

Walking...In The Spirit

by Pastor Cary Nack

INTRODUCTION

It's been said that the position of Head Men's Basketball coach for the UCLA Bruins is one of the worst head coaching jobs in America. Why? Because the position comes with unusually high expectations. Why? Because of the program's winning in ways in the past. From 1964 - 1975 the UCLA men's basketball team won **10 NCAA Championships over a 12-year span** under Hall of Fame head coach John Wooden and future NBA Hall of Famers such as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Sidney Wicks and Bill Walton. From 1967-1973, the Bruins won seven straight titles, finishing undefeated four times (1963-64, 1966-67, 1971-72, 1972-73). From 1971 - 1974, the Bruins set a record for the longest winning streak in men's college basketball history by winning 88 consecutive games.¹

During this dynastic run, many schools believed UCLA simply could not be overcome. It was assumed that UCLA would always win.

Transition: The same thing used to be said about the world. For centuries, the world with its anti-God, self-centered, wicked ways had a winning streak SO LONG — that many believed the world could not be overcome. That is — until the Lord Jesus Christ overcame the world Himself and then sent the Holy Spirit to help His followers do the same.

We're continuing our series in 1 John today called **AUTHENTIC WALK**. I'd like to invite you to open your copy of God's Word with me to **1 JOHN 5** and pull out the sermon notes in your worship folder so you can follow along. **If you forgot your Bible or need to borrow one, please raise your hand and one of our ushers can loan you one of ours.**

Series Key Verse: Our theme verse for this series on prayer is 1 John 2:4,6. If you haven't already, I want to encourage you to underline or highlight it in your own bible. Let's read it out loud together...you may either look at the screen behind me or use your sermon note handout...

Whoever says "I know him"...ought to walk in the same way in which He walked.

(1 Jn. 2:4,6, ESV)

Throughout this series, this keen ministry veteran repeats a singular truth in several different ways **[Series Big Idea:] Real Christians really walk with Christ.** This gray-haired apostle has been telling us with a "just sayin" boldness: **If you claim to know Jesus, then FOLLOW Him, LOVE like Him, SACRIFICE for Him and if necessary — suffer for Him.** John has also been telling us the **inverse: DON'T claim to know Jesus if you don't want to follow Him, don't want to love like Him, don't want to sacrifice for Him or don't want to suffer for Him.** In chapter 2 of this letter, John told us one litmus test for authentic faith in Jesus Christ is obedience...that REAL believers WANT to walk with their Savior. He then told us to not love the world or the things of this world. In chapter 5, John either was asked or anticipates the question: **"Where does the Christ-follower find the power to overcome a powerful world? Living IN the world while not being**

LIKE the world is VERY difficult to do.” So, he circles back to the topic and explains where the Christ-follower can get the power to do what he says.

Thus, our Big Idea for today is...

Big Idea: Real Christ-followers overcome the world with the Spirit.

Overcoming the world is important because Jesus calls His followers to live a life that is set apart and different from the world. The danger of worldliness wasn't just talked about by Jesus and John, it was also mentioned by James...one of the other apostles in Jesus' inner circle...

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

(Jas. 4:4, ESV)

John answers the following questions in this passage: (1) How can we tell if someone has been genuinely born-again? And (2) Where do we find the power to live out our faith in this dark world?

SCRIPTURE

1 Jn. 5:1-12

EXPOSITION

[Read 1 Jn. 5:1]

I. The **WORK** of the **SPIRIT** powers **REGENERATION. (5:1)**

5:1 *“who believes that Jesus is the Christ”* This statement is a response to the false teachers we learned about in chapter 2. **Cross-reference:** 2:22-23. John was aiming his Gospel sniper rifle at 3 cults that were picking off naive church members at the time of this writing. The **Gnostics, Docetists and Cerinthians** taught that Jesus was either not truly a man or not fully God. Because these cults opposed the true Gospel that Jesus preached, John called them ANTI - christ. The Greek word for “Christ” here in chapter 5 verse 1 is *Christos* which means “Anointed One” or “Messiah”.² John’s choice of words here is both intentional and Holy Spirit inspired. He is proclaiming that Jesus of Nazareth WAS the one that God’s prophets promised, that died on the cross for our sin and conquered death 3 days later. To believe that Jesus IS the Christ is much more than being familiar with the Gospel story, acknowledging Jesus’ existence or saying the sinner’s prayer. When the NT talks about believing in Jesus Christ, it means to give yourself to the Savior who died on the cross for your sin, was resurrected three days later, to repent of your sin and follow Him the rest of your life. Individuals that do this receive from Jesus the gift of eternal life, forgiveness and gain access to God through an intimate relationship.

5:1 Notice how John describes those that believe Jesus is the Christ. They have *“been born of God”* He repeats this phrase later in verse 1 and also in verse 4. What does it mean to be “born of God”? The concept first comes up in the Gospel of John chapter 3 when Jesus is speaking with Nicodemus that no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he has been “born-again”. Nicodemus’ response is understandable: “How can someone get back into his mother’s womb to be born again?” Jesus went

on to explain that every person is born once *physically* but in order to receive eternal life we must be born-again *spiritually*.

Theologians call this concept of being made new or “born-again” regeneration.

‘Regeneration’ simply defined: *The renewal of your heart and mind so you can know, love and serve God.*

- Regeneration is God saying: “I can’t do what I need to do IN and THROUGH you so long as you have a heart damaged by sin. And you can’t experience the abundant life I want to give you unless you have a new heart.”
- Regeneration is necessary *spiritually* because it restores our intellectual, volitional, moral, emotional and relational capacities so that we can know, love and serve God.³
- Regeneration is necessary *eternally* because the Scriptures teach that [TB:] *you can be born once and die twice or you can be born twice and only die once.*⁴

Illustration: One of my favorite classic cars made before I was born was the 1963 Chevy Corvette Stingray Coupe with the split rear window. I remember seeing one at an auto show a few years ago that had a completely rebuilt, new engine. The new engine allowed this vintage sports car that was damaged by time and elements to have a new power it had never had before. That’s what regeneration does for us. God gives us a new heart and injects us with the Holy Spirit so we have the power to change because we lack the power to do it on our own.

Application(s): *Make sure you’ve been born again.* You need to assess the old you and the current you; and then ask: Is there a difference? Individuals that have sincerely repented of their sins and by faith trusted in Christ alone for salvation are being changed by Him. They are changing because the greatest engine in the universe has been placed in their heart to POWER their new life in Christ. If you aren’t changing or you are trying under your own power, it begs the question: Have you been born again?

Repeat Big Idea 2: Real Christ-followers overcome the world with the Spirit.

[Read 1 Jn. 5:2-3]

II. WALKING in the SPIRIT proves SALVATION. (5:2-3)

5:2 *“By this we know”* Know what? Who really knows Jesus. How do we know? By looking at those who obey His commands. Those that truly know the Lord and love the Lord will WANT TO obey His commands because the Holy Spirit resides in them and the Spirit always wants to follow the Lord. It’s unfortunate that John has to say this, but he feels compelled to because there have always been people that claim to know Jesus but really don’t. Just like people who try to identify with celebrities today because they think it increases their stature...**[Illustration:]** Like the guy who claims to be friends with NBA superstar LeBron James because his cousin cleans LeBron’s pool....in the same way, there have always been folks who want to be associated with Jesus when it benefits them. However, Jesus will say to them some day: *“Depart from me, I never new you”* (Mt. 7:23).

5:3 *“his commandments are not burdensome”* What does John mean by this? Actually,

the Lord's commandments ARE a burden if we try to obey them in the flesh instead of with the help of the Holy Spirit. But His commandments are a joy to follow if we walk in the Spirit. [The Apostle wants us to know that JUST AS we couldn't get saved without the Spirit's help in regeneration, we also can't live the Christian life as a new creation without His help either.](#)

Application(s): Do the 3 D's of the Spirit-filled life... I share specific, practical applications in my sermons because I believe the Scriptures call us to apply what we've learned. However, I worry that some of you take these applications, determine to "pull up your bootstraps" and just try harder to live the Christian life in your own strength. That is NOT what I mean for you to do and DEFINITELY NOT what the Lord wants you to do. Don't try to pull off in the flesh what can only be done in the Spirit. You might be wondering: "How do we balance the commands of Scripture with our inability to do them in our own strength?"

The 3 D's of the Spirit-filled Life...

A. DELIGHT in Him (Ps. 37:4)

Psalm 37:4 says ***"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart"***. It means to find so much enjoyment in WHO the Lord is that your desires become His. We do this just like we would with any other person we enjoy knowing: We spend TIME with the Lord. When we MAKE time for the Lord in personal bible study and prayer during the week, when we MAKE time to fellowship with other believers in a vGroup and MAKE time to commune with the Lord in corporate worship each Sunday we WILL get to know Him better. And as we get to know Him better, the more we will delight in Him. [\[TB:\] NO ONE IN WORLD HISTORY HAS EVER DELIGHTED IN THE LORD AND THEN CONCLUDED: "Well, that was a waste of time. I'm never doing that again. Wish I had gone out and committed some sin instead."](#) Be careful that you don't conclude in your heart the Lord is not delightful if you've never made a genuine effort to spend time with Him. Such a conclusion would be unfair to Him.

B. DISCIPLINE yourself (1 Co. 9:23-27)

In 1 Corinthians 9:23-27, Paul said that he disciplines his body like an athlete striving to run a race and win a prize. Except the prize earned is eternal rewards in heaven. The point he is making is **[Illustration:]** The Christian life can be like working out at the gym: Some days you dread the thought of going but after you do you're almost always glad you did. And if you abide in Christ, it will be easier.

C. DEPEND on Him (Jn. 15:5)

In John 15:5, Jesus says: ***"Apart from me you can do nothing."*** He meant that if we don't abide in Him, we won't be able to do what He requires of us. He wants it that way because by depending on Him we draw closer to Him which leads to the intimacy He wants from us. The Lord's high expectations should humble us and make us dependent on Him. In fact, if you are finding yourself tired from trying live the Christian life it is probably because you ARE trying to do it in your own strength. During Jesus' ministry, there were some that were exhausted from trying to live a religious life without an intimate relationship with Him. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30...

“COME TO ME, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

(Mt. 11:28-30, ESV)

Illustration: I once read a story about an American Christian who was taking his British friend (who was also a Christian) to tour some of our continent’s landmarks. As they approached Niagara Falls, the American said to his British friend: “I am about to show you the greatest unused power in the world.” After taking him to the foot of the falls, he pointed to the whirlpools and rapids and declared: “Look at the GREATEST unused power in the world!” To which his British brother replied: “NOT SO, my brother! The greatest unused power in the world is the Holy Spirit of the living God!”⁵

When we delight in who Jesus is, we’ll be motivated to follow Him. When we practice the disciplines of the faith, we’ll discover we can’t do it without Him. When depend on Him, His Spirit empowers us to do what He has called us to do.

RQ: Are you tapping into the greatest unused power source in the world?

Repeat Big Idea 2: Real Christ-followers overcome the world with the Spirit.

[Read 1 Jn. 5:4-5]

III. WALKING in the SPIRIT provides VICTORY. (5:4-5)

- 5:4** **“For everyone”** Note how John uses another all-inclusive, indefinite pronoun. Not "a handful". Not "some". Not a "few". EVERYONE!
- 5:4** **“Everyone who has been born of God”** This is a qualifier without an exception for what he is about to say next. In other words, NO ONE who has been genuinely born again has failed to do what’s next because they had help from the Spirit and the Spirit never fails. What has every born again believer walking in the Spirit been able to do?
- 5:4** **“overcomes the world”** The Greek word used here for “overcome” and “victory” is the word *nike* [NEE-kay]. *Nike* [NEE-kay] was the name of the Greek goddess for victory.⁶ And if this sounds familiar, it’s probably because you have some shoes or clothes that have the same Greek name on them. The word means “to conquer, to carry off the victory or to come off victorious”.⁷ It’s a promise that those who have been born again and are filled with the Spirit will overcome evil men (Ps. 44:5), satanic forces (Lk. 10:19) and temptation to sin. This verse is a favorite for many to quote and has even inspired several Christian songs. However, we need to make sure we look at it in context. What John is REALLY saying — is that the person who REALLY knows Jesus Christ REALLY loves the Lord, loves to obey His commands and loves people...the way GOD loves people....not the way the world loves them. And the reason people who REALLY know Christ are able to do these things is because of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling. AND IF YOU WALK IN THE SPIRIT YOU CAN’T LOSE! YOU ARE GUARANTEED TO WIN AGAINST THE WORLD!

How can someone running the race to win the prize experience victory?

Application(s): Practice spiritual breathing. You EXHALE by confessing sin regularly and thanking the Lord for His forgiveness. Then you INHALE by regularly surrendering control of your life to Christ, breathing in His Word and allowing His Spirit to empower you. You received ALL the Holy Spirit you need and ALL the Holy Spirit you're going to get when you gave your life to Jesus Christ. In fact, [TB:] *we don't need more of the Holy Spirit to overcome the world. Instead, the Holy Spirit just needs more of us. To walk in the Spirit or to be filled with the Spirit simply means to be surrendered to the Spirit's supernatural control so that you act outside of your normal self. Those that are filled with the Holy Spirit love those they would normally hate, to serve when they would rather be served instead, to give when they would normally be selfish, to sing when they would normally be silent, to apply God's Word when they would rather just do what "feels" right and to keep going when they feel like quitting.*

[Read 1 Jn. 5:6-9]

IV. The WITNESS of the SPIRIT proclaims the GOSPEL. (5:6-12)

Please notice the use of legal language such as "testifies" in verse 6, "testify" in verse 7 and "testimony" in verses 8-10.

5:6-9 There has been some debate amongst theologians as to what John was saying in these verses. I think it is safest and simplest to interpret this as John shooting back at the false teacher Cerinthus. Cerinthus errantly taught that the divine Jesus descended on the man Jesus at his baptism but then left him at his crucifixion. John combats this heresy by using courtroom terms to prove that Jesus is the Christ.

Illustration: It would be like (woman's name) robbing her favorite shoe store and (woman's name) was driving the getaway car. Let's say they are eventually arrested and taken to court. How would our court system prove that (woman's name) and (woman's name) committed this robbery? Evidence and witnesses. The court would put eyewitnesses who were in the store on the witness stand to cross examine them. "Point to the person in this room you saw..." Then the next witness would be called and asked the same question. Until 3-4 of them saw the same thing...our defense system calls that "corroboration of witnesses".

John says that the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophets, the water at Jesus' baptism and the blood at his crucifixion ALLLLL testify like witnesses in a high profile court case that JESUS IS THE CHRIST!

Application(s): Pray for those who have no proof of the Son. You've heard me say this before so I don't want to be-labor the point. If the Apostles didn't consider themselves worthy to change the Gospel that Jesus preached, then neither should we. We've not been given the permission or the authority to lower the entrance requirements for God's Heaven. This is why John has repeated the proofs of salvation throughout his letter and then summarizes it succinctly: ***"Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God DOES NOT have life"***.

LANDING THE PLANE

In the 19th century, D.L. Moody was one of the most anointed evangelists and preachers in the world. The Lord used him to lead 1000's to Christ through his revival meetings. During the height of his ministry, a group of pastors met to discuss the possibility of having Moody come lead an evangelistic event in their city. One minister who was reluctant to invite Moody sarcastically asked: "Why Moody? Does He have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?" After a long silence in the meeting, another pastor spoke up and said: "No, Moody does not have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit DOES have a monopoly on D.L. Moody."⁸

Who or what is monopolizing you?

Repeat Big Idea 3: Real Christ-followers overcome the world with the Spirit.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

¹ *Greatest Dynasties In Sports History* (www.nbcsports.com, slide #21).

<http://www.nbcsports.com/greatest-dynasties-sports-history#slide-21>

² Strong's Concordance G5547 found at www.blueletterbible.org.

³ Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 293.

⁴ See Rev. 20:14 and 21:8.

⁵ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations* (Dallas, TX: Bible Communications, 1998), 1134.

⁶ Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 1000.

⁷ Strong's Concordance G3528 found at www.blueletterbible.org.

⁸ Roy B. Zuck, *The Speaker's Quote Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishing, 1997), 194.