

How YOU Can Be An Overcomer

Jesus Christ promised everlasting life in the Kingdom of God to "him who overcomes." But what does it mean to be an "overcomer"?

Jesus Christ offers everlasting life to all who believe in Him (John 3:16). But believing in Him entails far more than giving intellectual ascent to His existence or His redemptive work. Listen to what Jesus Himself says to the community of faith:

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7).

"He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death" (verse 11).

"To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it" (verse 17).

"To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations" He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery" just as I have received authority from the Father. I will also give him the morning star"(verses 2628).

"He who overcomes will...be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels" (Revelation 3:5).

"Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name" (verse 12).

All these wonderful promises — power over the nations, the right to eat from the tree of life, immunity from the second death, and so on — are all different ways of describing the divine blessedness the overcomer will experience. He will reign with Christ in His kingdom and ultimately inherit a world free of sin and disease. God Himself will dwell in their midst. *"They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain..."* (Revelation 21:3,4).

That is precisely the state of existence all of us are looking for!

Every week, we receive scores of letters from people asking us to pray for bodily healing, for deliverance from their heavy financial burdens, for the healing of broken hearts, for divine help in resolving relationship problems-and on it goes; the list is endless! How

wonderful it is to occasionally hear that God has indeed intervened and healed someone who has asked us to pray with them. We are uplifted when we learn that God has intervened and turned someone's tears of agony into tears of joy. But think of how it would be to live in a world where there is no pain, no mourning, no suffering—a world filled with the love of God!

There is coming such a world—and it's the promised inheritance to those who overcome! If you are to be a part of that world, then it is imperative that you know how to be an overcomer.

But first, before looking at the specific steps we can take to become successful overcomers, let's come to a clear understanding of what God wants us to overcome. To overcome means to conquer, to prevail over some enemy or opponent. But what, specifically, does God expect of us? What is it that we are to conquer?

Enemies of the Saints

The saints of the seven churches knew precisely what Christ was calling for when He pronounced His blessing upon "him who overcomes." In some cases, overcoming entailed renouncing heresy and seeing to it that heretics within the church were not permitted to continue spreading their damnable doctrines. In other cases, overcoming meant faithfully following Christ even under the pain of persecution and the threat of martyrdom. In still other cases, overcoming entailed repenting of personal sins and returning to a life of walking by faith. In each case, some enemy or potential enemy of the faith was involved.

The church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:17) had forsaken the love it had at first, thus increasing its risk of eventually falling into apostasy. To this church, the enemy was within. Overcoming entailed remembering and returning to the enthusiasm and good works that characterized this church in the early years of its existence.

The church of Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11) appears to have been relatively free of serious internal problems. Its major enemy was from the outside. The saints who made up this church faced persecution, with the very real possibility of martyrdom. To them, overcoming entailed pushing back the fear and enduring the pain.

The churches of Pergamum and Thyatira (Revelation 2:12-17) failed to excommunicate heretics whose damnable doctrines encouraged the saints to compromise their faith. To the members of these churches, overcoming meant driving out the heretics and repenting of the sins they had fallen into as a result of the heretics' teachings.

The church of Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6) had all but abandoned the self-sacrificing faith to which the true disciples of Christ are called. To the weary members of this church, overcoming meant waking from their spiritual slumber, recommitting themselves to Christ, and returning fully to a life of obedience to God.

The church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) is dubbed the faithful church because Christ has only good things to say about it. Yet, the reference to the "synagogue of Satan" (verse 9) and to Christ's "command to endure patiently" (verse 10) implies that this church had endured persecution in the past and may have to endure it again in the future. To the faithful members of this church, overcoming meant: "Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (verse 11).

The church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22) could neither quench spiritual thirst nor offer spiritual healing for its members or for those coming to her seeking fulfillment for their spiritual needs. To the fallen member of this church, overcoming meant recommitting his life to Jesus Christ, the Overcomer par excellence, who is always ready to restore the fallen brother or sister to full fellowship.

The watchword is **compromise**. In each case, believers had either already compromised some aspect of their faith or were facing situations wherein they would be tempted to compromise. Whether they would stand under the pressure of temptation depended upon the depth of their commitment.

The same is true today. While few in our modern western societies experience the kind of persecution and suffering the early Christians experienced, God still calls upon His people today to exercise the kind of commitment that enabled the early saints to endure brutal treatment rather than renounce the name of Jesus Christ.

In one sense, it is more difficult for Christians living in a time when religious faith is generally tolerated and religious freedom is emphasized. Without the pressure imposed by persecution, Christians have less resistance to overcome and are more likely to let the cares of this life become more important than their devotion to God. Prayer becomes a brief event that occurs just before falling to sleep each night. Bible study becomes virtually nonexistent. Church attendance falls off, becoming a once-in-a-while occasion. God takes a back seat to the pleasures and activities of life.

Conversely, when Christians are suffering for their faith or living under the threat of persecution, they pray much more often and much more fervently. They pour over their Bibles, seeking inspiration and encouragement for each day. They cry out to God—morning, noon, and night—for the strength to endure another day, looking to Him for spiritual and physical sustenance, thus developing and enhancing their faith. Their willingness to suffer and die rather than deny their Savior leads others to recognize the priceless treasures of true Christianity. In fact, history shows that Christianity thrives when persecution is intense.

Most of us face a very different enemy. Our enemy doesn't come to us with sword drawn and threats of physical harm if we don't renounce the faith, but is subtle. It is so subtle that we don't even think of it as an enemy. It is the tendency to fall into spiritual lethargy, and it is nourished by the lack of resistance in our lives.

An overcomer is not only one who resists the temptation to renounce his faith when heavy persecution comes, but is also one who, through honest and continuous introspection, is always aware of his own spiritual condition, and is diligent in putting sinful attitudes and behaviors out of his life.

Facing the enemy

The Lord Jesus Christ says, "*Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done*" (Revelation 22:12).

He is not saying that God is indebted to the person who does good works, as if He owes anyone salvation. God owes no one anything! Every good thing we have-including our talents and abilities-comes from Him, so He owes us nothing!

On the contrary, we owe Him! We owe Him our lives and everything we own. In fact, everything we own is His anyway. So we really can't give God anything that did not, in one way or another, come from Him.

Good works, then, are necessary. They are required. And we will be rewarded for doing them. But let's not make the mistake of thinking that the rewards Christ promises to us are in any way a wage we have earned.

Now, with that possible misunderstanding settled at the outset, let's see exactly what it is that God wants us to overcome.

In the Middle Ages, church leaders identified the characteristics of fallen man. They called them the "seven deadly sins," which include sloth, lust, anger, pride, envy, gluttony, and greed. These sins are overlapping, and several of them could be categorized together, under one heading. For example, gluttony and greed are forms of lust, so both may be placed under the one category labeled "lust." Generally speaking, sloth involves lust, or an inordinate desire to have something-perhaps a life free of the "stress" of fulfilling one's obligations-without paying the required price. Anger, too, often involves lust. Even pride is a form of lust, since it is by definition self-serving and self-centered.

John writes, "*For everything in the world-the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has done-comes not from the Father but from the world*" (1 John 2:16). Here, John recognizes that all sinful acts-"everything in the world"-emerges from lust and pride.

For our purposes, we will focus on pride, lust, and anger, since the "seven deadly sins" can be sufficiently covered under these categories.

Pride

If we were to be transformed into spirit beings, we would no longer experience the cravings and sensations associated with our physical appetites-and the lusts of the flesh

would disappear entirely. No doubt, the final conquest over the lusts of the flesh will only be realized when the mortal "natural body" is "raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44).

But the same cannot be said of pride. Pride is the opposite of humility, and is characterized by self-centeredness and self-exaltation. Unlike the lusts of the flesh, pride is entirely a matter of the heart! A person transformed into a spirit being would no longer have the sensations that motivate lust, but his pride would still be intact!

Pride is the sin of the devil. It is the state of mind that led to his rebellion against God. And it is a state of mind which, if not appropriately dealt with, can lead you to reject God's rule in much the same way Satan did.

Satan's unrestrained pride and resultant rebellion are reflected in the taunt the Jews were to take up against the ancient king of Babylon once they were delivered from the oppression they experienced under the king's unrighteous reign. Isaiah writes:

"How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:12-14)

This highly poetic description of the king of Babylon's fall from the height of his glory into utter ruin reflects Satan's rebellion and illustrates for us the danger of allowing pride to go unrestrained.

The destructive nature of pride is seen again in Ezekiel's lament concerning the king of Tyre. Notice how the "fall of Satan" motif is once again used in a poetic description of an ancient king's fall from glory to shame and destruction:

"You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God.... You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God.... You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.... Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor." (Ezekiel 28:12-17)

Don't underestimate the destructive power of pride. It has led many down the path of ruination, and lies at the very root of so many of the evils we see both in history and in today's world. This sin should be at the top of the overcomer's list of things to keep in check.

Lust

Just what is "lust"? The term simply means desire. All human beings have desires. Nothing could be more natural than the normal human desire for food and drink, warmth, love, companionship, and, yes, sexual pleasure.

Of themselves, these desires are not wrong. They become wrong-sin, if you will-only when they are misused.

To desire to share sexual pleasure with one's lawful spouse is perfectly normal and healthy, and is right in the sight of God. But to desire sexual pleasure with another person's spouse or anyone other than your own husband or wife is wrong. It is sin!

Unlawful desire-also known as covetousness, or more simply, lust-is definitely to be included on the overcomer's list of things to be conquered.

All deadly sins begin in the mind, and most (if not all) sinful acts involve lust. Surely most murders are directly related to some unlawful desire. Adultery and theft are definitely lust-related. Even lying is often the result of an unlawful desire.

It was lust-the desire for something that cannot be lawfully obtained-that led to man's fall from grace. When Eve, the first woman, "saw that the [forbidden] fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it" (Genesis 3:6).

This was the first human act of lust, or covetousness. Countless such acts have occurred since our first parents were driven from the Garden of Eden-and they are still occurring today. To be a successful overcomer, a person must come to terms with lust. He must be willing to see it in his own life, and he must be aware of how pervasive and powerful it is in this world.

Christ's requirements for you as an overcomer can never be fulfilled if you allow this area of your life to go unchecked.

Anger

It is natural to feel anger when you witness an injustice. In itself, anger is not sinful. But left unmanaged, it can become one of the deadliest forces of all.

All of us know of instances where anger led to acts of violence. In fact, all of us have experienced moments of anger, and most have allowed anger to lead us to say hurtful things to others, even to our loved ones. No doubt, some reading this booklet have let anger drive them to violent acts, perhaps even murder.

The Bible has much to say about anger.

Jesus says that "anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" (Matthew 5:22). Anger itself is not the problem, for on one occasion Jesus Himself "looked around at them in anger" (Mark 3:5). The problem arises when anger is not managed.

Paul, citing Psalm 4:4, writes, "*In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold*" (Ephesians 4:26,27). In other words, manage your anger. Don't let it lead you to sinful behavior. Take charge of your feelings, and don't let yourself become an instrument of the devil.

Paul urges fellow believers to "rid yourselves of...anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language" (Colossians 3:8), and says that the elder who oversees a church "must be blameless-not overbearing, not quick-tempered [KJV: not soon angry], not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain" (Titus 1:7).

Obviously, a person known to be "quick-tempered" and "violent" is not qualified to lead God's people. An effective leader "*must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined*" (verse 8). These terms describe a person who has learned to successfully manage his anger.

As stated above, the emotion we call anger is not necessarily a bad emotion. It is not, of itself, sinful. It becomes sinful only when it is not tempered by genuine love, the greatest virtue of all. The Christian ideal is set forth beautifully in Paul's highly poetic description of the love that never fails:

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:18)

It is unlikely that anyone reading this booklet will claim to have achieved such a love. For most, achieving such a love may seem too idealistic a goal. Yet, it should be apparent that those who make it their goal will achieve the most success in managing anger.

Anyone serious about joining Christ's army of overcomers cannot afford to overlook this vital area of Christian living.

What you can do

Now, having identified the problems, we are left with the question of what to do. What are the steps a person can take in changing his life for the better? What, precisely, can we do to become successful overcomers?

There are several important steps you should take if you are serious about joining Christ's army of overcomers. Let's look at each one of them.

Accept God's provisions

Unless you are a disciple of Jesus Christ—a true Christian, or one in whom the Spirit of God dwells—you cannot be a successful overcomer. Anyone from virtually any faith can make positive changes in his life, and should be commended for it. But the promises to the overcomers (Revelation 2 and 3) apply exclusively to the followers of Jesus Christ. Therefore, your first step is to either become a Christian by accepting God's provisions for salvation or make sure you are a true Christian.

Here's what you must do to be saved:

First, you must believe the gospel. The true gospel is made up of several essential truths, including the preexistence of Christ, the incarnation and virgin birth, the divinity and humanity of Christ, His death, resurrection, and ascension, and His future return to this earth as King and Judge.

Of course, simply believing that these things are true is not sufficient. That's a form of faith, but is not the faith that God requires. The faith through which a person is justified in the sight of God is an obedient and trusting faith. Such a faith produces genuine repentance, which is a yearning to turn from a life of disobedience to one of obedience. It involves a new respect for God's everlasting law, a deep-down desire to obey His commandments, and a true commitment to the way of life to which He calls you.

Saving faith means embracing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It means realizing that He died to pay the penalty for your sins, that He rose from the dead, and that He ascended to the heavenly sanctuary, where He serves as High Priest for all those who put their trust in Him. It means applying His sacrificial offering to your sinful life, and resolving to faithfully abide by His will for the rest of your life.

Finally, it means symbolically burying the old sinful self in the watery "grave" of baptism, and receiving the laying-on-of-hands for the reception of the Holy Spirit.

If you have done these things, then you are now ready to move on toward spiritual maturity through a life of overcoming.

Confess your sins

If you have repented of your sins and turned to God through Jesus Christ, then you have already confessed your sins, since repentance involves honestly confessing one's sins

before God. However, confession does not end with one's initial repentance and conversion. It is a lifelong process, and involves regularly examining one's own thoughts, motives, and actions. It means asking and honestly answering oneself such questions as: Why did I do that? What was my motive for saying that? Was I sincerely paying that person a compliment, or was I fishing for a compliment in return? Did I congratulate that person because I was truly happy to see him achieve his goal, or was I using the situation to draw attention to myself?

Often, people are not honest with themselves. We have the uncanny ability of hiding the truth about ourselves from ourselves. We are somehow able to convince ourselves that our motives are other than what they really are.

Through this process of self-deception, some are able to turn sins into virtues. Take, for example, the person who finds great delight in telling about someone else's faults, and who likes nothing more than a juicy new piece of gossip. When reprimanded for such behavior, the person covers his guilt by transforming his sin into a virtue. "I guess I'm just too honest for my own good," he says. Thus, the sin of slanderous gossip is transformed into the virtue of honesty.

According to Dr. M. Scott Peck, people deceive themselves about their own motives because they cannot tolerate the pain of facing their own guilt. "The problem is not a defect of conscience but the effort to deny the conscious its due," writes Dr. Peck. "We become evil by attempting to hide from ourselves. The wickedness of the evil is not committed directly, but indirectly as a part of this cover-up process. Evil originates not in the absence of guilt but in the effort to escape it" (p. 76, emphasis added).

Dr. Peck is right. Evil is the product of covering up our sins and refusing to face up to our guilt. To avoid becoming evil, then, a person must learn to be honest with himself. He must stop playing the cover-up game, and realize that self-deception is the first step toward becoming evil.

King David attempted to cover up his sins of murder and adultery, but when he was forced to face his guilt he fell down before God in heart-rending contrition. His prayer of repentance is recorded in Psalm 51: *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquities and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me"* (verses 13).

David confessed his sins and stopped denying his conscious its due. The bitter-sweet truth was that inner-cleansing and true freedom from guilt can only be obtained when there is "truth in the inner parts" (verse 6).

If you are serious about overcoming, you cannot ignore this vital principle. Examine yourself. Be honest about your motives. Confess your sins and faults, even the minor ones. And finally, lay your heart bare before God, in the privacy of your prayer closet,

and ask Him to cleanse you from all unrighteousness and give you the strength you need to put away those things in your life that would give rise to evil.

And He will.

Take charge of your thoughts

James says that "each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14,15).

Since sin begins with desire, and desire is formed in the mind, overcoming sin must begin in the mind. The overcomer must learn to take charge of his thoughts. When a temptation to commit sin arises, he should immediately put away the tempting thought and replace it with wholesome thoughts.

Paul exhorts, "Flee from sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). To the youthful Timothy he writes, "Flee the evil desires of youth" (2 Timothy 2:22). Warning of the dangers hidden in the "love of money," the apostle urges Timothy to "flee from all this" (1 Timothy 6:10,11).

To "flee" is to dart away as quickly as possible. It does not mean to stick around and ponder the situation; it means to leave the scene at once! This is how you can overcome your sins and bad habits.

If you have a problem with pornography or with harboring thoughts of sexual sin, you can overcome your problem by "fleeing" from the evil thought at the very instant it comes to mind. Simply put it out! Never allow such a thought to remain in your mind, not even for a moment. The longer it is there, the more likely you are to give in and commit sin.

Are you a smoker? You can quit smoking by using the same method. First, throw away your cigarettes. Destroy them completely. If you toss them into the dumpster or drop them into a garbage can, there's a good chance you will be tempted to go back later and dig them out. "Flee" from this temptation by destroying them completely. Flush them down the toilet if necessary, but by all means get rid of them in a way that will not allow you to retrieve them. Then, once you have disposed of your cigarettes, don't allow the thought of lighting-up to take root in your mind. Drive that thought out as soon as it enters, and immediately fill your mind with wholesome thoughts.

The "flee evil thoughts" principle may involve physically staying away from certain locations, or turning the television set off, or even parting company with certain acquaintances. As Paul states, "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

The principle is expounded again and again in Scripture. Here are some examples from the book of Proverbs: "Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way" (Proverbs 4:14,15). "For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil....Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house" (Proverbs 5:3,8).

Putting away an evil thought as soon as it enters the mind is only the first part of the principle. Remember, driving out one thought means replacing it with another. This leads us to the next principle for successful overcoming.

Develop your prayer life

The apostle Paul urges the Thessalonian believers to "pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). To the Colossian believers he writes, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful" (Colossians 4:2). The writer of the book of Hebrews encourages his readers to "approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

No question about it, the early disciples of Jesus Christ believed that prayer makes a tremendous difference in the lives of those striving to obey God. As James states, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). Prayer is a "powerful and effective" means of keeping evil thoughts from reentering the mind. As we noted in the above discussion, it is necessary not only to drive out an evil thought but to replace it with a good thought. Offering a silent prayer as soon as the evil thought is driven out is one way of assuring that the thought will not quickly return.

You may find that a pocket-size book of Psalms is helpful at such times. All you need to do is take out the book, turn to the first Psalm (or a selected Psalm), and read it, making it your prayer by applying its meaning to your life. (Of course, it's not a good idea to do this while you are driving.) Using the book of Psalms as a prayer guide is an excellent way of learning to pray.

Starting each day with prayer is also an important part of the overcomer's lifestyle. Here's how to do it: Arise a half-hour or so earlier each morning and devote that extra time to prayer. Be specific in talking to God about your weaknesses. If you tend to be quick-tempered, for example, don't let a morning go by without asking God to help you control your anger. If you have just quit smoking, ask God to give you the strength you need to make it through the day without a cigarette.

Take one day at a time. Each morning, ask God to give you the help you need for that one day. Then, before retiring for the evening, close the day with a prayer of thanksgiving for the help you received that day. Days become weeks, weeks become months, and months become years. To put years between the sins of the old, sinful self and the new person in Christ, you have no choice but to take one day at a time.

Resolve to go daily before the Throne of Grace.

Read the scriptures

Closely related to daily prayer is daily Scripture reading. Daily readings from the Word of God will help you replace those evil thoughts and temptations that come your way with good thoughts. By filling your mind with the things of God, you will have more helpful information to draw upon in forming good thoughts to combat the bad ones.

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

That's an awfully powerful weapon, and anyone serious about overcoming should learn to use it.

The apostle Paul certainly knew the value of spending time in the Scriptures. He says that "the holy Scriptures...are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

That's quite a powerful testimony for the value of Scripture, and its message is loud and clear: the overcomer cannot afford to neglect spending time in the Scriptures.

There are several ways you can use the Scriptures. You can use the Psalms and prayers of Scripture to help you in your prayers (see discussion above). You can also come to a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Scriptures by learning how to properly study them. (If you don't already have it, write or call for your free copy of our booklet, *How to Study Your Bible*.) And finally, you can benefit greatly by simply reading the Scriptures. (A schedule for daily Bible reading is in the booklet, *How to Study Your Bible*.)

As you read and study the Bible, look for instructions on things you should do. We often focus on the many "Thou shalt not" commandments, and perhaps neglect the many positive commands. Don't neglect the little helpful nuggets of truth that appear toward the end of the New Testament epistles, and look for ways you can begin to apply them in your life. (Be sure to request a free copy of our brochure entitled *True Discipleship: What It Means to Follow Jesus*.)

You can be an overcomer!

We have covered only the most basic principles of successful overcoming. Anyone who diligently puts these principles to work can expect to experience a lifetime of spiritual growth.

Never forget that those who turn to God in repentance, accepting His offer of salvation through Jesus Christ, can succeed in their spiritual journey-provided they keep their eyes fixed on Jesus.

The writer of the book of Hebrews encourages us to *"throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* (Hebrews 12:13).

The same epistle informs us that *"we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). For this reason, the epistle continues, we may *"approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need"* (verse 16).

The overcomers, says Jesus, will eat from the tree of life, sit with Him in His throne, reign with Him, and enjoy dwelling in His presence for eternity.

You can be an overcomer! The choice is yours!

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

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