**1. Motivate**

What is your favorite comeback story?

* Ohio State over Michigan
* Texas over A&M

A video introduction is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_4eh99z9c> If you have no Wi-Fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/u5ax65pm>

* A&M over Texas
* Alabama over \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Ole Miss over \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Dallas Cowboys over Washington
* Hare and the Tortoise
* Truman over Dewey
* all the Rocky movies
* Star Wars movies
* Star Trek movies

**2. Transition**

Today we will look at *spiritual* victory

* Because Jesus has won the victory over sin, Satan, and death, His people are victorious.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Victory over Doubt

Listen for assurance.

1 John 3:19-22 (NIV) This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence 20 whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

What does this passage say about how believers can be assured they are right with God, even if they don’t *feel* right or doubt?

* we *can* know we belong to the truth
* we *can* set hour hearts at rest in God’s presence
* even if your heart condemns you, even if your conscience feels guilty
* God is greater than your heart
* He knows the reality of our relationship with him

Why is conscience not always a good gauge of one’s relationship with God?

* the makeup of the word conscience is *con* or *with* and *science* or *facts*
* your conscience is “with the facts”
* your conscience is formed much by your upbringing
* the “facts” it holds are based on culture, parenting, peer groups, etc.
* in a heathen culture, a person’s conscience may be quite different from Biblical teaching

Why would our hearts need reassurance?

* I might doubt my salvation because I find myself often failing, sinning
* Satan can hold that guilt over you and try to convince you of how evil and sinful you are
* God assures us that our faith in Him means we are forgiven for *all* our sins … past, present, and future
* when our conscience bothers us about something, we can go to God and confess (agree with Him it is sin), and by faith receive the assurance of forgiveness
* recall Bill Bright’s practice of “Spiritual Breathing”
  + breathe out confession (exhaling the impure)
  + breathe in God’s forgiveness (inhale the pure)
  + breathe in God’s strength to be victorious the next time we are tempted with that same issue

According to this passage, what will be the results of obedience to God and doing what pleases Him?

* our hearts do not condemn us
* we have confidence before God
* our prayers are answered

3.2 Remaining in Jesus

Listen for Jesus’ command.

1 John 3:23-24 (NIV) And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

What is the two-pronged commandment John states in verse 23?

* believe in the Name (the authority) of God’s Son, Jesus Christ
* believe in what Jesus accomplished in dying and being raised from death to life – that our old sin nature died with Him on the cross and our lives also are raised from spiritual death to spiritual life
* love one another as Jesus commanded

What does it mean to “believe in the *name* of Jesus Christ”?

* believe in the authority of the name
* receive by faith who Jesus is
* that He is God and he is man … both at the same time
* receive by faith what He has done
* to put your belief on Jesus in the sense of trusting in Him,
* relying on Him, and clinging to Jesus.
* It isn't about intellectual knowledge or understanding, it is about trust

How is it possible to keep these and any other commandment of God?

* God’s Holy Spirit lives within us
* we surrender to His authority in our lives
* we depend on Him for guidance and power to live a life that pleases God



This diagram illustrates how God dwells in the life of the believer in the person of the Holy Spirit. How do we dwell/live in Him as it also says in verse 24?

* when we place our trust in Jesus Christ for our salvation, God’s Holy Spirit comes and lives within our lives
* we trust God not only for our salvation from eternal death, we also place our lives in His hands for daily strength to live for Him, to serve Him
* Jesus talked about He was the Vine, and we are the branches … grafted in to His family, dwelling in Him

3.3 Victory in Jesus

Listen for who is conqueror.

1 John 4:1-4 (NIV) Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but 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. 4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

What did John instruct his readers to do?

* do not believe in every spirit
* test the spirits
* see if they are from God

John goes on to warn about *false prophets* in the world. Considering this warning along with previous studies on spirits, what do you think He means by the phrase “test the spirits”?

* could mean the general attitudes and spirit of thinking
* could mean evil spirits we studied about
* actually the Greek word in this passage for *spirit* is the same one used to describe evil spirits
* note that John proceeds directly *spirits* to the false prophets
* he believed that false prophets were influenced, even controlled by evil spirits

How can we distinguish truth from error in spiritual matters? How do we “test the spirits”?

* compare/contrast what they say with what scripture teaches
* if they make predictions, do they come true *always* … 100% accuracy
* Old Testament criteria was that if a prophet makes a prediction that does not come true, he is a *false prophet* (Deut. 18:22).
* test means, “to prove or to examine.”
* examine messages to see if they are from God.
* examine sources behind messages, don’t accept without questioning

According to this passage, what is the so called “litmus test” to recognize the Spirit of God?

* does the spirit acknowledge that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”
* if yes, the message is from God’s Holy Spirit
* if no, the message is from the spirit of the antichrist

Note some modern examples of groups who spread false teachings regarding the full humanity and full divinity of Jesus:

* Mormons, Latter Day Saints
* Jehovah’s Witnesses
* Islam
* Hinduism

Common characteristics of cults – false spirits … signified by math symbols

* + They *add*  to Scripture
* - The *subtract* from the deity of Christ
* × They *multiply* the importance of works
* ÷ They are *divisive*, causing divisions in families, among friends

What spirits should we be testing today? What false prophets are in the world today?

* biased news media

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

* statements by politicians
* people claiming to be prophets
* anyone who preaches, adheres to beliefs other than Scripture
* those who advocate policies and practices that are contrary to Scripture
* entertainment that advocates immoral, ungodly attitudes and activities

Application

Examine your life.

* Do you struggle with doubt?
* If so, answer these two questions:
  + Do you believe the truth of Christ as taught in the Scriptures?
  + Do you love other brothers and sisters in Christ?
* If you answered yes to both, then you have no reason to doubt. Christ remains in those who remain in Him.

Align your life.

* Make sure you are practicing the spiritual disciplines regularly.
* Practice such things as prayer, Bible study, Scripture memory, fasting, journaling, and serving.
* Each of these disciplines will help you walk with Christ.

Make a difference in someone’s life.

* Do you know someone in doubt?
* Take time this week to walk them through 1 John.
* Ask them questions such as: Do you desire to have fellowship with God? Are you sensitive to sin in your life? Do you believe what the Bible teaches about Christ? Do you have hatred in your heart toward others?

This just in from the yachting attaché working in the Tolé Quagualip consulate. He found the message below in a pile of ropes on his deck. The partial decoding key is shown above. Quickly, before the message dissolves from exposure to sea water, use the key to get as many letters as possible to make out the message. Surely your outreach pastor will want to know the contents of the secret message, don’t dawdle. Help and further intriguing activities are available at <https://tinyurl.com/u5ax65pm>

