

H Y M N S T U D Y

SONGS OF FAITH

Teacher's Guide

*13 lessons to help your
congregation sing more
effectively.*

*Rick Brown
Jason Miller*

Hymn Study:
Songs of Faith
Teacher's Guide

By
Rick Brown and Jason Miller

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Published by
Spiritbuilding Publishers
9700 Ferry Road, Waynesville, OH 45068

(800) 282-4901

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ISBN: 978-1-955285-39-1

Printed in the USA by D & E Printing, Brownsburg, IN
dandeprinting.com

Spiritbuilding
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Information for Teachers

Thank you for using this material to help Christians better understand some of the songs we sing. This material was purposefully prepared such that both the teachers and students may explore each hymn in a way that allows the freedom to make the study and songs personal. The desire is that those involved in the study will come to know more about what each hymn has to teach, as well as to develop a greater sense of faith and encouragement and edification when singing and praising God. With that in mind, each lesson can be developed to suit the needs and desires of your church family and each teacher's goal. To jump start the process for those leading the discussions, this edition contains answers to the questions that will at least initiate productive conversations. We hope this information is helpful and inspires you to put together studies that will benefit you and your students for years to come—each time you sing these hymns.

In Christian love,
Rick Brown & Jason Miller

Lesson One:

Faith Is the Victory

“Faith Is the Victory” is a powerful song that encourages both the singer and the hearer, as we speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The lyrics were written in 1891 by John Henry Yates. The music was composed by Ira David Sankey, also in 1891.

The song challenges Christians to rise to our calling... to rise up and overcome through faith. It speaks of being brave and strong as worldly challenges and battles are met head on in Jesus. It declares God’s love and the power of His Word.

It reminds the Christian of the wonderful blessings available in Christ, and the importance of taking up the whole armor of God as we charge forward through this life with our sights set on the life to come.

The chorus cannot be sung without enthusiasm and hope as Christians join voices and declare:

*“Faith is the victory!
Faith is the victory!
Oh, glorious victory,
That overcomes the world.”*

Encamped along the hills of light,
Ye Christian soldiers, rise,
And press the battle ere the night
Shall veil the glowing skies.
Against the foe in vales below
Let all our strength be hurled;
Faith is the victory, we know,
That overcomes the world.
Chorus

His banner over us is love,
 Our sword the Word of God;
 We tread the road the saints above
 With shouts of triumph trod.
 By faith, they like a whirlwind's breath,
 Swept on o'er every field;
 The faith by which they conquered death
 Is still our shining shield.

Chorus

On every hand the foe we find
 Drawn up in dread array;
 Let tents of ease be left behind,
 And onward to the fray.
 Salvation's helmet on each head,
 With truth all girt about,
 The earth shall tremble 'neath our tread,
 And echo with our shout.

Chorus

Teacher Notes

1. ***Make note of any information, anecdotal, historical, or biographical, concerning this song or its author.***
 - Author: John Henry Yates (1837–1900). Assisted his family in the shoe business. Encouraged by his mother to write poetry, which was soon published in newspapers and magazines. He served as a preacher for the Methodist church. Later in life, he began working with the Baptist church.
2. ***What is (are) the challenge(s) of verse 1? What passages of Scripture come to mind that might help meet the challenges?***
 - “Rise”—indicates that we need to stand up and fight. Physical soldiers battle in certain ways, as do Christian battles towards sin and Satan. Sometimes the

battle comes to us; other times, we must go to it (sin/temptation; fighting error). Physical soldiers must be strong and ready for fighting. As Christians, we must strengthen ourselves and be ready for conflict.

- Sin—lust of flesh, lust of eyes, pride of life (1 John 2:15–17; Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23)
- The love of this world—Luke 8:14; Matthew 6:24; James 4:4
This challenges us to rise up for Christ, prepared to battle against evil and for the souls of men. It challenges us to take advantage of whatever time we must fight for right, to be faithful and evangelistic while there is still time. Don't waste the time we have before darkness falls.
- 1 John 5:4—our faith helps us overcome the world. It helps us to resist temptations, error, worldly entanglements. Our faith helps us “overcome”—this is the idea of victory.
- Matthew 6:25–34—worry and trusting in God
- Psalm 56:3–4—trust in God
- Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 27:1—do not fear
- 1 Peter 5:8–9—prepare for the Devil
- John 9:1–5—Jesus is the light of the world
- 2 Peter 1:5–11—prepare diligently to prevent stumbling and to make our call and election sure.
- Ephesians 6:11–18—put on the whole armor of God, emphasized again in question 5.

3. *What battles do Christians face today?*

- Worry, sin, temptations, family problems, failures, success, pride, worldliness, lack of faith, apathy, economics, political influences, peer pressure.

4. *What are banners used for and how does this relate to the words in this song?*

- Old Testament times—Numbers 2:2 (families/tribes), Numbers 10 (divisions of soldiers in battle), Song of Solomon 2:4 (his love for this woman).
- Banners or flags were used to display victory at the end of a battle (Exodus 17, “the Lord is my banner”).
- By holding up the royal banner, we are declaring that God is our flag; hold it up and we win the battle.

5. *What tools are referenced in vv. 2–3 to help us in the battle to overcome the world? What Bible passages come to mind?*

- Sword, shield, helmet, banner, shout. Equipment in sports is used whether apparent or not. We use the armor of God at times when we don't anticipate the need.
- Ephesians 6:10–20
- We have the love of God, the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Truth, righteousness, preparation of the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, word of God and prayer. Persevere with these tools, these weapons.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11—breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of hope and salvation.

6. *How do we prepare and equip ourselves for battle with Satan? What weapons do we use?*

- Realize that we are in a battle. Self-examination—determine what are our strengths and weaknesses. Ask for help from God, from brethren. Be prayerful. Grow spiritually—don't be a spiritual child your whole life. Make the commitment to grow. Be constantly on guard. Study (often)—be in the word, Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 3:15.
- The whole armor of God—Ephesians 6:10–18
- Hebrews 4:12

7. *What warnings are given in v. 3?*

- The enemy (foe) is always around (1 Peter 5:8).
- He attacks when we are isolated or alone (Matthew 4).
- Satan is a liar. He deceives. He knows scriptures and lies with the truth, John 8:44; 2 John 7–8.
- Being faithful does not mean that our lives will be easy and free of challenges. We must avoid being complacent—Revelation 3:14–19. We must keep in mind that, just as the enemies of God are ready for battle, so must we be ready. We must be ready to use the word of God, to be faithful in our service and to patiently endure what comes our way.

8. *Should the Christian be worried about these warnings? Why or why not?*

- Satan is a real enemy. He is ready to attack. He will lose in the end. If Christians are not prepared, we may fall because of his tactics.
- God is on our side. If we prepare for battle, we will be ready when temptations and trials arise.
- 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:6–7; Philippians 4:13
- The Christian should heed these warnings.
- Satan will be defeated, but he wants to take us down with him.
- Choose Jesus—every single time!
- Romans 8:37–39

9. *How did Christ's sacrifice provide victory?*

- Through His sacrifice we have the victory over sin, over spiritual death,
- 1 Timothy 2:6; Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:13–14; 1 Corinthians 15:50–58.
- We have victory through Christ. As Christians, we have a peace that is beyond this world, Philippians 4:7.

10. *How is faith the victory that overcomes the world?*

- The Lord has provided us ways to be victorious.
- As our faith grows, we come to the realization that the world is not our home and is against God. Our faith helps us to overcome the things of this world, as we prepare for eternity.
- Our faith shows us the victory we have over sin, because of the gifts (God's love & grace, sacrifice, the word, the church, etc.) from God. Our faith is strengthened through His word, thus it is imperative that we immerse ourselves in the word.
- We have example after example of those that believed and obeyed God. Faith overcomes: Hebrews 11:30–40
- We have hope in the promised salvation by grace through faith—we have victory. We've already won through Jesus Christ.
- 2 Samuel 22:29–43—a reminder of the victory we have in God.

Lesson Two: Amazing Grace

“Amazing Grace” is an emotional song that connects the singer and the hearer to God’s love. The lyrics were written in 1779 by John Newton. The music was composed by Edwin O. Excell in 1829. The song reminds Christians of our lost state prior to Jesus’ grace. The song reminds Christians of our glorious condition as believers. We are found. We are no longer blind. Our fears are relieved. Because of God’s amazing grace, we have protection, direction, and hope. Because of God’s amazing grace, we will praise God forever:

*“When we’ve been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.”*

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.

‘Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear,
And Grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come.
‘Tis Grace hath brought me safe thus far
And Grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me.
His Word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Teacher Notes

1. *Make note of any information, anecdotal, historical, or biographical, concerning this song or its author.*

- John Newton (1725–1807)—writer, English poet, captain of slave ships. He nearly died while at sea. While fearing death, he turned to God.

2. *Grace is declared to be “amazing” in verse one. Why? How does that make you feel?*

- Because we don't deserve. It is because of love. It is available to the good and the bad.
- It is amazing because it saves us from our sins, it allows us to have a relationship with Him, it is something we don't deserve and could never earn, 1 Timothy 1:15.
- Ephesians 2:8—it is a gift from God.
- We should appreciate God's grace because we would never be able to do enough to deserve it. We are unable to save ourselves. Only by God's grace through faith can we have salvation. Without the blood of Jesus, the only sacrifice that can wash away our sins, we would be lost.
- How do I feel? Unworthy. Blessed. Loved. Saved. Hopeful. Awed and amazed.

3. *Define wretch:*

- Merriam Webster—“a miserable person; one who is profoundly unhappy or in great misfortune; a base, despicable or vile person.”
- None of us like to think about how wretched we are but live with self-delusions that our sins are not so bad. We overlook the fact that any sin separates us from God, except forgiven sin. We often compare ourselves to others and determine that we aren't as bad as we think.

- Only when we come to the realization of our wretched state can we begin to understand how amazing His grace is.
- 4. *Does God's grace prevent man from changing his spiritual condition? Explain.***
- No—God's grace does not mean man cannot do anything to change his spiritual state. However, man cannot do anything on his own to achieve a saved spiritual condition, it is only by accepting God's grace that man can play a part in changing his spiritual condition. We change our spiritual state by submitting to God and accepting His grace. Grace and salvation are never earned, but man can reject or accept the salvation offered only through grace.
 - Grace—"unmerited favor." (Matthew 18:23–27) The forgiveness of sins is a gift. Christ's sacrifice is a gift we could never earn for ourselves.
 - Titus 2:11–12—this is the only reason man has hope of eternal life. God's grace is available for all men.
- 5. *What are works of faith/righteousness, and what is their relationship to grace?***
- Even though we can benefit from God's grace, there are still acts of obedience required of us. OT examples: Noah and the ark (Genesis 6–8), the bronze serpent (Numbers 21:4–9), children of Israel marching around Jericho (Joshua 6), Naaman and leprosy (2 Kings 5).
 - Our salvation is a product of grace through faith, but not by dead faith. God's grace is needed—it is a gift from God. Salvation is made available by grace through faith. That faith must be demonstrated, not just an acknowledgment that God and Jesus exist. James makes it clear that faith without works is dead. Dead faith does not lead to salvation.
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:3—our faith involves obedience to the gospel—work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Romans 10:9–10—Confession
 - 2 Corinthians 7:10; Acts 2:38—Repentance
 - Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15–16 – Baptism
 - James 2:14–26—Working faith

6. *The value of grace (the fact that it is “precious”) should be very personal. What are some ways that grace is personally precious?*

- When we come to realize what grace is, we understand that it is “precious.”
- It is personal when we examine our lives, recognize our sin as sin, understand that without grace we have earned death.
- Grace helps alleviate guilt so that we can continue living and serving without the weight of our past mistakes holding us back.
- Grace is precious and it is personal—very personal.
- Romans 3:24—because Christ paid our penalty for sin. God’s grace is free to all who will accept it.
- God was not obligated to provide a means for our salvation, 1 Corinthians 1:4.

7. *How does grace teach our hearts to fear? What is that fear?*

- God’s word teaches us to fear Him and follow His word (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).
- Hebrews 9:27—it is grace that can teach our heart to fear, and repent.
- The price of the grace we have received should remind us of the seriousness of sin and its consequences. That should help us to understand what fear is and that the Lord is to be feared. He has the power to destroy or save the soul.
- The love behind the price of saving grace should cause us to fear the Lord in the sense of giving Him proper gratitude, respect, and obedient service.

8. *How does grace help us to overcome? How does it lead us to our heavenly home?*

- We all have struggles in life. Sometimes they are our own doing. Sometimes they are trials of life. By the grace of God, we will be lead through the challenges of life and to our eternal home. Grace points us toward heaven, giving perspective to the treasure and pleasures and challenges and hardships of this life.

9. *How is God our shield? From what does He shield us?*

- A shield was used in times of battle for protection. It was vital for the soldier’s survival. It was held up against the body to protect from the enemy.
- Proverbs 30:5; Psalm 28:7; Psalm 18:2

- Genesis 15:1—Abram was told not to be afraid.
- Psalm 119:113–120
- Does not allow us to be tempted more than we can handle (1 Corinthians 10:13) but reminds us that through Jesus there is a way of escape provided.
- His word protects us from being carried away (Ephesians 4:14).
- Ephesians 6 discusses the armor of God. It is used for defense as well as offense while fighting sin.
- Ephesians 6:16 specifically encourages us to take up the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one.
- He shields us from worry if we go to Him (Philippians 4:6–7).

10. *What aspect(s) of God's grace and promises does verse five emphasize?*

- There is no “time” in heaven. God’s “time” is not man’s time (2 Peter 3:8). “Everlasting” is difficult for our finite mind to comprehend. The point simply is that we are no closer to the end after “minute 1” than after “year 10,000”. There is no end. The blessings go on and on. The singing goes on and on. The fellowship goes on and on. The presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit go on and on. The worship goes on and on.
- The reason we will be fortunate to be in heaven is because of God’s grace. We do not have it within ourselves to save us, it is a gift from God, born out of His love.
- Ephesians 2:4–7
- Romans 5:6–11