

**Living Life to the Fullest**  
**Part XXXIV**  
**If I Could Start Again**  
1 John 5:1-7

Few entertainers have been able, through music, to transcend the lines that divide cultures and generations than the late Johnny Cash. His music seemed to be an extension of himself as it addressed the reality of facing the uncertainty of a world of few absolutes and no guarantees. Perhaps none of his works describe the emptiness and hopelessness of a culture void of the centrality of Christ than a recording completed shortly before his death. This emptiness was only compounded by the futile wish: "If I could start again a million miles away I would keep myself, I would find a way," the last line in his rendition of Hurt.

Through a life filled with disappointments, the writer captures the breadth of emotions with which so many can identify. Everything from the numb feelings produced by unmet expectations in relationships and accomplishment, to the futile attempts to escape the memories. There is the constant reminder of being lost, a causality of life without purpose in a world with only superficial promises that never work out.

We eventually see images of ourselves limited to only letting others down and bringing pain upon them. The songwriter, and too often we the singers, know the reality of our own deception, and we condition ourselves to simply learn to live with it, left only with the vain wish to "start again." So is the description of the postmodern man in a post-Christian world, only hoping for something that will never be.

It is this world, this culture, and this generation that are most susceptible to the hope found only in Jesus Christ. Christ and His Word are saturated not only with anticipation but with the present reality of purpose, worth, and contagious confidence only God can provide. The contrast between the emptiness of the world and the fullness of God has never been greater. The failure to overcome the challenges of our culture has never been more obvious. The promise of Christ, who came to bring not only life but life to the fullest, has never been more inviting and needed.

The Apostle John could write no more clearly or with greater conviction of the promise from God than, "he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God," and is "born of God overcomes the world." What an alternative to those who are overcome by the world and left only with an empty wish, "If I could start again."

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**LIFE RESPONSE:**

1. This week **MEMORIZE** and **MEDITATE** on Romans 8:37, "*But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.*"
2. Personal/family reflection
  - (a) Compare Romans 8:31-39; 1 John 5: 1-7; 1 Peter 2:18-23; John 16:33
  - (b) What are a few of the personal *conflicts, battles, relationships* that some times overwhelm you?
  - (c) What do you know about Christ and His promises that will give us encouragement (make a list from Scripture).
  - (d) How can we encourage each other to be overcomers rather than be overcome.
3. Define the place of Scripture and Holy Spirit in your life as you face those overwhelming circumstances.
  - (a) Do you have some circumstances which are insurmountable?
  - (b) In what way or ways do other believers encourage or discourage you in facing these challenges?
4. How do you see *your* role or responsibility to encourage *others*? Do you use Scripture? Personal prayer for Holy Spirit to guide? What is the most effective steps you can take to encourage another?

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Part XXXIV

## If I Could Start Again

1 John 5:1-7

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*“A mind resolutely determined to be absolutely open is often, in actuality, quite closed.”* – Allen Bloom 1930-1960

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### THE PROMISE TO OVERCOME THE WORLD

What the passage is not saying.

What the passage **is** saying.

### THE POSITION FOR OVERCOMING THE WORLD

THE THEOLOGY

“Abide in Him”

THE TRAINING

“He Abides in Us”

### THE PRACTICE OF OVERCOMING THE WORLD

GENERAL

SPECIFIC