 John without running into the word love at every turn. And so it's been a fun series, but short and profound. And John, he's writing this letter to a church community that was in danger of doing a lot of the right things outwardly, but they were in danger of becoming rather unlike Jesus. And so John, what he's doing, he's calling them back to the basics, refining the fundamentals, right? Knowing God, loving God, and being loved by God, and then going out and loving others. And John doesn't say much new in this final chapter. We're going to read all of 1 John chapter 5. Don't freak out. But he doesn't say much that's new to us. It's very much a summary of things he's already talked about. But he does add this one new element. He says that if we live like this, right? If we live having faith in God, knowing him, and loving him, and obeying him, and loving others, if we live like this, if we become this people that embody this simple basic idea of

Christianity, then we overcome the world. We have victory in this life. We experience true victory. So let's jump into it. 1 John chapter 5 verse 1. Everyone who believes that Jesus Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God that he has born concerning his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God is born concerning his Son. And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request that we have asked of him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life. To those who commit sins that do not lead to death. Now, there is a sin that leads to death. I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is a sin that does not lead to death. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning. But he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

[3 : 52] And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true, in his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. This is God's word. So, I'm going to ask you this question. Let's ask ourselves this question. Let's ponder this. What is a successful life? What does that look like?

What does it mean to be successful in this life? And then how can that be obtained, right? How do we win at life? Well, it's a lot more than taking a selfie of something when we're doing something well and posting it and kind of slapping the hashtag winning thing on it, right? That doesn't mean that we're winning at life. It starts with what you believe about what success and winning at life is. When we seek to think about, okay, what does a successful winning life look like? Well, what do you believe success is? What do you believe winning is? See, your definition of success, your definition of winning at life is going to determine how you live and what you live for. See, winning might look like keeping up with the Joneses or it might look like not just keeping up with them but being better than them, surpassing them. There's an interesting question that was posed to the tycoon John D. Rockefeller.

He was asked, how much money is enough? He looked at the guy and he replied, more. See, that word more encapsulates how our cultural moment defines winning at life. And it probably, my guess is a little bit how we define what winning at life, what success at life looks like.

Man, happiness, fulfillment, satisfaction, having a victorious life means more, needing more, getting more, being more. Which means that winning at life is always this thing that's just around the bend, right? It's just around the corner. If I could just get around this hurdle, if I could just get around this thing, then I'm going to find happiness. I'm going to find, I'm going to grab hold of what it looks like to win at life. But the problem is, if we believe this, this culture of more, this message that's coming at us, what we're doing is we're on this circular track. So living for something and for happiness and success and winning, being just around the bend, guess what? You're in a never-ending curve. Everything's just around the bend all the time. So I want to ask us today, what is the more in your heart and what is the more in my heart that we need for happiness? What are we looking for?

[6 : 30] What are we expecting? What are we holding on to? What is that goal that you and I have set to attain? That when we reach it, we just know that we'll finally have won at life.

What's your vision of success and victory in this life? See, what John is getting at and what he's saying in this passage and kind of what he's been saying through his whole letter is there's this spiritual war being waged over our minds and our hearts. We live in a spiritual war. And it's, what happens is, is this war is two kingdoms at opposition, right? So those of us who have been saved by Jesus, we've come into his kingdom and we've come to know what his values are, what it means to live for him and obey him and love like him. And there is the kingdom of this world that wages war against that. It's very much the opposite of everything that the kingdom of God stands for.

And both sides are vying for our hearts. Both sides are vying for our worship. Both sides are vying for our attention. And both sides are holding out what the good life looks like and what victory in this life looks like. See, what we believe and what we love is what we're going to live for. And how is that war fought and won? Well, John is telling us that the victory for the Christian is tied to three themes he's already talked about several times in this letter. It's belief, it's faith, it's love, and it's obedience.

And these three things are tied together. They're knitted together. You don't get to just have one without the other. And they're tied together and they become a part of our very nature when God saves us and makes us his children. 1 John 5 verse 1, it says this, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, right? Born of God because of faith. And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. And by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. So again, we see John talking about being born of God again. And it's important that he does this. And it's important that we hear this over and over again. It's important that we reiterate to ourselves, right, as Christians, if you're here and you're a Christian, man, get this into your brain. You need to wake up every day and you need to hear this truth. Because the things that we're best at is forgetting. And we need to be reminded over and over again who we are. Man, we are sons and daughters of God. We are sons and daughters of the King of Kings. We're born of him. And so like, just like John's been reiterating that to us over and over again, we need to catch a wake up and say, you know what, maybe I need to start doing this in my life. It's a good thing for me to remember and remind ourselves of that. Because becoming

God's children through faith in Jesus and seeing what he's done, what it does, it changes us. It changes who we are. And this is what that looks like. It's believing in God, loving the Father and others, and obeying his commandments. And he ties all these things together so that they're all connected.

[9 : 42] Faith, love, obedience. And if you think about that faith, it's like our head, our heart, and our hands. Like all of that has changed. Faith, love, obedience. That's what it looks like to be born of God. That's what it looks like to be born of him. And the result is that we overcome the world.

And so we're going to talk about each one of these things and how we can live this out and live as we've been called to live as children of God, which is truly the victorious life. And so children of God are victorious as we simply live in Jesus. So John talks about the implications of being children of God for our head and our heart and our hands. And this first aspect of being born of God is all about believing. It's about simple faith. It's about faith in him. And here's the thing.

Simple faith leads to victory. Simple faith leads to overcoming the world. In verses 9, it says, who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? See, we can think of overcoming the world as being on top of the world, getting more, having a trouble-free life.

But John's saying, no, no, actually overcoming the world is simply faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, who came and saved us from our sins. And it continues on this in verse 6. This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not by the water only, but by the water and the blood.

And the Spirit is the one who testifies because the Spirit is the truth, for there are three that testify. The Spirit, the water, and the blood. And these three agree. If we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. So John is talking to us about believing in who Jesus is, and that he came, and he presents to us some eyewitnesses to this. He says, hey, I have three things I could bring to the witness stand to prove this to you, to help you establish your faith. And that's the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Now, let's just step back and admit, okay, the water and the blood language is a little odd. We read that, and we're like, hmm, that's okay. Whatever. Now, we may get the blood part. The blood kind of makes sense, right? Jesus died on the cross. He bled and died for the forgiveness of our sins. As Christians, we totally get that. And if you're here, man, and you're not a Christian yet, man, hear this. That's one of the most amazing parts of the gospel. Jesus died on a cross. He bled for us, and through his blood, we have forgiveness for our sins. But then there's this water thing, right? He talks about the water and the blood. Well, what's the water about, right? Well, it may refer to Jesus' baptism when Jesus got baptized, right? And he came up from the baptism, and the Father from heaven, the Spirit descended on him, and the Father from heaven spoke and said, man, this is my beloved

[12 : 26] Son in whom I'm well pleased. Listen to him. So it could have been alluding to that, because John, the apostle John, he wrote this. He was an eyewitness of those things. Or it could have referred to the water that flowed from Jesus' side on the cross when he was pierced. It could have been either of those things. And maybe he's referring to both. It could very well be that he's referring to both. But the reason that John is including this language of blood and water was to combat a false teaching that was beginning to spread and become prevalent in the church. And it was denying that Jesus actually came in the flesh. He was saying, no, no, he was just like a spirit Jesus that kind of walked on this earth, like hologram Jesus. He wasn't, you couldn't really touch him. You couldn't really pierce him.

He didn't, he couldn't have really bled at all. Water couldn't really have flowed from his side. You couldn't really have baptized him as a ghost, right? And so the reason that John gives us this and calls them to the witness stand is to fight against this, because spirits don't have a body that can be tortured or bleed out. But that's exactly what Jesus did. And that's exactly what John is saying.

Hey, these guys can see anything we want. They want. And I was there. I saw him. I saw him bleed. I saw his water baptism. He really got wet in that water baptism. I saw the water pour out of his side.

I can't deny that. And there's a lot of other people and eyewitnesses there that don't deny that either. And John is saying this, and it's important, because if we deny that Jesus came in the flesh, what you're doing is taking away the power of the cross. See, what we believe as Christians is that Jesus came as a representative for us. He had to be fully man. Even though he was fully God, he had to be fully man. He had to die in our place. That can't be diminished in any way, shape, or form.

Because if you take away the cross of Jesus, if you take away the fact that he bled and died for the forgiveness of our sins, what you lose is a huge motif of the whole gospel story that's been played out from Genesis, the beginning of the Bible, all the way to the end. And you can't undo that.

[14 : 36] And John's saying, hey, I know what's being spoken about, and I'm going to put an end to it. I'm going to tell you that is false, and that is a lie. The blood of Jesus isn't merely a metaphorical way to talk about forgiveness of sins. He physically shed his blood, right? John's saying, I was there, trust me. And then John goes on to say that it's not only the blood and the water that testify, it's also the spirit that testifies to this too, which is great. That's awesome, right? Because you and I didn't see Jesus die on the cross. I was always confused by that old gospel hymn, were you there when they crucified my Lord? I'm always thinking, do I really have to answer that question? Like, obviously I wasn't there, and I know you weren't there. See, you and I, we didn't get the privilege to see what John saw. He didn't, John had the privilege of seeing Jesus die right before his eyes. He got the privilege of seeing Jesus' resurrected body after the third day.

And then also, we don't have John in the flesh here being able to tell us that what he saw was true, but guess what? We do have the spirit, the eternal spirit who is there bearing witness to Jesus' death and Jesus' resurrection. He saw, and he testifies, and he's here with us today, and he works in our hearts, and he testifies to the truth of that as well. So for Christians, that means that we get to experience this testimony in us, and this is a gift from God. Even now, the spirit is at work in us.

He's doing the very works that Jesus did, and he's working through us. See, the role of the spirit is to testify to Jesus. And the spirit, the Holy Spirit, is the experiential testimony. We ultimately don't just believe because of what we know or what is historically true, but because of our experience of God through the spirit. The spirit's testimony can happen in several ways, right? One, he gives us faith to believe in Jesus, right? The Holy Spirit, he comes, and he regenerates our heart. He changes our heart of stone and makes it a heart of flesh, and he brings faith to believe the gospel when we hear it.

1 Corinthians 12.3, Paul says this, no one can say Jesus is Lord. No one can confess truly confess that Jesus is Lord, that Jesus is who he says he is, except in the Holy Spirit.

Okay? So without the Holy Spirit's help, we're kind of hopeless. We need him. The Holy Spirit, we learn in Romans, is the one that comes into our hearts and cries out, Abba, Father, right? That's how we know we're sons of God. He comes in, and he begins to cry out from the depths of our souls so that we can confirm and believe that is who we are. The Holy Spirit comes and begins to teach us the language of God's love, the language of salvation and what he's done for us. So that's one way the Holy Spirit comes and bears witness about Jesus. And the second way he does that is he takes God's power public, or he puts God on display, and he manifests it. And so we hear about things, the gifts of the Spirit. And, you know, I agree we're probably on different ends of the spectrum, or different places in the spectrum of what we believe about gifts of the Spirit. You can look at 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. It talks about that in length. And so there's a lot of these different gifts, but God's power being put on display. And so, you know, we live in a day and age, especially in the American context, where we're very scientific and we're like, man, some of those things that we hear about, like, you know, God healing or doing different miracles, we kind of, okay, that's cool, but we doubt them a little bit. But, man, when you've actually seen it right in front of your eyes, it's hard to go back from that. It's hard when you experience God breaking in in that crazy way, it's hard to go back from that. There's tons of stories. I've seen someone be prayed for who had a short leg and their leg grow. I don't, I can't explain that except that I've seen it. God's power on display. Me and Hales, before we came here back in 2009, God had put it on my heart and said, hey, you're going to be moving to North Carolina to be a part of One Harbor Church. And One Harbor

[19 : 04] Church had just started. And I was like, oh, man. And so I started praying into it and just wanted confirmation. Because Haley was, you know, she wasn't as excited about that opportunity as I was.

And so I was just like, man, God, make it clear. I just wanted to make sure it wasn't me being emotional and having a moment with God and responding in the wrong way. And so I sat on it for four months, five months, just praying into it. Man, God, if this is your will. And his pull became stronger. And so I started praying just like, man, Lord, would you make this obvious?

Maybe it's like, you know, like a Barnabas and Paul moment. And if you guys aren't familiar with that story in the church and Acts, you know, Barnabas and Paul were in a church service and it said the Holy Spirit spoke to God. And he said, separate Barnabas and Paul for the work I called them to do. And they were sent out on a missionary journey. So I said, man, it could be cool if it was like a Barnabas and Paul moment. And we never told anyone. I told Haley. And then Sunday night at a Sunday night service, the pastor was getting up to preach. And he said, you know what, before I start in, I just want to say like, man, God put it on my heart that this is a, there's a Barnabas and Paul moment for a couple out there. I've been in church my whole life. I'm a pastor's kid. Never had those words uttered ever in any context. And I looked back at Haley, he hadn't said her names. And I was like, you know, we're going. She was back there with the kids playing, playing around. And I was like, that's us. He's definitely going to call our names. And by and large, that's what he said. And I feel like Jesse and Haley, God was saying that for you guys. Can we just come up and pray for you?

It was just a confirmation. God does crazy stuff like that sometimes. Donnie and Jill, that something, they had no idea when they first planted this church, there was a lady that was preying on married men and trying to get them in the sack. And they had no idea that was going on.

And then Donnie and Jill both had the same, pretty much the same dream one night and woke up and were just like, hey, I had this weird dream. And they started sharing the dream. They're like, oh my gosh, that's what I got. And that's the same gal. And so they, they confronted her and it came out that, yeah, she's like, yeah, this is, this is what I do. This is my thing. And she was very unrepentant.

[21 : 20] And so they had to ask her to leave. But like, see, see, God does amazing stuff. He does powerful things. He does things out of the ordinary because he loves us and he cares for his church. And those are just a few examples, guys. A few examples. There's many, many more things we could share. But God is powerful and he has these amazing gifts that he works through his people to put his power on display. And then the third, a third way is that he, he makes us more like Jesus, the Holy Spirit. He testifies to the fact that Jesus is real by making us more like Jesus.

The fruits of the Spirit, right? If you've been a Christian for any amount of time, you kind of know about the fruits of the Spirit. If you grew up in kids' church, you probably saw them in like flannel things and stuff, you know, as apples and pears and bananas. And, you know, there's, so love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, those things God works out in our lives.

The Holy Spirit works out in our lives. And this is proof that our faith is real. This is proof that, that Jesus is who he says he is. Because the faith that results in a victorious life is not just intellectual knowledge, but it's, but it's fellowship with the person of God and the Holy Spirit. That's what it is. And this, this fellowship is more than just believing in Jesus and seeing the Spirit's power worked out in our lives, right? It says this, right? John opens chapter five by saying everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. And by this, we know that we love the children of God when we love God. So children of God are victorious as we simply love. See, John says that believing in Jesus and loving like Jesus are inseparable. Jesus loved God. Jesus loved people.

And John keeps coming back to this truth. Guys, God is love. So if we truly are his children, we also must love. And now John tells us that his children born of God through faith and love, by this is how we overcome the world. And John says that the true victory comes through faith and true, true victory also comes when we love. And this love can only be known by looking to the cross.

If you're wondering, man, what is this love like? You got to look to the cross. And it shows us that love isn't about getting more. Chasing after more, it's actually about giving more.

[23 : 51] That's what true love is. That's what Christ's love is. It wasn't about him getting more. It was about him giving more. Love leads us to lay down our lives for others. Love is willing to do whatever it takes to go the extra mile. Man, we don't love in order to get on top. We don't love in order to advance our agendas. We don't love in order to be better than the person next to us or neighbors across the street or the guy in the cubicle. Right? And that idea of love, man, that's really challenging. That's really costly. That even might hurt us in some ways. It's a costly love. But here's the thing with our faith in Jesus. Our hearts are filled with how he loved us. And so we love. And we love God and we love others.

That's what it looks like. And our love for God is what leads us to obey his commands, which is the third element John weaves together with faith and love. Children of God are victorious as we simply obey. Verse 3 says this, for this is the love of God that we keep his commandments.

And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. So John often refers to God as the father in this message, right? And so this is what a loving son-father relationship looks like. A father has commands and rules, right? They expect their kids to follow their commands and rules, to be obedient. Now, let's admit not all fathers are equal. Some fathers can be harsh and mean and their commands can be heavy burdens and heavy-handed. And we might obey them out of fear, but not without a twinge of rebellion or resentment in our hearts. But see, the more loving a father is, the less this is so. And so John is right to say that God is our father who is perfect love and his commands are not burdensome. Jesus's life showed this. If you look at Jesus's life, man, he wasn't begrudged to obey his heavenly father. He wasn't begrudged to obey him. He actually delighted to be obedient to the father's commands. The gospel of John, chapter 5, verse 19 says this,

So Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, the son of God can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the father doing. For whatever the father does, that the son does likewise.

And then in John 14, 31, it says this, but I do as the father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the father.

[26 : 37] Now, we often think of obedience to God as a killjoy, as something standing in the way of our happiness. Obedience to God doesn't rob us of joy. Actually, obedience to God is where we find joy.

It's what brings us joy. And actually, it's a byproduct of living in the perfect love of God. Just like Jesus did. He lived in the perfect love of God, and he loved to obey his heavenly father.

And obeying to earn God's love, man, that's the heavy burden. If you're trying to earn the father's love through obedience, man, that's going to be a heavy burden. But obedience to God that flows from a heart that's been filled by his love, man, that's a different game. That's a light burden. That is not burdensome at all. That is a joy. Jesus said his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Man, it's a thing we take on, and it's light, and it's enjoyable, and it's something easy and enjoyable to live under.

Now, this doesn't mean we're expected to be perfect. Not at all. And God knows this. We are going to disobey at times, right? But then when we disobey, what we have is the Holy Spirit. He comes and he convicts us. He convicts us when we disobey. He shows us like, hey, you're supposed to be walking this way in this manner, and you kind of just that way over there. Hey, let's bring this back in line, right? And so we get to repent. We get to repent in God's grace, not because he's mad at us and he's about to throw us out of his house, right? Because the Holy Spirit is coming and saying, hey, God loves you. He's calling you back to get back on track. Repent. And we know that when we come to God with repentance, we don't come to a throne of judgment. In Hebrews, it says we come to a throne of grace, and he receives us and restores us every single time. But here's the thing. This shouldn't lead our hearts to presume on God's grace either, right? So if we get to a place in our hearts where we're trying to gain the system, it shows that we have a love problem, right? What do I mean by gain the system? Well, if we start thinking about sin, and we know we're going to sin, and we're just like, you know what? I could just repent on the other side, right? And just like, you know, clear it up with God. God will be cool with it. It's kind of gaming the system, right? If we're in that place, man, our hearts are in a bad place. Our hearts are in a bad place. And it doesn't mean that you have an obedience problem. You actually have a love problem. If you're presuming on God's grace, it's less of an obedient problem, and it's really a love problem. 1 John 5, 18 says, we know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning. But he who was born of

God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. And the apostle John here is agreeing with the apostle Paul, who says, man, you can't keep on sinning so that grace may abound. You can't presume on God's grace. All that proves is you have a love problem in your heart. You can't be truly loving the Father to willingly continue in sin and presume and say, well, I can just keep repenting, and God's going to keep forgiving me, and I'm not going to change. As children of God, his love makes us want to change. His love helps us to fight sin and to repent of sin, right? There's that passage. His loving kindness does what? Leads us to repentance. And friends, are we content to tell ourselves that we're being obedient in lots of areas, but aren't ready to let God reach into that certain part, give access to that certain part of our lives that we're not willing to surrender and give up? See, I can sit here and pat myself on the back because I choose every day not to use hard drugs. But if I'm honest,

[30 : 26] I've never been a drug addict, and that's not really a difficult area for me to obey. See, a better question for me is if God has control of my finances. Man, am I being generous of heart? Am I being generous with my wallet? Am I being generous in giving to the church and to others? Is my life, are my hands open that way? Are they closed? And they're refusing to do that. See, that's a greater temptation for me than the drug thing is. And so I can't sit back and judge anybody who's struggling with that and not realize that, man, there's real deep heart issues in Jesse that I got to fight, and I can't presume on God's grace. But nevertheless, I get to fight it and tap into God's love so that I can have victory over those things. See, our love for God and obedience is revealed in the ways we obey him. The ways that are costly to us and the ways that don't make sense or benefit us.

This is why John links obedience to faith and love and the way we live can't be separated from what we believe and what we love. The way we live reveals. It reveals what we believe. It reveals what we really love. And not only that, it reveals what we really worship. And John ends the letter by saying this in verse 21, little children, keep yourselves from idols. Now, it's only fitting that this book about love ends this way, and here's why. Love and worship are inseparable. You can't love without worship, and you can't worship without love. The danger is what you are loving and what you are worshiping.

See, when we talk about idols, we often think of these archaic things, these images, these stone images or wood images that people kind of bow down to in worship, and we say, we don't have that this day and age. But no, no, no. Idols are basically this. Idols are good things that become God things.

It's any good thing in our life that becomes a God thing in our life. It's what becomes more important than God in our hearts. An idol is just a substitute for God. An idol is where you and I look for identity.

It's where you and I look for meaning or happiness or hope or significance. And even in our modern age, our hearts are idol factories. They just are. My heart is an idol factory, let me tell you. If you guys could see into my heart at any random point during the week, you would probably disqualify me as a pastor. Our hearts are idol factories.

[33 : 13] The world, it tells us to worship the idol of more, just like John D. Rockefeller said, more stuff, better stuff, newer stuff. But that never leads us to joy, which is why we as a society are just constantly tired and weary and burned out and unhappy. What's the paradox of today is that we are the wealthiest society in the history of the world. Our quality of life is unparalleled to any previous generation. We have more money. We live in bigger homes. We drive better cars. We have more access to everything, entertainment, education. There's more opportunities that we have than any other civilization prior to this in the history of the world. And yet what we see is increasing, increasing numbers of depression and divorce and suicide. Why is that? Why should that be?

It seems like the wealthier we get, the sicker our souls are becoming. See, our hearts have latched on to that idol of more. We're chasing around in the circle again and again. Happiness is just around the bend. It's just outside my reach. If I could just get that thing. Let me ask you this. Does joy, does peace, the good life always seem to be just around the bend to you? Are you unhappy? Are you unsatisfied looking at your life and saying, man, if I just had a better job? If I just had a better position? If I just had a bigger home? If I could just get a new car? If I could just get married? If I could just have kids? And I want to be sensitive to those things. I realize some of those things are good things to want, but we don't put our hope in those things to bring us happiness. And if we do believe in any of those things, we just believe, we believe in that narrative that more is going to make you happier. And you're going to get it, and it's going to be satisfying for a moment, and then it's just going to become old and stale, and you're going to run on to the next thing. The next thing that's going to be more for you, whatever is more for you. The idol of more makes us sick. Hope deferred makes the heart sick, right? The idol of more makes our hearts and our souls sick. It makes us bitter. It makes us angry. It makes us jealous. It makes us covet. The idol of more takes more than it gives.

It promises to give us so much, but actually what it does, it takes way more than it gives to us, and it burns us out. And so we end up overworked. We end up tired. We end up in debt.

So how do we stop worshiping at the altar of more? How do we stop doing that? It is what John's letter has been about this whole time, guys. It's abiding in God's love. It's remaining in him. It's knowing his love. It's worshiping him. And as we love God more, as we abide in his love more, we want to worship him more. And we begin to believe this narrative more and more and more, that man, true happiness is found in him, in him alone. And because of that, we begin to not believe this false narrative that's being held out to us, that actually happiness is found in more.

And that's what overcoming the world looks like. That's what victory in Jesus is. So as we respond, I want to ask you today, if you're a follower of Christ, a life of victory is abiding in faith, love, and obedience. Winning isn't chasing that idol of more.

[36 : 55] It's being satisfied in Jesus who did more than we could hope or imagine, right? When you realize that in Jesus, you already have everything, you don't need the more anymore. See, if we're chasing that, if we're chasing that idol of more, I want to invite you and exhort you today to repent. Man, get off that merry-go-round that's never going to end. Get off of that circle that's a never-ending pathway of happiness that's just around the bend.

And turn from it. Turn from it and turn to God. Return to his love. And what that means, it's going to mean new habits for you. It's going to look like a new way of living. It's going to be letting go of some of your goals and dreams and desires that you thought were going to be fulfilling, but they're not. And it's putting God's kingdom first above those things. And I'm inviting you, man, return to him. And as you experience love, obey him, respond in obedience because you love him. And remember that the cross is the perfect picture of loving obedience. However, Jesus said before he went to the cross, as he was contemplating what he was facing, the anguish and the pain and the separation from his father's love, he says, not my will, but yours be done. That's what obedient love looks like.

It's in those moments where you're saying, this is going to be tough to give up. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

I want to invite you, if you're here and you're not a Christian, I want to implore you and let you know that, hey, we're so glad you're here. And we hope you hear this. Jesus died for you. He died on the cross for your sins and his death will set you free. It has set you free from sin, free from chasing the empty promises of more, of chasing after that more that this life is holding out. And he invites you to put your faith in him. He invites you to put your faith in Jesus Christ and what he's done for you. And so I dare you, I dare you today to invite his love into your heart.

I pray, man, God, if you're real, I surrender to you. Man, invade my heart with your love. I want to know what that's like. And if you do that, I believe that he's going to respond to you and he will forever change you. As we continue to respond, we're going to be taking communion. And this is the beautiful picture of Jesus's victory. The juice represents his blood that was shed. His bread, the bread represents his body that was really broken. The victory of Jesus over sin and death. He defeated sin and death for us because we couldn't. They were our enemies that we could not defeat. And Jesus is our champion. Communion reminds us of that. Communion reminds us that Jesus, because of what he did, he gave us an inheritance in his kingdom so that we don't have to chase after more anymore.

[39 : 54] We don't have to chase after more to find meaning or significance or joy. We look to the cross and what we see in Jesus on the cross is perfect faith. In Jesus on the cross, we see perfect love. In Jesus on the cross, we see perfect obedience. And that is the ultimate victory.

And by faith in him, his ultimate victory becomes our ultimate victory. As we live in him and take hold of him by faith, his ultimate victory becomes ours, right? And I want us to imagine this as we come up, that as we're grabbing that piece of bread, as we're grabbing that cup, what we're doing is we're taking hold of faith in Jesus Christ. We're taking hold of his faith and his love and his obedience, because it's counted towards us. It doesn't matter if you have imperfect faith. It doesn't matter if your love isn't perfect towards God. It doesn't matter if your obedience has been a little shoddy lately, right? You get to take hold of Christ. And in his grace, man, we have victory over this world.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you, man, for this amazing letter. First John, we thank you for how it shows us, man, that the basics of Christianity, how it reminds us to refine the fundamentals. We don't have to get fancy and go searching after these deep truths, in quotes, because the deep truth is, is that you loved us and you sent your son to die for us so that we could abide in your love. And your love comes and invades us. And that love changes us. It changes our desires.

It changes who we are. You make us sons and daughters. You become our heavenly father, a father that we're not afraid of, a father whose commands aren't burdensome and heavy, a father who's not angry, malevolent towards us, but a father that cares for us, who loves us, whose loving kindness leads us to repentance, but also whose love so works in us that we desire and we find joy in obeying you.

And so I pray for all of us that we would live in that love and your love would set us free. Your love would set us free from living for ourselves, living for the rat race of trying to get more and going after more, to live in the satisfaction of knowing that you've given us everything in you, Jesus Christ. I pray this in your name. Amen.

[42 : 33] Before you come up and take communion, I just want to invite you to take a moment where you're at, continue to respond where God has been speaking to your heart, where you feel like you need to repent of anything. Go ahead and do that. And then when you're ready, come to any of the tables spread throughout the room and take communion. There's a slide that shows you what to do.

If you're here and you are not a follower of Jesus, you're not a Christian, hey, we're so glad you're here. And I hope you've heard about communion and what it represents. It's what we do as Christians because we believe in Jesus. And so we would ask that, man, until you've put your faith in Jesus, it doesn't make sense for you to participate in this at all. And we would ask you, instead of coming and taking this, because it really would be meaningless, that we just reflect on what was said and consider how you can respond to God calling you to put your faith in Him today. Thank you.