



Lesson Overview

Week of August 22

1 Life Need:

Discuss what it means to love the way Jesus loves.

2 Bible Learning:

Study what John said about loving like Jesus.

3 Bible Application:

Explore how we love like Jesus and live in Him.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible Handout—God's Image and God's Idea
- Poster board, adhesive tape, pictures, magazines

4 Life Response:

Love more like Jesus.

Suggested Material:

- Video of Todd Dulaney's song 'Psalm 18 (I Will Call on the Name)'

Church/Home Theme:
We are the Body of Christ.

Lesson Focus:

Loving like Jesus gives us confidence that we live in God.

Lesson Scripture:

1 John 4:2-3, 13-17;
5:4-5

A Conquering Faith

A False Teaching—When the apostle John wrote the letter we call 1 John, specific ideas from Greek philosophy influenced the Christian church. One teaching was that flesh is evil, but spirit is eternal. Therefore, Jesus could not have been both human and God at the same time. John said that anyone denying the Incarnation, that Jesus came in the flesh, was against Christ.

A True Teaching—God's children and the heavenly Father are connected and communicate with one another. This is possible because God dwells within the believer through the Holy Spirit. Jesus' followers, His apostles, were eyewitnesses to the facts concerning Jesus. They testified concerning His actions while on earth. God and His love dwell in those who place their faith in Christ. Those in Christ's Body are overcomers through the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers do not have to worry about being defeated by the world. The victory has already been accomplished.

Christ and His love dwelling in believers are benefits given to Christians. It's their grounding, their confidence. When days of darkness and judgment come, we do not have to push back but be bold in our beliefs.

As Your Students Arrive

Ask your students what is something they do with confidence—that is, they can do it almost without thinking about it. For example, they could say they confidently drive to church, knit a scarf, cook a favorite meal, or change the oil in their car. Tell them that today they will be considering how confidently they love Jesus.

Link to Last Week

Encourage a few of your students to share how they connected with someone from a younger (or older) generation this past week and encouraged them.

John's Three Letters

The apostle John's Gospel and three letters were probably written around the same time, sometime between A.D. 85-95. John was a teacher and leader based in the church at Ephesus until his exile to the island of Patmos around A.D. 95-96, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. He returned to Ephesus after his exile and remained there until his death around A.D. 100. False teachings bombarded

the Christians at the time of John’s writings (the latest in the New Testament) especially an early form of Gnosticism, which considered matter, including the human body, evil and the spirit good. Thus, John stressed that Jesus was not only God but “the Word [who] became flesh” (John 1:14)—whose love and sacrifice for our sins had been displayed bodily. John described what Christlike love and hope looked like, and that it was the believers’ love, expressed through their own bodies, that overcame the world and affirmed their identity in Christ.

1 Life Need

Discuss what it means to love the way Jesus loves.

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A Conquering Faith

“Are you sure?” Linzell said to his GPS. He then looked over at his 10-year-old son, Jeron. The two were on their way to the home of Tion, Jeron’s classmate.

Tion had started bullying Jeron at the first of the school year. Before Linzell and the school administration had learned of it, Jeron had taken matters into his own hands, and the result was the unintentional damage of Tion’s backpack, which carried a pair of extra tennis shoes and other miscellaneous items.

The school administration had dealt with Tion and his mother about bullying. They had also talked to Jeron and his parents about the effects of bullying. Although Linzell and his wife, Carmelita, talked to their son of the importance of letting them know about troubles immediately and the need to protect oneself, they also prayed and talked about forgiveness and the love of Christ.

The new bookbag and shoes was Jeron’s idea, and Linzell was so proud!

“Tion!” shouted his mother. “Get in here.”

After receiving the gift, Tion looked contrite and offered his apologies.

“We are happy to do it,” Linzell said. “And it was Jeron’s idea. God has been good to us, and we wanted to share the love of Christ with you. This is how we live our lives.”

Tion’s mother relaxed her shoulders and eyed Linzell closer. “What church do you all go to?”

1. Fill in the blank: I knew Jesus loved me when _____.

2. How confident are you that Jesus loves you? Explain your answer.

3. What are some ways you can love like Jesus?

LESSON FOCUS: Loving like Jesus gives us confidence that we live in God.

Ask your students to read the opening story in the student book, then have them form groups to talk about their answers to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

For Question 1, students will discuss their personal examples of finding that Jesus really loved them. Perhaps they found that out at church, from a family member, or when reading the Bible.

Question 2 reminds students that Jesus loves all of us. Our confidence that He does is shown by the things He does for us and the way He makes us feel as we pray to Him, read His Word, etc.

Question 3 shows that we reflect God’s love in our actions and attitudes toward other believers. We are loving like Him when we show peace, joy, love, compassion, and the other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit to others.

2 Bible Learning

Study what John said about loving like Jesus.

Jesus represents God's greatest gift to the world. He is the manifestation of God's love for us. This great love should be shared with the world. It's the kind of love that should spread like wildfire. This wildfire should be used to eradicate sexism, racism, classism, and all -isms that do not show the love of God.

RECOGNIZING THE SPIRIT

Read 1 John 4:2-3, 13-15 with students and elaborate on the following key points:

- The apostle John wrote in his letter that the Spirit of God acknowledges that Jesus was sent by God the Father (vs. 14) and dwelled on earth in the flesh.

BIBLE EXTRA

A Real Jesus, a Real Faith

Much of 1 John addressed the false teachings of the early Gnostics, including a group known as the Docetists, who contradicted Jesus' teachings in a number of ways. The Docetists believed the human body and physical world were entirely evil and that spiritual enlightenment was achieved by escaping from the body. In trying to "recruit" Jesus to their cause, the Docetists taught that Jesus only appeared to take a physical body on earth, since Jesus' physical humanity was offensive to them. Yet, without it, His sacrifice on the Cross was a sham.

Likewise, since they believed that matter is evil, the Docetists practiced no bodily restraints. Consequently, they didn't believe in moral rules or commandments, but followed their own personal preferences. John wrote in response to this that "this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). The belief that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine was essential to the faith, and to ongoing life in Christ.

- Every spirit that does not believe in Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of the antichrist.

- God has given us His Spirit, and He lives in us. John says if you believe in Jesus, God's Spirit lives in you.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

John made plain how they could "recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God"

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Recognizing the Spirit

1 John 4:2-3, 13-15, KJV

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world....

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

1 John 4:2-3, 13-15, NIV

²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world....

¹³This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.

¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.

At the opening of 1 John 4, the apostle challenged his readers to not blindly accept every teaching or spirit, but to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God," in light of the many false prophets in their midst (vs. 1). He then clarified how they could recognize what came from God: "every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (vs. 2). Conversely, any spirit that did not acknowledge Jesus or His incarnation was from "the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world" (vs. 3). The fact that the spirit of the antichrist was present was, again, clearly evident from the multitude of false teachers around them.



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 993-1032 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

(4:2). Thus, any spirit, or person, who did not acknowledge Jesus' incarnation was from "the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world" (vs. 3).

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

John reminded believers that God had given each of them His Spirit to dwell within them, guide them, and remind them "that we live in him and he in us" (vs. 13). Because of this, every believer had already "seen and [could] testify that the Father

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Having made clear how to recognize the true presence of the Spirit, John explained how believers could know with certainty that they belonged to Christ: God had given His Spirit to dwell within them, guide them, and remind them "that we live in him and he in us" (vs. 13). Because of this, every believer had already "seen and [could] testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world" (vs. 14). The working of the Spirit, sent by the Father, reminded believers of the hope they had in Christ.

It is worth remembering that John wrote this letter roughly 60 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. Thus, when he spoke of testifying he was probably not speaking primarily of "eyewitness testimony"—aside from his own, of course; by the time he wrote this letter John was one of only a few eyewitnesses left. Rather, John was speaking of God's children "see[ing] and testify[ing]" through their own "spiritual eyes"—they too, by faith, had seen and could speak of the reality of God's presence, because of what the resurrected Christ had already done in their midst collectively, and in their hearts individually.

Thus, John summed up, "If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God" (vs. 15). Their very testimony was evidence of the Spirit of Christ living within them.

4. *How could believers know whether a spirit was from God?*

5. *How could believers know that they belonged to Christ?*

6. *Because of these truths, what kind of testimony did John say believers should have?*

Living in God's Overcoming Love

1 John 4:16-17; 5:4-5, KJV
 16 And we have known and

1 John 4:16-17; 5:4-5, NIV
 16 And so we know and

BIBLE EXTRA

The Spirit of Antichrist

In addition to 1 John 4:3 in our lesson text, John mentions "the antichrist" or "antichrists" in 1 John 2:18 and 2:22. John observed that, "even now many antichrists have come. . . . They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us" (2:18-19). This warning made clear that these "antichrists" had penetrated even the ranks of the church.

In addition, the presence of "the spirit of the antichrist" in John's day—and ours—served as a precursor to the fact that "the antichrist is coming . . . denying the Father and the Son" (2:18, 22). In contrast to the man of sorrows (Jesus) who "had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him" (Isa. 53:2), the last-days antichrist (1 John 2:18) will use earthly power and beauty to draw many away from the faith. Thus, although the specific threats were different, John's warnings are just as pertinent to believers today.

BIBLE EXTRA

Who Was 1 John Written To?

Although John did not specifically state who he was writing to in his letter, there are some educated guesses to be made. Tradition says that by the time John wrote this letter (about A.D. 90), he had been a leader of the church at Ephesus for more than two decades, and it is believed by many that his influence and authority extended throughout the Roman province of Asia. The familiar tone of John's letter also strongly suggests that he was well acquainted with the churches he was writing to.

Thus, most scholars believe that John's first letter was intended for the several churches that had been established in the province of Asia (modern-day Turkey)—likely including, but not limited to, the seven churches to whom John directed the early chapters of Revelation: John's own Ephesus as well as Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamum, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Rev. 2-3).

has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world” (vs. 14).

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

John’s readers too, by faith, had experienced the reality of God’s presence—a hope based on what Christ had already done in their midst as the Church, and in the hearts of each of them as believers. “If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God” (vs. 15).

BIBLE EXTRA

The Judgment of Believers

John wrote that believers can be confident on the day of judgment (1 John 4:17). The apostle Paul similarly described a time of evaluation in which the works of all believers will be judged. This is commonly known as the “Bema” or “Bema Seat” judgment.

Paul said the works will be tested by the fires of God’s omniscience and justice (1 Cor. 3:10-15). The apostle used the metaphor of an ongoing construction project to illustrate the “materials” with which Christians can build their lives. The indisputable foundation is faith in Jesus Christ. Those who demonstrate a life of obedience are like contractors who select the best stones available to construct their building. Those who compromise the commandments of God and waver in their commitment are like laborers who use easily consumed materials such as wood, hay, and straw to shore up their structures.

At the time of this judgment, those “buildings” that are constructed with imperishable materials will be left standing and their builders will be given a reward. Those buildings constructed of consumable materials will be reduced to ashes and their owners will suffer loss while still being saved.

Bible scholars differ on the nature of this “loss.” Some claim it is regret when they have no works of any quality to present to Christ. Others say this loss will involve diminished responsibility in the kingdom of God and withholding of reward that might have been theirs if they had acted more faithfully.

Their very testimony was evidence of God’s presence within them.

LIVING IN GOD’S OVERCOMING LOVE

Finally, read 1 John 4:16-17; 5:4-5, and review these summary statements:

- God is love, and whoever loves is of God.
- We will have confidence on judgment day if we love as God has loved. As long as we live in this world we are called to love as Jesus loves.
- We are born of God; therefore, we have overcome the world.
- When we believe in Jesus, our faith overcomes the world.

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believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.

⁴For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Having established how believers could know they are God’s children, John now went on to tell them how to express the reality of Christ’s love to the world. Because believers acknowledged that Jesus is the Son of God, through the inner conviction of the Spirit, they could also “know and rely on the love God has for us.” And because “God is love,” that reality would be expressed through the Church’s love for one another and those around them: “Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them” (1 John 4:16). A love-filled existence reflects a God-filled life.

At the same time, John made clear that the consequences of living in love went far beyond immediate acts of service or compassion: “This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus” (vs. 17). On the day of judgment, and eternally beyond, God’s children will commune openly with Him and not be ashamed, because of their communion with Him even now. John intended this encouragement to give believers confidence, even as they contended with the world.

John then made an even bolder statement about the

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Because they, through the Spirit, acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, believers can “know and rely on the love God has for us.” God’s love will fuel their own love. And because God Himself is love, they can express that reality through their love toward one another, and toward those around them: “Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them” (1 John 4:16).

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

In addition to the benefits of immediate acts of service or compassion, the love believers show to

others will give them “confidence on the day of judgment” (vs. 17). Because of their communion with God now, on the day of judgment, and eternally beyond, God’s children will commune openly with Him and not be ashamed.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

John made an even bolder statement about the believer’s future in 1 John 5:4: “Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). As Jesus abides in the Father and experiences total victory, so every one of God’s children can also experience victory over the world through Him. As they confidently live in faith, hope, and love, Jesus’ victory will increasingly become theirs.

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believer’s future: “everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). As Jesus abided in the Father and experienced total victory, so every believer could also experience victory over the world through Him. As they live like Christ here on earth, they could have confidence in the midst of this world, and beyond. “Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (vs. 5). This was no promise of a trouble-free life. And yet, as Jesus said while on earth—and as John recorded in his Gospel, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

So, the apostle affirmed that believers do indeed conquer the world through their faith in Christ. If the means for continued victory over the world is obedience to God’s commandments, then obedience to those commandments must be seen not as a heavy burden, but as the only means to a full and abundant life. As God’s children confidently lived in faith, hope, and love, Jesus’ victory would increasingly become theirs.

7. How, and why, can believers express the love of Christ, according to John?



The traditional site of the tomb of the apostle John is in the ruins of this ancient church in Ephesus.

8. In addition to benefiting others, what does love accomplish for the believer?

9. What else does John declare about the future of the believer, and why?

WINDOW ON THE WORD

The Spirit World

In Bible times, evil spirits were regarded as supernatural beings who possessed frightening power. And while these fallen angels (demons) remained under God’s control, both the Israelites and Christians understood they were able to exert their evil influence on earth.

In the period of the Old Testament, Satan was regarded as the great “tester” of humankind. He constantly sought grounds upon which to accuse and test God’s people (Job 1–2). Ironically, John turned the tables by commanding Christians to become testers of the spirits to determine their origin—that is, whether from the devil or the Holy Spirit—and the truthfulness of their messages (1 John 4:1). The apostle assured believers that by testing the spirits and by relying upon God’s power, their victory over the “tester” and his subordinates was assured.

3 Bible Application

Explore how we love like Jesus and live in Him.

Photocopy this page and give instructions to each group. Give the poster board, tape, pictures, and magazines to the group making the collage. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit and give them to the group using it.



Handout:

'God's Image and God's Idea'

Read the instructions on the handout sheet and share your answers with your group, and then the class.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Living in Perfect Love" and answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. God is everything good because God is perfect love. Jesus showed us that God is love and what it means to truly love. If we are thinking of others before ourselves, serving others, and valuing others more than ourselves, we are living in God's love. That's hard to do with those who hate us or abuse us or devalue us.

Love Collage

On the poster board, use photographs and pictures from the magazines to create a collage of examples of someone loving and giving like Jesus.

Quote Discussion

Discuss this quote from C.S. Lewis's book *Mere Christianity*. Is this statement true or false in your own experience: "Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. . . . If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less."

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Living in Perfect Love

Love gives, and God loved humanity so much, He gave His very best. He didn't think of Himself but gave us His most beloved gift—His only Son. A well-known description of God's love is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Because we want to be like Jesus, we love others. We want to love others as God loves us, perfectly and sacrificially. According to 1 Corinthians 13, God's love is the greatest gift of all to us. Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than it does for itself. Love is not prideful and always looks for the best in others. The apostle Paul explained that God's love is the motive for everything we do; if not, what we do really amounts to nothing in His eyes. If you give all your belongings to the poor and it's not driven by love, your giving is unprofitable. Finally, if you suffer until death for a worthy cause, but not for the sake of love, your great sacrifice is useless.

The apostle John said it is a simple equation: if you live in love, God lives in you. It's through Him and His Spirit that we love others. We do not naturally love others because unlike God, we're selfish and self-centered. In everyday lives, our needs and wants come first.

So how do we love like Jesus? Sometimes it's what we don't do that makes the difference. As Paul said, it's not doing things "out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Phil. 2:3-4). That's what Jesus did. That's what we should do.

- 10.** Describe what perfect love looks like.
- 11.** What signs do you see that you are living in His perfect love now?
- 12.** If you gave examples of how hard loving like Jesus can be, what would you say?

4 Life Response

Love more like Jesus.

Our ultimate goal should be to please God and do what He desires. We live in God when we love like Jesus. There is a confidence that comes when you know you are pleasing God.

Ask your students to read, "Love: Your Dwelling Place" and think how they would do the activity it describes. One way to think of accomplishing these love acts is to make the three people a family member, a friend, and a stranger. These love acts may include buying someone's groceries, paying

someone's bill, being a listening ear, or sending a card to a senior citizen who lives alone.

End the lesson by praising God for Jesus being present in our lives and supplying the grace we need to finish our journey. You may want to play a CD or watch an online video of songwriter Todd Dulaney's song "Psalm 18 (I Will Call on the Name)." This song celebrates Jesus and His majesty. If students are familiar with the song, invite them to sing along.

As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

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Love: Your Dwelling Place

Everyone needs a dwelling place. Everyone needs a place they can call home. When we love like God, we dwell in love. Love becomes the structure and foundation for our lives, and it becomes hard to do anything that is not done out of love. When we love like Jesus, love is our dwelling place.

► *Think of three people to spread some extra love to this next week such as a family member, a friend, and a stranger. Write a commitment here to do that:*

This week I will do these things that show love to others:

KEY VERSE

God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. —1 John 4:16b, KJV

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. —1 John 4:16b, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of August 23 through August 29

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** 1 Corinthians 15:16-23—From Death to Life in Christ.
- Tues.** Ephesians 3:14-21—Strengthening the Inner Being.
- Wed.** Ecclesiastes 12:9-14—Every Deed, Good or Evil, Judges.
- Thurs.** Romans 2:4b-11—God's Judgment of Human Behavior Impartial.
- Fri.** 2 Corinthians 4:1-6—Paul, Confident in the Ministry.
- Sat.** 2 Corinthians 4:7-15—Entering the Presence of Jesus.
- Sun.** 2 Corinthians 4:16—5:10—Live the Faith with Confidence.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10. Ask your students to think about this question: "What is your WHY?" In other words, what do they think is their (God-given) purpose for being here on earth?