

STOP ASKING JESUS INTO YOUR HEART

A BIBLE STUDY FOR **STUDENTS** ON ASSURANCE

A STUDY BY **JASON GASTON** BASED ON THE BOOK BY

JD GREAR

LifeWay | Students

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SESSION ONE

IMPORTANCE OF ASSURANCE

OVERVIEW

God wants you to be assured of your salvation.

That truth is essential to the life of every believer as they seek to follow Christ in obedience. But the sad truth is that many people struggle to know with certainty that they belong to Jesus.

In our opening session, J.D. Greear will discuss the uncertainty that often goes through our minds when we think about our salvation. This entire study is built around this simple question: *How can anyone know, beyond all doubt, that they are saved?*

Too many students who are truly saved struggle with doubt. They become spiritually paralyzed, spending time and energy worrying whether they've done enough to gain God's approval. They are locked up in fear, when they should be resting in the grace and promises of God.

The flip side of that coin, however, is that there are many who are living with false assurance of their salvation. They have bought into the notion that because they simply prayed a prayer, or walked an aisle, or held up their hand, that their place with God in eternity is secure.

This first session will emphasize God's desire for you to be assured of your salvation, and how assurance in the goodness of God will propel you to a lifelong journey of obedience and radical faith.

WARM UP

- **What are some phrases or terms you have heard centered around the salvation experience.**
- **If a friend were to ask you "What does it mean to be saved?", how would you respond?**
- **How would you define "assurance"?**

WATCH

Use this video guide to follow along with J.D.'s teaching. Fill in the blanks of the key statements, then use the additional space to note other important information.

- **The good news is that God does want you to know that you _____ to Him.**
- **God wants you to be sure of your salvation for a couple of reasons:**
 1. He _____ you.
 2. We will never be able to thrive in the Christian life, to make bold _____, until we are assured of God's love for us.
- **You're never going to be able to lean your life fully on Jesus, to take your hands off everything else, until you're confident of His _____ to you.**
- **Love for God only grows in the _____ of His love for us.**
- **This study is about . . .**
 - ... how for sure a person can know they're _____.
 - ... how they can know for sure they _____ to Jesus.
 - ... how they can know for sure Jesus _____ to them.

VIDEO FEEDBACK



Use the questions below to help process the teaching you heard on the video.

J.D. stated in the video that he has prayed “the prayer” thousands of times, been baptized multiple times, and walked forward at youth events all over the country. How did that resonate with you?

Do you agree with J.D. that there are students that should have assurance of salvation that don’t, and students who feel assured of their salvation, but shouldn’t be? Explain.

Which of the key statements is the most important for you? Why?

If you could summarize the main point from the video in a tweetable statement (140 words or less), what would it be?

GROUP DISCUSSION



- 1. Read John 14:18. Just as J.D. mentioned, God does not want us to doubt his love. How does the idea of God being a faithful Father to the fatherless change the way you view Him?**

How has He been this for you?

- 2. When was a time you were assured of something and it motivated you to action?**

- 3. Read Romans 8:15. What are the two categories of people mentioned in this passage? How are the two different?**

- 4. How does knowing that God longs for you to know Him as “Abba, Father!” change the way you view him?**

WRAPPING IT UP

God the Father longs for you to intimately know Him as a loving daddy. He does not simply want your service as a servant, but rather He longs that you would give Him the intimacy of a son or daughter. God wants for you to be assured of His love toward you. This entire study is built around the simple premise that God the Father wants you to be confident of His love for you and the salvation you have in Christ Jesus.

Are you part of God's family? Are you assured of His love? Explain.

What is one truth from this session that resonates with you?

What is one question that still troubles you?

REFLECT AND PRAY

As you close the session, focus your praying on the following requests:

- Pray that your eyes would be opened to how God loves you.
- Pray that you would move from being uncertain about your salvation to being assured.
- Pray your heart would be overwhelmed with the love of God as a result of this study.

DAY 1 PERSONAL WORK

Key Thought: Assurance fuels the fire of obedience.

Read Daniel 3:1-12.

As young men, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were captured and taken to a distant land by their enemies. There they were subjected to a new language, new literature, and even given new names: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Though they found themselves in a foreign land among foreign gods, these three young men found great favor among the Babylonians and were even promoted to a place of great influence.

However, there came a point when these three young men had to make a difficult choice:

- Why was their choice so difficult? What was the looming penalty for disobeying the King's edict?

Read Daniel 3:13-23.

- What did they choose to do?
- How did these three young men display an unwavering faith in this situation?

Even in the face of death, they refused to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar because of their obedience to the One True God; Yahweh. They valued God's glory more than preserving their own lives.

- List their bold answer to the King here (vv. 17-18):
- What would prompt that kind of faith statement in the lives of these young men?

They had a great affection for and loyalty to God that was worth more than life itself. Fully assured of God's goodness toward them, they put their trust in Him, regardless of the situation or the outcome.

- Would you have done the same? Explain.

Read 2 Timothy 1:8-12.

- How was Paul able to remain focused and passionate about the mission in the midst of the suffering and persecution he faced in his life?

Paul was confident of his standing before God regardless of what life threw at him.

"You'll never give up your life in radical obedience until you are radically assured of His radical commitment to you." -J.D. Greear

Just like the rappelling illustration J.D. shared in the video, we need to be reminded that it is only when we come to a place of confidence and assurance in Christ that we will be moved from spiritual paralysis to spiritual freedom.

- In what ways have you found yourself spiritually paralyzed and not able to move forward in assurance in Christ?

"In the same way, there are points you can never pass spiritually until you are confident that Jesus will support the full weight of your soul. There are sacrifices you'll never make and commands you'll never obey unless you are convinced of their eternal value. Following Jesus, after all, means saying 'no' to a lot of things." -J.D. Greear

Read Matthew 16:24.

- What does it mean to take up your cross and follow Jesus?

The call to all disciples is a call to FOLLOW HIM and TAKE UP YOUR CROSS ... it's a call to die to yourself and put your faith and confidence in Him.

"You'll never have the courage to embrace the cross until you have the confidence that you own the resurrection." -J.D. Greear

An assured faith fights off temporary fears for the promises of a faithful God.

Reflect and Pray

- Ask God to give you great confidence in His love for you and His passion to see you grow more into His image.
- Confess to Him areas where you have doubted His goodness and His ability to sustain you in all situations.
- Commit to live courageously as you trust in His faithfulness.

DAY 2 PERSONAL WORK

Key Thought: We are loved by God as intimately as a child, a spouse, and a friend.

His Beloved Child: Read John 14:16-18

- What promise did Jesus make to His followers? What was the significance of this promise?

As Jesus prepared to leave His disciples, He assured them that they would not be left alone. Can you imagine a loving and committed earthly dad just choosing one day to leave his children behind as orphans, never to see them again? Of course not!

Just as a good earthly father would never abandon his children, Jesus promised that He was not abandoning His followers. He promised that the Father was going to send the Holy Spirit to remain with them. That promise is still being fulfilled in our lives.

There is no doubt how much God loves us. His faithfulness and presence proves it.

His Spouse: Read John 14:1-3

- Where does Jesus say that He is going? And what does He promise to do?

Jesus promises that He is going to His Father's house to prepare a place for us. At first glance, this may seem insignificant, but J.D. pointed out that this would have brought to mind the imagery of a Jewish man going to prepare a home for his soon-to-be wife. It was an expression of his love and care for the one he loved. Our modern equivalency of this is when a man goes out to buy a diamond to put on his fiancée's hand. It lets everyone know, "She is mine, you can't have her, and my love is only for her."

His Friend: Read John 15:13-15

- What is the difference between the loyalty of a friend and the loyalty of a slave?

Both on the surface will probably get you a cup of water if you ask them to. The slave will do it because he fears what will happen if he doesn't obey. The friend will do it because he loves you and wants to do something pleasing for you.

- How do we know the depth of God's commitment to our relationship?

We see it in verse 13, that God laid down His life for us, that He sent His one and only son to die in our place.

- Which one of the previous relationships gives you the most assurance in your relationship with God? Why?
- Have you allowed an earthly version of these relationships to taint the perfect version we have in God? For instance, has a bad or absent father caused you to struggle to relate to God as a good and loving father? Explain

"The same love the perfect Father has for the perfect Son is the love that Christ, our everlasting Father, now has for us . . . But if the Son of God doesn't sit around wondering about His relationship to His Father, I should not be worried about my relationship to Him."
—J.D. Greear

"I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and to know the Messiah's love that surpasses knowledge, so you may be filled with all the fullness of God."
Ephesians 3:17b-19, (HCSB)

- How does understanding the way God loves you change the way you live your life?

Reflect and Pray

- It is sometimes hard to imagine the depth of God's love for us because no one on earth has loved us with the same depth and consistency. Ask God to give you a greater understanding of His love.
- Ask that He would allow you to rest in His love and acceptance rather than seeking to earn it from Him or from others.

DAY 3 PERSONAL WORK

Key Thought: God wants our obedience to be from love, not fear.

God isn't looking for us to do what He wants because we are worried about what will happen if we don't. He doesn't want us constantly looking over our shoulders, worrying that the next time we mess up is the last time before He is tired of forgiving us. He wants us to obey Him because we love Him.

Read Romans 8:12-16.

- What type of spirit does this passage teach us we did and did not receive?

We have not received a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. We have received the spirit of adoption as sons. A son loves his father and trusts that what the father asks him to do is good for him. His obedience is not motivated by fear, but love.

- What does the Spirit enable us to cry out?

As we discussed in the session, to understand God as loving Father was foreign to Paul's original audience. We can use the intimate term "Abba" (similar to our term "Daddy") because we have a Father who loves us enough to adopt us as sons and daughters at the cost of His only Son's blood.

Martin Luther pointed out that someone who obeys God out of fear and another who obeys out of love may look very similar on the outside. Fear can produce a "surface level adherence to the law."¹ But under the "thin-veneer of obedience will rush a river of fear, pride and self-interest."² The only way to have a real love for God is when our fear of Him is removed.

Read Romans 8:31-39.

- To what lengths did God go to remove our fear of Him?

God "did not spare His own Son." Pause for a moment and think about that. Who or what is most important or precious to you? Is there anything that you would give that up for? This is exactly what God did for us. He sent His one and only Son to live as a man, to be

persecuted and mocked by the very people he created. Then, He was beaten and nailed to a cross, separated for a time from His Father whom He had known from eternity past. When we were far from Him, unable to save ourselves; God reached down to our helpless estate and set us free, adopting us as His own.

Look again at the following promises from these verses. What confidence does this give us to come before the Father?

- *"If God is for us, who can be against us?" –Romans 8:31b*
- *"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" –Romans 8:32*
- *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." –Romans 8:33*
- *"Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." –Romans 8:34*
- *"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." –Romans 8:38-39*

Even though we have heard many of these promises before and even though we acknowledge that God did not spare His own Son, we still often struggle to believe and rest in the assurance we have as God's children.

Read 1 John 5:10-13.

- What does John tell us the purpose of his letter is?

John tells us that our confidence and assurance comes from two things: belief in the testimony about eternal life, and the evidence of that eternal life at work in us.

"Eternal life is not just a reality we enter into when we die; it is something that comes into us now, and its evidences appear everywhere." –J.D. Greear

Reflect and Pray

- Pray that you would be set free from a fear of God's wrath. Pray that God would grant you the faith to believe that He has adopted you as a son or daughter, that He has set you free from wrath, and that nothing can separate you from His love.
- Call out to God as your "daddy" and ask Him to give you eyes to be able to see Him more clearly in this way.

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Use the information below to introduce the session.

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In our opening session, J.D. Greear will discuss the uncertainty that often goes through our minds when we think about our salvation. This entire study is built around this simple question: *How can anyone know, beyond all doubt, that they are saved?*

Too many students who are truly saved struggle with doubt. They become spiritually paralyzed, spending time and energy worrying whether they've done enough to gain God's approval. They are locked up in fear, when they should be resting in the grace and promises of God.

The flip side of that coin, however, is that there are many who are living with false assurance of their salvation. They have bought into the notion that because they simply prayed a prayer, or walked an aisle, or held up their hand, that their place with God in eternity is secure.

This first session will emphasize God's desire for you to be assured of your salvation, and how assurance in the goodness of God will propel you to a lifelong journey of obedience and radical faith.

WARM UP

The following questions listed in the bold type are found in the student book. Use these questions to begin the discussion about the session topic. You can allow students to write their answers and then discuss, or just read each question and discuss it.

- **What are the some phrases or terms you have heard centered around the salvation experience?**

List their answers on a large sheet of paper or on a white board. Point out how we use lots of phrases associated with salvation —“pray a prayer,” “walk the aisle,” “make a decision,” “raise your hand,” and so forth.

ASK: *How could some of these phrases cause confusion?*

- **If a friend were to ask you “What does it mean to be saved?”, how would you respond?**

- **How would you define “assurance”?**

Put their answers on a large sheet of paper or on the white board. Compare it with the following dictionary definition:

Assurance: 1. a positive declaration intended to give confidence; 2. promise or pledge; guaranty; surety; 3. full confidence; freedom from doubt; certainty¹

ASK: *How would you define assurance of salvation?*

At this point, just allow the students to share their thoughts. Don’t try to correct or land on a definition.

Following the discussion, start the video for Session 1.

1. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/assurance?s=t>

WATCH

Direct students to use this video guide to follow along with J.D.'s teaching. Encourage them to fill in the blanks of the key statements, then use the additional space to note other important information. Be sure to preview the session video so you can note other key statements to discuss during the Video Feedback or Group Discussion.

- The good news is that God does want you to know that you **belong** to Him.
- God wants you to be sure of your salvation for a couple of reasons:
 1. He **loves** you.
 2. We will never be able to thrive in the Christian life, to make bold **sacrifices**, until we are assured of God's love for us.
- You're never going to be able to lean your life fully on Jesus, to take your hands off everything else, until you're confident of His **relationship** to you.
- Love for God only grows in the **assurance** of His love for us.
- This study is about...
 - ... how for sure a person can know they're **saved**.
 - ... how they can know for sure they **belong** to Jesus.
 - ... how they can know for sure Jesus **belongs** to them.

Once the video is finished, make sure the students have the blanks filled in with the correct answers, then move to the Video Feedback section.

VIDEO FEEDBACK

Use the questions below to help process the teaching you heard on the video. You can allow students to write their answers in the space below the questions, then discuss in the large group, or simply read the questions aloud and discuss.

J.D. stated in the video that he has prayed “the prayer” thousands of times, been baptized multiple times, and walked forward at youth events all over the country. How did that resonate with you?

Do you agree with J.D. that there are students that should have assurance of salvation that don’t, and students who feel assured of their salvation, but shouldn’t be? Explain.

Be sensitive to the fact that you probably have both kinds of students in your group.

Which of the key statements is the most important for you? Why?

Direct students to choose one of the statements from the Watch guide, or another statement that they jotted down from J.D.’s teaching.

If you could summarize the main point from the video in a tweetable statement (140 words or less), what would it be?

Work together to formulate one statement. You can work as a large group or allow students to work separately or in small teams and then form one statement from all the different statements. When you have finished your meeting time, update your social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) with the key phrase using the hashtag #SAJIYH (that’s short for “stop asking Jesus into your heart.”)

GROUP DISCUSSION

Lead students through the following questions.

1. Read John 14:18. Just as J.D. mentioned, God does not want us to doubt His love. How does the idea of God being a faithful Father to the fatherless change the way you view Him?

Help students understand that this concept reinforces the truth that God wants you to be assured of your salvation. He doesn't want you wondering about His love for you or the security you have in Him.

How has He been this for you?

This question personalizes the previous question. Allow students to share. To help students feel comfortable with sharing their answers, you might lead with a personal story of how God has been a faithful Father to you. And how this characteristic of God affects your assurance of salvation.

2. When was a time you were assured of something and it motivated you to action?

Remind students of J.D.'s teaching on the video that unless we are assured of God's love, we're going to be paralyzed in our faith. Feel free to use this quote from the trade book and lead students to comment on it:

"Until you know that you are His and He is yours, your obedience will be limited. Your love will be stifled, your confidence will be shaky, and your courage will be minimal." —J.D. Greear

***ASK:** When has your lack of assurance of God's love kept you from making bold steps for Him?*

3. Read Romans 8:15. What are the two categories of people mentioned in this passage? How are the two different?

Paul talks about the difference between a slave versus son/daughter. Point out that the slave does not intimately know the love of the father. He does what the master wants out of fear. God however, has adopted us into His family and wants us to know Him intimately. Because we are His children, we can use the term “Abba” to address Him. Abba is an Aramaic word that is similar to our term “Daddy.” It signifies closeness and intimacy in the father-child relationship.

4. How does knowing that God longs for you to know Him as “Abba, Father!” change the way you view Him?

WRAPPING IT UP

Use the information and questions below to wrap up the session.

God the Father longs for you to intimately know Him as a loving daddy. He does not simply want your service as a servant, but rather He longs that you would know Him intimately as a son or daughter. God wants for you to be assured of His love toward you. This entire study is built around the simple premise that God the Father wants you to be confident of His love for you and the salvation you have in Christ Jesus.

Are you part of God's family? Are you assured of His love? Explain.

Understand that this study will constantly challenge students to consider their standing with God. This is not meant to make them doubt, but to honestly evaluate so that they can experience the full assurance of their salvation.

There will be several moments throughout the study that provide you the opportunity to lead students to place their faith in Christ for the first time. Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in each one.

What is one truth from this session that resonates with you?

This question will help them zero in on what is the take-away for this session. What is the one nugget of truth that resonates with them?

What is one question that still troubles you?

This study will raise questions from students. Embrace that. Be willing to wrestle through the difficult questions with them.

REFLECT AND PRAY

Provide students a quiet moment to pray using the prompts below. These are also found in the student book.

- Pray that your eyes would be opened to how God loves you.
- Pray that you would move from being uncertain about your salvation to being assured.
- Pray your heart would be overwhelmed with the love of God as a result of this study.

Point out the Personal Work sections in the student book and encourage students to complete these before next session to reinforce what they've learned in this session.