

## 1John 5:9-11 Assurance

A good study is predominated by questions, not monologues, but it's important for you to have a thorough understanding of the passage and point of the study. Please read and understand this essay for your own knowledge, and then lead the study by asking the questions which follow. Keep it lively, interactive and feel free to customize to suit your audience.

In this brief passage, John summarizes the main purpose of I John. He has written to a group of believers who were uncertain of the reality of their salvation. John is writing so they will know that they have eternal life. In this short letter, he says at least nine times that we can know that we are safe in Christ. It is a book about certainty, and the basis for that certainty. Of course, one ought not be assured of salvation if they aren't actually saved, so it's also helpful for showing people they are not safe, and how they can become safe.

### Says Who? (Verses 9,10)

In verse 9, John is talking not about one of his own ideas, or a man made argument, but about a declaration made by God. He calls it the "testimony of God"—a solemn and truthful declaration of fact. In verses 11 and 12, he articulates that testimony.

### God's Testimony (vv.11-12)

John says that God has made two critical declarations about eternal life; namely, that 1) eternal life is a gift from God, and 2) that the gift is found in Jesus. Based on that statement, he observes that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who have the Son and, therefore, have life; and those who don't have the Son, and therefore, don't have life.

He wants us, who may be uncertain of our standing before God, to know that we can be sure we are safe. He gives us the basis for our confidence. It is not some arrogant presumption that we deserve heaven, but rather the trustworthiness of God's promise. God has said that Heaven is a gift, given to those who believe in Jesus.

This will be an important point to make clear, particularly for people who don't actually know Christ. John 14:6, and Acts 4:12 are good cross-references.

### Who Has the Son? (Verse 13)

It is clear that if we have the Son, (i.e., if we've placed our faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins), we have eternal life. We can know this not only because of John's words here, but also because of Jesus' other promises and the consistent message of the New Testament. (See John 3:16; John 5:24; and Revelations 3:20.) Faith in Christ is all we need.

But there's still a problem. The theological answer that "He who has the Son has life" is true, but it may not be all the help a person needs. For that reason, John's entire letter is written to answer the follow up question, "Do I have the Son?"

That's a great question to ask. We should question whether we are really in Christ, and seek to make certain that we are. John is writing not only to assure us that life is found in Jesus, but also to give us the evidence to look for, so that we can know our faith is genuine. When we exercise real faith, Jesus will also produce other changes in our life that give evidence that we have the Son.

Look at v. 13 with that understanding. John writes, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." This is the summary statement for the entire book. "These things" refers back not only to the immediately preceding verses, but also to John's entire letter. If you were to scan back through the text and look for the words "we know," you would find multiple places where John tells us what the signs are that indicate someone has the Son.

### Three Categories of Signs

*We know because of our obedience:*

2:3 We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands.

2:5 But if anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in Him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to walk in Him must walk as Jesus did.

3:10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

*We know because of our love:*

3:10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

3:18 Dear Children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us.

*We know because the Spirit lives in us:*

3:24 Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us.

4:13 We know that we live in Him and He in us because He has given us of His Spirit.

These three categories of evidence build in our lives after we place our faith in Christ. The gift of eternal life is ours solely because of Jesus' death on the cross, and our faith in Him. However, as we walk in Him and grow in faith, there will be a natural consequence of growing in obedience and love for others. These serve to increase our assurance that Jesus has come into our lives to forgive our sins and make us the kind of people He wants us to be. They are the evidence of our salvation, not a condition of it.

Give your people the solid theological answer that "He who has the Son has life." Help them understand what this means. But also help them evaluate their life so they can discern if they genuinely do have the Son.

One great risk is that they could think that these three lines of evidence are actually three tasks to perform, which they are not. A simple set of equations can help clear this up.

Faith = Heaven.

*This equation doesn't balance as an obedient life is missing. Here is the most commonly assumed solution:*

Faith + good works = heaven.

*This doesn't work either as we are saved by grace alone through faith, not by works. (Eph 2:8,9)*

Faith = heaven + good works.

This is what the bible teaches. A changed life is necessarily present in salvation, but it is a result, not a requirement. A consequence, not a condition. As Calvin said, "It is faith alone that saves, but the faith that saves is never alone.

This simple set of equations can be a very helpful tool in establishing in your groups mind that we are not saved by good works, but we are saved to good works. In fact, those good works are the practical basis of our confidence or assurance of salvation. We are saved because we have the Son. We know we have the Son because he has changed us.

Print these question, cut them out and stick in your Bible as a discrete guide for the discussion.

#### LAUNCH

- On a scale of 1-100 how sure are you that you will go to heaven when you die? Why?

#### EXPLORE

1. God's testimony says two things are true. What are they?
2. How would you describe eternal life to someone else?
3. What does John mean by, "this testimony in our heart?" Read Romans 8:15-16. What additional insight does this verse provide?
4. How does someone who doesn't believe in Jesus make God out "to be a liar?"
5. Is it possible to have the Son and not have the life?
6. Is it possible to not have the Son and still have the life?
7. Is it possible to have the life, but not be sure?
8. Is it possible to think you have the life, but don't?

#### APPLY

9. How can you know that you have the Son?
10. What are the "things" John has written? How do they add additional confirmation that we, in fact, have the Son?
11. Scan for the phrase "we know" throughout the book to find the three lines of evidence John gives:  
I John 2:3; 2:5; 3:10.  
I John 3:10; 3:14; 3:18  
I John 3:24; 4:13  
What are these lines of evidence he says gives assurance? Where do you see these in your life? Where do you not?
12. Randomly divide your group into two camps and have them debate the proposition "Having assurance that we have eternal life gives us the freedom to sin as much as we like."
13. What do you think of this equation? Faith= heaven
14. When was the time that you placed your faith in Christ?
15. Having gone through this study are you more or less certain that Christ is really in your life?
16. How should being sure of our salvation affect the way we live? Do you live like that?

Here are the answers, nice and simple. But be sure to read and understand the opening essay designed to give you background knowledge to lead well.

1. Eternal life is a gift from God, and that gift is found in Jesus.
2. In John 17:3, Jesus says, "Now this is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." This definition leads us to picture eternal life primarily in terms of a relationship with God.
3. He could be referring to the Holy Spirit who now indwells us.
4. He declares that the testimony God has given concerning His Son is a lie.
5. No, they are inseparable.
6. No, Scripture is clear that all need Jesus' forgiveness (See Acts 4:12)
7. Yes, in fact this is the very reason John writes.
8. Yes. That is why it is imperative to be certain that you have placed your faith in Christ.
9. We who believe, know we have the Son, because Jesus promised to come into our lives if we place our faith in Him.
10. There are four things to which he is referring. First, the testimony in verses 11 and 12. Also, the three lines of evidence present through- out the book of I John.
11. Allow the group to discuss.
12. Allow the group to debate. Hopefully the side opposing that proposition will prevail. True love, gratitude and hope towards Jesus will result in a heart that wants to obey, not despise Him.
13. It doesn't balance. But neither does the oft assumed correction, faith + good works = heaven. The better equation is faith = heaven + good works. Obedience is a consequence, not a condition. It is a result not a requirement. "It is faith alone that saves, but the faith that saves is never alone."
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. As they discuss be prepared for some to realize they may not be believers. Encourage them to find that assurance by genuinely surrendering their lives to Christ.
16. It should provide thankfulness, gratitude, and hope that energizes obedience. Help them honestly assess if this is true in their lives.