

Living as an Overcomer – Tony Evans
Rejoicing in Growth and Abundance - Chapter 12

“In this chapter, I share some practical applications for not only pursuing godliness but for continuing to grow in godliness.”

1. John 10:10 says, “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*” (NASB) Evans says that the path to an abundant life goes through Jesus. The abundant life is not one filled with money and fame but one of spiritual wealth.
2. Remember Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21, 19 “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” The abundant life is contentment with your life.
3. If you look at the common way that rich people think, “I have more but I want more”. At what point do they have enough. I believe that joy is about being more than content regardless of your circumstances, the same thing applies to an abundant life. Hebrews 13:5 says, “*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*”
4. Many of you remember the TV show, the *Beverly Hillbillies*. They were dirt poor and then struck it rich. Throughout the shows they were content with their previous lifestyle but through the pressures of the world and Mr. Drysdale, they were being pushed be more like the world.
5. When we accepted Jesus, He has taken us from being spiritually poor to a place of spiritual richness. A few weeks ago, we read Revelation 3:21, it says, “*To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.*” How much richer could we be than to sit at the right hand of God with Jesus.
6. James 1:9-10 says, “*9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower.*” Worldly richness is temporary but spiritual wealth is eternal.

“The riches of this world will certainly fade away — but James says that the rich man also will fade away. If we put our life and our identity into things that fade away, we will fade away also. How much better to put our life and our identity into things that will never fade! If a man is only

rich in this world, when he dies, he *leaves* his riches. But if a man is rich before God, when he dies, he *goes to* his riches.” (Guzik)

7. We have said a number of times in this study that God is trying to transform us into the image of Jesus. He is our goal and our measuring stick. As humans we can never come close to reaching this goal. We have obstacles in our path in the form of our old sin nature. Too often we allow our goals to align with the world’s goal.
8. Evans says that not only are we suppose to pursue godliness, we are to grow in godliness. Our godliness can never be as good as Jesus but we have to move His direction. He will give us some practical applications of pursuing and growing in godliness.

DOING THE WORK

9. The power required to grow in godliness and attain godliness can only come from God. We must tap into the power that comes from a personal relationship with God through Jesus and studying God’s Word. Attending church on Sunday is a good first step but we can never reach the godliness that God wants for us without more.
10. Read 1 Timothy 4:4-10. Guzik says, “The word godliness comes from the old English word *Godlikeness*; it means to have the character and attitude of God. This was a worthy goal, much more worthy than the potential attainments of physical exercise.” The “But” is that it requires work. In verses 7 and 8, Paul says “*discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness*”. (NASB) The Greek word that Paul used for ‘discipline’ is ‘gymnasia’. Sound familiar, some translations say ‘train’ or ‘exercise’.
11. Anything worth having is worth working for. Paul says “*for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*” If you do physical exercise and then stop and don’t continue, I was always told that you lose what you had gained in two weeks. It is temporary. Growth in godliness is eternal. Godliness impacts how we think and act in our daily lives now, especially if we make it our lifestyle.
12. Galatians 5:17-18 tells us, “*17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*” Being under the Spirit is like godliness. If you are living and growing in godliness then you are living by the Spirit and the things of the Law are meaningless.

13. If we are to ever reach our goal of being like Jesus, then we have to grow in godliness. Our sin nature tries to keep us grounded in the world but our godliness keeps us focused on God. Without living and growing in godliness we will not be able to grow as Christians.

Evans says there are four specific ways to WORK.

14. **1. Exercise your soul.** Just like your body, your soul can get out of shape. When it is out of shape, your soul cannot handle the evil things that the world throws at you. Consider the election, there was so much propaganda regarding the issues and candidates that it stressed me. Evans would say that my soul was out of shape because I let it bother me too much. It is similar to huffing and puffing as I take my out of shape body up stairs.

“If your soul is out of shape because ungodliness rules your thoughts, words, and actions, you need more than an intention to overcome. You need more than a resolution to live as an overcomer. You need more than a desire to grow spiritually. If spiritual laziness overrules decisions and discipline that develop your spiritual muscles, then you will not be positioned to overcome difficulties as a way of life. You need more than a good intention to overcome. You need to put in the work.”
(Evans)

15. **2. Deny Worldliness.** In #7 above, we read verses from 1 Timothy 4. Verse 7 says “*have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women*” (NASB) and the NLT calls them “*godless ideas and old wives’ tale*”. Paul is saying avoid old wives tales and anything that has no spiritual or Biblical foundation. As I said above, I allowed myself to get caught up in the election propaganda that had no Biblical or truthful foundation.

16. Read 1 Timothy 4:1-3. Paul gives us two examples of things that fit into this category: “*They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods.*” (NLT) As for being married, they assumed since Paul was not married then that was the correct way to live. The Jews were accustomed to having limitations put on what they could and could not eat in the Law. But in both cases, people were working on false information. So Paul sets them straight.

17. Paul says this information is from “*deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons*”. We cannot mix the world’s view in with God’s view and still be on the right path to being an overcomer.

“Life transformation takes place when you practice the spiritual disciplines. You develop your ability to overcome when you base your perspective on God’s kingdom worldview. You already possess all you need to live in and grow in godliness, but you need to refrain from mixing it with worldly ways of thought.” (Evans)

18. 3. Live in Community. Several times in this study I have quoted the adage, “A shared joy is a double joy; a shared sorrow is half a sorrow.” Evans says that you need a partner to hold you accountable and keep you on course. It doesn’t have to be a spouse but it can be. When I used to workout, I had a workout buddy. When I would think about skipping, I would tell myself “Dave is going to be there. I can’t let him down.” We have a whole church of partners willing to help us. The Christian life is not a solitary one, it is designed as a community. Consider Paul always traveled with someone or in a group.
19. 4. Develop Gratitude. Remember we started this chapter with John 10:10 which says, “*I (Jesus) came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*”. The abundant life starts with godliness. It impacts every aspect of your life.
20. 1 Timothy 4:4-5 says, “*4 Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. 5 For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer.*” When God created, He saw that it was good. He didn’t leave anything out. When we receive it, we are to receive it with gratitude.
21. James 1:17 tells us that “*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father*”. Having just come through Thanksgiving, we should be aware of our blessings from God and hopefully you showed God your gratitude for all of them. You need to thank Him constantly and not once a year. King David was in awe of God’s caring and he said, “Who am I that you are mindful of me.”
22. When we say grace, we thank God for His providing us the food on the table, what about everything else. Do you count your blessings? We are a truly blessed people. Look at those crossing our border, trying to get a part of what God has blessed us with by just putting us in this country. Never forget to thank Him for everything.

Abiding in Jesus

23. Jesus said in John 15:7-9, “*7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.*” (NASB) More than just exist in Jesus’ love, we are to abide.
24. Evans calls Jesus the “dispenser of godliness”. The closer you are to Jesus, the more godliness you have. The closer your relationship with Him, the more important WWJD becomes. The less godly that you are, the less important Jesus is to you. Godliness requires you to tap into the power of Jesus to overcome your old self.

25. Jesus' presence in your life becomes more and more evident to others. Jesus' presence will impact everything that you say and do. It changes what is important to you.

Evans says, "Practicing the presence of Jesus means bringing Jesus in on everything you do, whether in your thoughts, words or actions. It also includes showing a heart of gratitude throughout your day as you witness and identify the many provisions Jesus has given you. Whether it is a provision of wisdom to know what to say and do at the right time, or the provision of safety or even a material provision, Jesus is the source of all good things in your life. You sanctify these things through the Word of God and prayer."

26. Consider if you wanted to lose weight. If you only controlled your eating on Tuesday and ate what you want the rest of the week, how would your weight loss go? Or if you were an athlete and only practiced once a week? That is what you are doing, if you only come to church on Sunday.

27. Something Dr. David Jeremiah said still sticks in my mind. He said that some people look at God as a vending machine God. They come to church looking for a blessing or an answer to a prayer. They may want God to get them out of their current problem. They don't come wanting a relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ but that is where the power is.

28. Evans says that you can tell when you are growing in godliness in yourself or those around you. You no longer allow the "doctrine of demons" to dominate your life. Things that didn't bother you very much before, now make you want to turn the channel.

29. In the book "My Heart Christ's Home", as Jesus moves into your life or abides in you, there are some rooms that are easy to allow Jesus to see. You give Him free access to them. You try to control what He sees in your life. When it comes to your heart, you want to put locks on the door so He doesn't see what you have hidden. Abiding is defined as "To abide is to "dwell," "remain," "be present," and to "be held and kept." If Jesus abides in you, then He is more than a casual visitor, He must have full access.

30. Earlier in this chapter, I said that you have to make godliness your lifestyle. That is what Jesus wants if He moves in to abide with you. It is not something that you do when you think about it. You have to become so comfortable with godliness that it happens without thought.

31. In the beginning you will have to work at it. That old sin nature gets in your way but as you work at it, godliness will become second nature to you. You will have to work at it

every day, all day long. Godliness grows as you develop a deeper personal relationship with Jesus.

32. In Matthew 5:21-45, Jesus covers thoughts that we may have and points out how they are equivalent to being subject to judgment under one of the ten commandments. For instance, Jesus equates hatred to murder. If you fully have Jesus abiding in you and you work at it, you won't have to worry about the 10 commandments. Jesus' influence on you leads you in the right way and you allow Him to lead.

“God's got a gym membership for you. And, by the way, it's open enrollment. Anyone who wants to get in can do so by virtue of your relationship with Jesus Christ. He has already paid the price. With this membership and use of it comes the power of God's Word to operate in your life through prayer and gratitude as you practice the presence of Christ. While godliness grows within you, godlessness will have to shrink and fall away. You can't have both. The overcomer's life is a life of spiritual discipline revealed by godliness in all you think, say, and do. But the good part is that it's not entirely up to you. You have help.” (Evans)

33. He will satisfy you with good things as you tap into His spiritual power for you to live as an overcomer in Christ, striving for godliness and the abundant life along the way, and be rewarded for it in eternity.

Conclusion: From Victim to Victor

34. Evans uses the example of professional wrestling to describe our victory in Jesus. The end has already been predetermined and life is just a matter how we get to the victory. In professional wrestling, the victor ended up beaten and bruised but he still knew going in that he was going to win. We too, will have trial and trouble and are beaten and bruised by Satan and the world but we can know in advance that with Jesus on our side, we will be victorious.
35. 1 John 4:4 tells us, *“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.”* If you don't believe it, skip to the end of the book of Revelation. It tells us so. We win because Jesus wins. God has plans for us that will be amazing and all we have to do is hold fast to Jesus.
36. Right now, Satan appears to be winning but this is just temporary. Remember what Jesus said in John 16:33, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* His victory was not temporary, it is eternal and as overcomers we can claim that eternal victory too.