

Look Around: Look Up

1 John 5:1 through 1 John 5:5 (NKJV)

1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Series Introduction

1 Corinthians 2:9 (NKJV)

⁹But as it is written:

*“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

1 Corinthians 2:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

In the purest sense, we do not know what tomorrow holds for us. But God knows. Eyes have not seen and ears have not heard, but God has prepared some things to happen in our lives. God holds every day of this New Year in his hand. Since our God has already prepared a course for our lives, I believe we must work to position ourselves to receive his blessings.

To help us position ourselves to receive the fullness of God's blessings in this year, we have taken a look around. We began with Look Back where we learned how to evaluate the previous year in a godly way. We also took a Look Around where we learned how to view the world through the lens of our faith. We took a Look Down to see the obstacles that would cause us to stumble and fall in the New Year. Last week, we took a Look Ahead and learned how to plan with God. As we bring this series to a close, we will learn the most important skill we have to carry us through this year. We are going to Look Up. We will review our series, look up to overcome, look up to have victory, and conclude for the day.

Series Review

When we began this series we took a Look Back at our relationships with God. Honestly, for some of us, our lack of true relationship with God will be our obstacle moving forward.

1 John 1:1 through 1 John 1:4 (NKJV)

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—

Some of us are limited in our ability to overcome because we haven't positioned ourselves to hear the word. We haven't seen God at work in our lives. We haven't leaned in to get a closer look at what God was doing. We haven't handled the word by applying it to our lives. Without the word of life we will face greater difficulty overcoming the obstacles in our paths. That's because the blessing of looking back is each victory strengthens our witness, our fellowship, and our joy.

Sometimes we just need a little joy to carry us along the way.

1 John 2:15 through 1 John 2:17 (NKJV)

¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

In the second sermon of this series we took a Look Around at the world in which we live. John taught us how to filter the world by telling us all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. If we are going to overcome we have to free ourselves from the influence of the world. You see the world is in an eternal crisis. John says it is passing away. But he also encourages us to understand those who do the will of God will abide forever.

Sometimes to overcome, we need to be in the world but not of the world.

1 John 1:8 through 1 John 1:10 (NKJV)

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Fighting the world is trouble enough without us fighting with ourselves. God spoke through John in our third sermon to teach us how to Look Down and see the personal

stones that would trip us up. In that message we were encouraged to acknowledge our stones and take ownership of them. I own my peanut butter cookies. I acknowledge how they lure me away from time to time. We used cookies as an example but the truth is we all have those sins that easily beset us. Truthfully, some of us won't be able to overcome the world until we stop sabotaging our own lives.

But if we are faithful to enter into true fellowship with God and the saints, we will find the friction of accountability will smooth out the rough places in our lives and strengthen us to run this race with confidence.

Sometimes we need a little help from others to help us overcome in spite of ourselves.

1 John 3:1 through 1 John 3:3 (NKJV)

1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. **3** And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Last Sunday we took a Look Ahead to see God's plan for our lives. Our God knows the beginning from the end. He is able today to tell us about our tomorrow if we would only ask. And yet, he still gives man the gift of planning. He only asks that when we exercise the gift of planning that we include him in the process so his plan and my plan can become our plan. John taught us that it doesn't yet appear what we shall be but when God is revealed, we will be like him.

Sometimes it just takes a little vision of our future for us to know the blessings on the other side of our obstacles. When God is revealed we will all have hope to overcome.

Look Up to Overcome.

We shall overcome,
We shall overcome,
We shall overcome, some day.

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

We'll walk hand in hand,
We shall live in peace,

We shall all be free,
We are not afraid,

These are the words of a people who were determined to change their world. Our people understood the costs of freedom and were ready to strive everyday to overcome the obstacles that stood in their way. The men and women who struggled during the Civil Rights Movement didn't have conviction that they would overcome because of their abilities or their power to overthrow the political system. Somewhere on the inside of them, there was a realization that God would bring justice to every person who was oppressed.

There was something on the inside of Dr. King and Rosa Parks that propelled them to courageously overcome. It was something inside of them that caused them to stare down an insurmountable obstacle and still sing we shall overcome some day.

John says; whatever is born of God overcomes the world.

Every person who has accepted Jesus as Lord of their lives and Savior of their souls is a new creature. Old things have passed away and all things are made new. Every saved person has been given power to become the sons and daughters of God. When we make the decision to accept the gospel message, we are born again. By our new nature as children of God we are all overcomers.

"I'm an overcomer."

Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. We are already blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Death has lost its sting and the grave has no victory.

Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.

If our destiny is born of God we will overcome the world.

If our plans are born of God, we will overcome the world.

If our marriages are born of God, we will overcome the world.

If our career paths are born of God we will overcome the world.

If your breakthrough is born of God you will overcome the world.

If your struggles are born of God you will overcome the world.

If your trials are born of God you will overcome the world.

If your strength is born of God you will overcome the world.

If your joy is born of God, you will overcome the world.

John says whatever is born of God overcomes the world.

And then he tells us how we overcome. He says the victory that overcomes the world is our faith. Let's look up to have victory.

Look Up and have Victory.

Example: Offensive Coordinator

When we watch football games on television we are only seeing part of the activity that goes on during the game. Sure we see the men on the field run, jump, throw, catch, and tackle, but behind the scenes there are many people who never take the field who help a team to win. One such person is the coordinator in the booth at the top of the stadium.

When a quarterback leaves the field after a set of plays he will sometimes sit on the bench and get on the phone. Or you may see him looking at pieces of paper and discussing them with another player or coach. When he is on the phone he is talking with a person in the booth who has a better view of the field than he does. From the booth, the coordinator can see what the defense is doing and help the quarterback make better decisions on what to do with the ball. The booth will sometimes take pictures of the field during plays and send them to a printer on the field so the quarterback can look at the pictures and see for himself from a bird's eye view what the defense is doing.

When you are on the field playing the game, you are at eye level and can only see so much. When you are on the field playing the game, there isn't much time for you to figure out everything the opposition is doing. When you are on the field playing the game, you can't see every opportunity that is available to you.

When the enemy is trying to stop you from moving forward you've got to look up and walk by faith. God is in the booth. He can see a way to make the enemy your footstool. When the enemy is trying to bring you down with temptation, you've got to look up and walk by faith. With every temptation God can see a way of escape. When the enemy has knocked you out of the game and you are sitting on the sidelines, you need to look up and get on the prayer line. God is in the booth and he's able to answer prayer.

We can't see all of the obstacles from down here but God can. We can't see all of the enemy's devices but God can. We can't see the path ahead but God can. We can't always see the opportunities but God can.

When we look up, God can see what we can't see. God knows the way. God knows what to do. God knows where to turn. God knows what we need.

If we seek the Lord and hear his words, we can activate our faith. Once our faith is activated, the Holy Spirit is released to operate on our behalf. We must look up and by faith allow God to lead us through this year.

Most people look in order to walk. Then they stop walking when they stop looking. In the kingdom it works in reverse. We stop in order to look. Then when we stop looking we walk. We don't have to see to walk. We walk by faith and not by sight.

I know it looks foolish to other folks but God said the just would live by faith.

"Don't move until your eyes are fixed on God."

Stop looking at that broken marriage.
Stop looking at that dead end job.
Stop looking at those wayward children.
Stop looking at that pile of bills.
Stop looking at the mistakes of your past.
Stop looking at the people who talk about you.

We must have some faith inside of us that assures us that we shall overcome.
We need some faith inside of us that assures us that we have the victory.

Look up and look to Jesus who is the author and finisher of your faith.

When he was praying in the garden, Jesus was looking up. When they hung him on the cross, Jesus was looking up. When he said "Father forgive them for they know not what they do", Jesus was looking up. When he said "Father into thy hands I commit my spirit", Jesus was looking up. When they laid him in the tomb, Jesus was still looking up. When he went down into hell and preached to the captives, Jesus was looking up.

But early Sunday morning, Jesus looked up until he got up.

Early Sunday morning, he got up and declared all power in heaven and earth is given unto me.

Look to Jesus. He has power to save. He has power to heal. He has power to deliver. He has power to strengthen. He has power to restore. He has power to overcome. He has power to give us the victory! He's got all power!