

Grace Evangelical Free Church
Issues & Answers: Overcoming the World

As Christians, we are called to overcome the evil influence of the world. But the question is how? How exactly can we overcome the world? Thankfully the Bible, the living word of God, reveals how we can resist the strong pull of this world.

What is the world?

When talking about the world, I'm not referring to the earth we live on but the system and customs of the culture. In the Bible, the Greek word for world is "kosmos". One of its meanings is "the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ" (Thayer's Greek Definitions).

Jesus Christ prayed to God the Father: "**I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one**" (John 17:15). So, you see, as long as we are living in this world, we are exposed to its evil and terrible influence. According to John, "**For 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**" (1 John 2:16).

Thus, it is not surprising to know that the god of this world is Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4). He is also called the "**prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience**" (Ephesians 2:1-2). He even deceives the WHOLE world (Revelation 12:9). The world is one of the three deadliest enemies of Christians today. Here are Biblical ways to overcome it:

- Do not be conformed to the world (Romans 12:2)
"**And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**"

It is worth noting that the Greek word for conformed is "suschēmatisō": to fashion alike. It means emulate the appearance and pattern of a particular object, in this case, the culture. Conforming to the world means that you don't see the need to resist its influence. You just go with the flow and don't even exert the effort to avoid its evil ways. The Apostle Paul tells us that instead of conforming to the world, we must be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The term transformed here comes from the Greek word "Metamorphoo": to change, transform, and transfigure.

The Apostle Paul is implying that we must be transformed in the same way as a hideous, crawling caterpillar morphed into a beautiful, flying butterfly. That's the kind of spiritual transformation that we should have. A complete change. We aim to be more like God and less like us. We need to decrease and let God increase in and through our lives.

- Be faithful
For us to overcome the world, we must be faithful. We read in I John 5:4: "**For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.**"

We read in **Revelation 17:14**, that those who are with Jesus are the called, the chosen, and the faithful. It is not enough to be just called and chosen, but we must also be FAITHFUL. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Without faith, we won't be able to endure tribulation. And without faith, we will just simply stop following God's commandments, failing to do His will through our lives. So, be faithful until the end. Stay strong and be courageous because when all things are said and done, we all shall reign with God and Jesus Christ.

- Be of good cheer
There's no doubt: living in this messed up, chaotic, and violent world can be tough and sometimes we find ourselves depressed and beaten down. However, Jesus encourages us: **"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: BUT BE OF GOOD CHEER; I have overcome the world"** (John 16:33). Jesus is basically telling us that tribulations, problems, and trials are part of our Christian lives. Challenges are perfectly normal. They are to be expected. But Christ comforts and tells us to be of good cheer. Why? Because He has already OVERCAME the world.

Now, Christ is not merely telling or suggesting that we should be of good cheer. Actually, He is COMMANDING us to be joyful and courageous! He wants us to be filled with hope and joy knowing that God will one day intervene into human affairs. Jesus assured us that he has already overcome the world and that fact alone should make us cheerful. With this in mind, all we have to do is put our faith and trust in God that whatever happens in this life, we can be confident that He is in complete control and nothing is strong enough to separate us from His guiding love and mercy.

- Be a light of the world
We have enough and even an excess of darkness in this world. It is the right time that we should serve as lights. The world thrives in darkness, but Christians live in the light. Christ instructed us: **"You are the light of the world... LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"** (Matthew 5:14, 16). If we want to overcome the world, our godly examples make a huge difference. Being a light means that we should represent God properly. Our light should shine to others in such a way that they see God in us. Our living examples should lead people to God and invite...compel them into worshipping Him and Him alone.
- Obtain godly wisdom
We must seek godly wisdom in order to overcome the world. We read in **1 Corinthians 3:18-19**: **"Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."**

It should be noted that God is a friend of truth on all subjects. These verses do not suggest that we stop learning about astronomy, medicine, chemistry, and other forms of science. But godly wisdom should be the foremost of our pursuit. We can obtain

additional essential knowledge but not in the expense of forsaking godly wisdom – the ability to know what is right and wrong factually/morally. As **2 Timothy 3:7** observes, without God educated people are, “**always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth,**” that is the essence of truth, the Creator and Sustainer of all there is. Godly wisdom reveals God’s will and purpose, a wisdom beneficial in all aspects of our lives.

- Deny ungodliness

Titus 2:12 tells that we must deny ungodliness. Ungodliness is to actively oppose God; a determined lack of reverence toward God. It is neglecting what God commands and disregarding anything that has to do with one’s Christian duty. In short, it is wickedness: Jude mentions the “**ungodly acts**” and “**defiant words**” that the ungodly speak against God (**1:15**).” James writes: “**Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls**” (**James 1:21**). Denying ungodliness means that we purpose to live a godly life in word and deed.

- Deny worldly lusts

Titus 2:12 goes on to say that we must also deny worldly lusts. Worldly lusts pertain to inappropriate and ungodly desires relating to this life. It includes the improper desire for wealth, pleasure, sensual indulgence, and honor. It is true that this world can offer a lot of things that will satisfy our cravings. However, we still find ourselves empty if we try to fill the spiritual hole in us with worldly things. We need to remember that it is only God who can satisfy our deepest desires. He knows what is good for each individually.

- Focus on God’s coming Kingdom

Titus 2:12-13 reads: “**Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.**”

We must realize that this world is just temporary. Jesus is coming for the second time, not as a helpless baby, but a conquering KING! He will gather all His saints and will make them priests and kings (**Revelation 5:10**). There are a lot of things in this world that can detract our focus from God’s kingdom. When that happens, we need to step back and consider the things that are more important in our lives. God’s kingdom is coming, and that’s as sure as the rising of the sun. We can have the full confidence that Jesus will return and will overcome this world! Desire, seek and live accordingly.

- Keep yourself unspotted from the world

We read: “**Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world**” (**James 1:27**).

We are called to live a holy life – a consecrated and separated life dedicated for a special purpose. We must keep our garment of righteousness unspotted from the world. We must strive to get rid of anything that may hinder us from being in the kingdom of God.

- Do not be a friend of the world

We read: “**You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God**” (James 4:4).

The world is hostile toward God. They don’t want to be corrected. They don’t like God leading their lives. Do you want to be part of that group? For you to be a friend of God, you must not be a friend to the world. You only get one choice, and you can’t have both. Would you rather please God or the culture? Will you put more importance on what people think than what God thinks? If we seek the approval of the world at the expense of compromising our faith, then we are becoming a friend of the world.

Be sure that you know which side you are on. Moreover, we are also commanded not to love the world. We read: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15). The point here is that we must not make this world the object of our chief affection. You can’t love God and love the world at the same time. God wants our faithfulness. He doesn’t want us to spiritually fornicate or commit adultery with this evil world.

- Don’t return to the world

God called us out of this world. He personally hand-picked us and has given us the chance to be part of His future kingdom here on earth. After accepting God’s calling, you must stay on course. We must not be like Lot’s wife who looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. We must also learn the lesson from the statement of Christ when He said, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

Notice what the Apostle Peter wrote: For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning (II Peter 2:20).

- Believe our Redeemer and Savior

We read: “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God” (I John 5:5)? To overcome the world, we need to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Why? Because there’s no other way, we can be saved. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Believing Jesus is not just about knowing His name, but you need to know who exactly He is, His mission, and teachings. Accepting Jesus is not enough, but it must be accompanied with actions.

Final words

These are just some of the best ways for you to overcome the world and reign victorious. Most importantly, we need to bear in mind that we can’t do it alone. We need God’s help. As long as we are on the side of God, we will never lose. We can and we will defeat this present evil world. For nothing is impossible with God. So, take heart and stay faithful. Let us all strive in defeating the world and ultimately be part of God’s coming kingdom!