

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Exude Confidence

Since this session focuses on the assurance of victory, it is paramount that you exude confidence in that victory through your interaction and communication with others. Resist the temptation to look at life with a “glass half empty” attitude. Use affirming and empowering words in your communication.

Express Joy

Remember, there is joy in victory. Take time during class to rejoice in the Lord. Let your joy be contagious and do the following: Share your testimony of the goodness of God in your life; Read verses about joy (Rom. 15:13, 12:12; Phil. 4:4; Psalm 16:11; Neh. 8:10); And let learners know how excited you are about leading the class.

LOOK BACK

Invite volunteers to share how they practiced the “Live It” applications (p. 27) this week. Point out that today’s session focuses on the assurance of victory in Christ. This is grounded in the assurance of the truth that salvation comes through Christ alone, which we studied last week. Invite learners to share how their assurance of the truth is impacting their Christian witness.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Bring to class enough black construction paper and white paper for every learner. Also have scissors and glue on hand. Direct them to make a checkered victory flag. (You may need to make one before class to show as a sample.)

GUIDE: Invite learners to identify the sport that uses a checkered flag (car racing). “How is it used in the sport?” Explain that it is used to indicate a race car has crossed the finished line to victory.

ASK: “What does it mean to be assured of victory as followers of Christ?”

EXPLAIN: Remind learners that Christians have victory over doubt, shame, and guilt. Explain, however, that today’s lesson focuses on the victory we have because Jesus conquered sin and death.

TRANSITION: Read the title and **The Point:** “**Because Jesus has won the victory, His people are victorious**” to transition into the session.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Victory Over Doubt

// 1 John 3:19-22

READ: Recruit a volunteer to read 1 John 3:19-22.

GUIDE: Draw an outline of a heart on a board, and ask learners what is meant by the word “heart” in these verses. Explain that the Bible is not referring to the beating physical organ in the center of our chests. Rather “heart” in the Bible refers to that intangible part of us that includes our mind, emotion, will, and most importantly, our spirit. Lead learners to discuss what it means to “reassure our hearts before him.” Explain that because of the assurance of forgiveness we have through Jesus, John exhorts us to not let our hearts condemn us.

ASK: “What does John mean? In what ways are we victorious because of Christ?”

OBJECT LESSON: Use the “Object Lesson” (p. 118) to help explain victory in Christ.

EXPLAIN: Point out that because we belong to the Truth who is Christ, we have the confidence of victory over doubts. Emphasize that our confidence in victory comes from the Spirit of Truth which indwells in our hearts.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins “Because of Christ ...” (p. 33) to discuss the condition by which we have victory.

GUIDE: Discuss the benefit of having confidence in our victory as people who are grounded in

THE POINT: BECAUSE JESUS HAS WON THE VICTORY, HIS PEOPLE ARE VICTORIOUS.

the truth of Jesus as the “anointed One.” Reread verse 22. Emphasize that the promise of verse 22 is conditional. Share with learners that God will respond to our petitions accordingly because we are keeping His commands.

ASK: Invite learners to answer the question on page 33: “Why is it important to remember the truths in these verses when we doubt?”

SUMMARIZE: Christians can live with confidence in their victory over sin because they belong to the Truth. We can overcome doubt and claim victory over guilt and shame in the name of Jesus.

Victory Through Consistency

// 1 John 3:23-24

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 1 John 3:23-24.

GUIDE: Reread the two commands given by John in verse 23. Discuss why John refers to believe in Jesus and love for one another as one command. Explain that our assurance of victory comes from our obedience to God’s command to love one another.

ASK: “Why are belief and love inseparable?”

READ: Invite a student to read the paragraph that begins “At first glance ...” (p. 33) and use the commentary for verse 23 (p. 119) to discuss this further.

ASK: “What does it mean to remain in Jesus?”

SHARE: Explain that victory comes when we remain in Jesus and He abides in us. Invite a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “John drew from ...” (p. 34).

ASK: “What are some of the practical things a believer can do to remain in Christ?”

DID YOU KNOW?: Invite a learner to read “Did You Know?” (p. 35) to discuss how consistency can make a difference in our remaining in Christ. Ask the question at the end of the feature.

EXPLAIN: Remind learners when people come to Christ in faith, the Lord comes to dwell in their hearts through His Holy Spirit (Rev. 3:20). Focus on the gift of the Holy Spirit that indwells in the

believer and how the Spirit gives us the confidence that we are more than conquerors when our faith is tested. Share with learners that “the proof of the Spirit’s presence breeds security in the heart of the believer.”

SUMMARIZE: Highlight again John’s focus on love and obedience as well as the pivotal role of the Spirit. Emphasize what it means to remain in Jesus.

Victory Over False Prophets

// 1 John 4:1-4

GUIDE: Direct learners to get into groups of three and discuss the difference between the Holy Spirit and other spirits. Call for volunteers to share the thoughts of their group. Remind them that there are many demonic spirits against which we continue to fight a spiritual war (Eph. 6:12).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 1 John 4:1-4.

ASK: “Why does John warn followers of Christ not to believe every spirit?”

EXPLAIN: Point out that Christians are exhorted to test the spirits to see if they are from God. John provides the litmus test for discerning if a spirit is from God in verse 2.

READ: Recruit a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins “The responsibility falls ...” (p. 34) to emphasize that the Holy Spirit indwells inside believers to affirm their faith in the Anointed One.

EXPLAIN: Share that any spirit which denies that Jesus was fully God and fully human is from the antichrist. There were many false teachers in John’s time which led people astray by rejecting the divinity of Christ. The Church of today is facing the same challenge that John faced in his time. Remind learners to reject any teacher or teaching that denies Jesus as the Second Person in the Trinity.

ASK: “What does it mean to know we are from God?”

EXPLAIN: Share with learners that since Christ has overcome the world, believers have the victory over the world and its evil spirits through Christ Jesus.

CLOSE THE SESSION

DIGGING DEEPER: Invite a volunteer to read the “Digging Deeper” feature (p. 33) to discuss David’s victories. Lead them to discuss the question at the end of the feature. Lead learners to sing the hymn: “Victory is mine.” Remind learners of John’s exhortation to test the spirits and make sure all teachings are aligned with the Spirit of Christ. Encourage learners to work through “Live It (p. 35) this week.

PRAY: Close the session in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to empower learners so they can live with confidence in the victory we have through Christ.

OBJECT LESSON

Download the picture of an Olympic athlete receiving a gold medal. Display the picture in front of the class.

GUIDE: Invite learners to describe what is taking place in the picture. Explain that Olympic athletes train arduously so they can win a prize. Yet no Olympic athlete is guaranteed a medal. However, Christians are guaranteed victory because Jesus has already won the victory over sin and death. We are guaranteed the gift of salvation because our faith is anchored in Christ Jesus.

ASK: “How should the guarantee of salvation define the way we live?”

EXPLAIN: Share with learners because they have the victory they should live with joy and exude spiritual confidence so the world can experience the power of their salvation.



COMMENTARY

1 JOHN 3:19-22

Verses 19-20. John began verse 19 by stating: “This is how we will know that we belong to the truth,” that is, how we know we are Christians. Scholars debate whether this is (more literally translated “in this” or “by this”) refers to verses 19-20 or verse 18. The actions listed in verse 18 suggest these two words relate better to that verse: “Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.” Other scholars believe these two words (and indeed all of vv. 19-20) serve as a conclusion for and an elaboration of verse 18.

The knowing mentioned in verse 19 leads us to “reassure our hearts before him.” The word rendered “reassure” is also translated “believe,” “persuade,” “trust,” and “be confident.” When we examine ourselves, often we are alarmed at the results. (1) We fall short of God’s standards. (2) We do not love others as we should. (3) We cannot claim the freedom from sin that is ours because we are in Christ. Thus, our hearts may condemn us. So how could John say we can have confidence before God? By saying, “God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things,” John explained his greatest reason for our reassurance. God still welcomes and forgives everyone who seeks His forgiveness and casts himself or herself on God’s mercy. Facts, not feelings, can quiet our condemning hearts.

Verses 21-22. When we lay aside self-condemnation on the basis of God’s great forgiveness, our hearts will no longer condemn us. Stated another way, “we have confidence before God.” The word rendered “confidence” means “boldness,” “frankness,” and “courage to speak or act freely.”

1 JOHN 3:23-24

Verse 23. Verse 22 reminds us of a prominent theme in this letter: obeying God’s commands.

In the next verse we find one commandment that is expressed with two distinct clauses: “believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he commanded us.” The two parts of God’s command, “believe” and “love” are inseparable, like the two sides of a coin. Doing one without doing the other is impossible. We can’t believe in the name (character, person) of Jesus without loving one another. Likewise, we can’t love one another (at least with God’s kind of love, agape love) without believing in Jesus. However, the Greek grammar of these two verbs (believe and love) indicate a difference in this command. “Believe” is in a tense that reflects its having happened at some point in the past; “love” is in a tense indicating this should be a continuous action and attitude in the present. The Christian life depends upon right belief and right conduct being combined; we cannot have one without the other. One depends upon the other. Our belief is not real unless action grows out of it; our actions are meaningless unless they grow out of right belief.

Verse 24. In this verse, John addressed those who were “keeping his commands.” Previously, John offered two proofs by which the new life in Christ is demonstrated: (1) regeneration, the new birth and its effects and (2) mutual indwelling of Christ and the believer. John described the Holy Spirit as the proof of indwelling. The Holy Spirit whose presence is the proof of Christ’s abiding in us manifests Himself in our life and conduct. As God, He convicts us of sin, inspires us to confess, empowers us to live righteously, and enables us to love everyone.

1 JOHN 4:1-4

Verse 1. Believers are to “test the spirits to see if they are from God.” Testing the spirits is necessary because there are two types of inspiration: from God and from Satan. Behind every prophet is either God or Satan. Both Jesus (Matt. 7:15 and other places) and Paul (Gal. 2:4) warned against false prophets or teachers. John stated one way to determine false prophets is what they confess about Christ.

Verse 2. For faith to be real it must be a witness to Jesus Christ. Jesus rejected those who called Him “Lord” and did not do His commands (Matt. 7:21-23). First John teaches that genuine Christianity is characterized by faith, love, and right living (righteousness); concentration on any one of these to the exclusion of the others is misleading. Christianity is not genuine if it is removed from its historical basis, the life of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Confession is more than the acknowledgment of these historical facts; it is commitment to Christ as Lord.

Verse 3. Although John stated the confession of Jesus positively in verse 2, in verse 3 he stated it negatively: “every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.” The authority behind the false teachers was the spirit of the antichrist. People with the spirit of antichrist either directly oppose Christ or substitute themselves for Christ. That spirit was already present when John wrote in the AD 90s. The purpose of the antichrist was to deny that Jesus has come in the flesh, to separate Christianity from its historical basis. However, as Christians we know we have victory because Jesus has conquered the world.

Verse 4. John stated that these Christians “have conquered them,” the false teachers. The tense of the verb John used here indicates a past completed action followed by a continuing result. The word “conquered” could also be rendered “overcome.” This action is both an “already” and a “not yet.” Already Christians have experienced some victory (in salvation and in becoming more like Christ). However, Christians have not yet experienced the total victory we will experience at our deaths or Christ’s return. God is the source of strength for Christians—only through being born of Him can we overcome, not by our own limited strength.