Believe, Obey, Enjoy (1 John 5:1-12)

Leader guide · Believe, Obey, Enjoy · 1 John 5:1-12 · Dale Sutherland, November 22, 2026

In 1 John 5:1-12, John answers how we can know we have eternal life. Pastor Dale Sutherland summarized the passage in three words: believe, obey, enjoy. Help your group see that real belief is reliance on Jesus, that obedience proves belief rather than causing it, and that we are free to enjoy God.

Open

Who is someone in your life you could totally rely on? What made them so dependable?

Read 1 John 5:1-12 (ESV)

1 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. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God
and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his
commandments are not burdensome. 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And
this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one
who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 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. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. 9 If we
receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has
borne concerning his Son. 10 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 has borne
concerning his Son. 11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Observation

1. Read 1 John 5:1-12 aloud. What words does John repeat? What do they tell you about what he wants us to know?

> *Leader note:* Believe (1 John 5:1, 1 John 5:5, 1 John 5:10), testimony (1 John 5:6-11) and life (1 John 5:11-12). Pastor Dale summarized the passage as believe, obey, enjoy.

2. According to 1 John 5:6-8, what three things testify about Jesus?

> *Leader note:* The Spirit, the water and the blood. Pastor Dale explained the water as Jesus' baptism, where he took our place in doing what was right, and the blood as his death on the cross, where he took our place by dying for what was wrong.

Interpretation

3. Pastor Dale said, "It is not something you believe. It is someone you believe." How is relational belief different from agreeing with facts about Jesus?

> *Leader note:* See 1 John 5:1 and John 1:12. Belief is receiving a person. He described the steps of assent (it is true), consent (I embrace it) and reliance (I depend on Jesus alone).

4. Why does John say that whoever does not believe God has made him a liar (1 John 5:10)?

Leader note: God has given testimony about his Son. Believing in some version of God or of Jesus is not the same as believing God's testimony about Jesus.

5. John says God's commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). Why do they sometimes feel heavy? How does Matthew 11:28-30 change the picture?

Leader note: He compared it to a diet and to kids saying thank you. Jesus says, come to me: we are not living for the commands but for Christ. His commands are demanding, but his power is energizing.

6. How does obedience relate to belief? Does obeying make us Christians?

Leader note: Pastor Dale said obedience proves our belief; it doesn't cause it. Keeping his commandments (1 John 5:2-3) describes a lifestyle, not perfection.

Application

7. 1 John 5:4 says our faith overcomes the world. Where do you need to remember your status in Christ this week?

Leader note: He was clear this is not a promise that every problem goes away. We overcome through Jesus, even when work, family or the middle of the night says otherwise.

8. What would it look like for you to enjoy God this week, especially in the middle of uncertainty?

Leader note: See 1 John 5:11-12. The catechism says our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. He told of resting in Christ on a grounded plane: we can enjoy God in uncertainty because we are certain of Christ.

This week

Each day this week, name one worry and tell Jesus you are relying on him with it. Then thank him for one way he has given you life.

Pray

Thank Jesus that whoever has the Son has life. Ask him to help you believe him, to see his commands as good, and to enjoy him now and forever.

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