



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Summer 2018 Midweek Sermon Starter

Unit 2: No Doubt About It

Sermon Series Title: Biblical Answers for Basic Questions

Sermon 1 Title: Acquiring Assurance

Bible Passage: 1 John 2:3-6; 3:14-15,24; 4:13-15

Background/Context

Some tell us that the only thing in life we can be sure of is death and taxes, and sometimes that seems true. Advertisers tout their product to be a “sure bet,” but few products live up to the hype. Insurance companies profit from the idea of providing assurance in the worst of scenarios, but even the best companies will deny a claim or drop a policy under the right circumstances. We are often surprised when relationships that we considered to be “a sure thing” to last end prematurely. From this perspective, it’s understandable why even the most mature believers might find themselves questioning whether or not their own salvation experience is truly certain – after all, nothing else seems to be.

In 1 John, we find great clarity and assurance for the question: “How can I know that I am a Christian.” In this letter, John the apostle is likely writing to believers in and around Ephesus who had originally received His gospel. In 1 John 2:1, the apostle clarifies that he is writing so that these believers (and us as well) will be assured that when they do sin, they “have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one.” This lesson is not based on a sequential study of John’s letter; instead it is arranged in a logical order in which these verses might be beneficial to believers’ lives.

A. I Confess Jesus
(1 John 4:14-15)

A friend recently went through a life-changing experience. A self-professed atheist for a decade, he claimed faith in Jesus as his Savior after his life hit rock bottom. But in the months that followed he began to question this faith that he claimed. He no longer doubted the existence of God; instead, his struggles revolved around Jesus. What my friend needed to learn—and many believers need to be reminded of—is that we have no access to God except through Jesus Christ. In this passage, John says that love is seen not in the fact that we love God, but that He loved us “and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins” (v.10). Verses 14 and 15 conclude that by confessing and believing in Jesus, we can be sure that we have more than mere forgiveness; we have assurance that we will remain in God and He will remain in us. If our salvation is real, then there will be a clear agreement with Scripture on our part as to who Jesus really is.

Application Point: My friend needed to be reminded that Jesus is the only way to God. Otherwise, there is no solution for our sin problem. Have you accepted Jesus, or are you still trying to deal with your sin in other ways? All these are futile; Jesus is God’s one solution for sin.

B. I Have the Holy Spirit
(1 John 3:24; 4:13)

The more business we do via the Internet, the more accustomed we become with confirmation numbers. These garbled, seemingly endless series of letters and numbers provide proof that a mysterious transaction (which has taken place over miles of cables and wires between your computer and some random computer on the other side of the world) is secure.

Isn't it beautiful that God was light years ahead of the Internet? Long before servers and megabytes, God knew that a vastly more mysterious transaction would take place between heaven and earth each time a person accepted His Son. How would we *know* that something had really happened? How would we know that the "feeling" in our hearts was truly a life-changing experience?

John tells us that the Holy Spirit is more than just a confirmation number. Yes, His presence in our lives reminds us that we didn't just imagine our salvation experience. More than that, as God continues to give to us from the Holy Spirit (see John 14:15-18, 16:5-15), we are reminded that He is continuing to work in our lives as we await the day that we are "delivered" to His doorstep in heaven.

Application Point: What evidence do you see of the Holy Spirit in your life? If He is present, then be assured that your place in heaven is secure. As our Counselor, He is not with us for just a while, but forever, until we join the rest of the Godhead in heaven (see John 14:16)

C. I Desire to Obey God's Word (1 John 2:3-6)

Several years ago, our church began reading short testimonies just before each new member is baptized. One common theme in these testimonies is some sort of statement explaining how their lives are different now that they've accepted Jesus. They typically write something like this: "Before I was saved, I didn't really want to read my Bible or obey God. But now, I want to read my Bible more often and want to live the life God wants me to live."

John the Apostle would agree. In 1 John 2:3-6, he explains that our daily actions are further evidence that Jesus has changed our hearts. In verse 4, John says that if someone professes Jesus, but doesn't obey His commands, then that person is "a liar, and the truth is not in him." This doesn't mean that we'll never sin after we are saved. But we will have a greater desire to live more like Jesus and less like our old selves. In John 15:5, Jesus said, "The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit..." This fruit can be seen in our obedience to His Word: "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14).

Application Point: As we mature as believers, our desire to obey God's Word will increase and our awareness of sin will become more acute. What has the Lord shown you lately in His Word? How would you describe your desire to obey Him?

D. I Love Other Christians (1 John 3:14-15)

Another tell-tale sign of true conversion is a greater love for other believers. This isn't a warm and fuzzy feeling towards everyone in church. No, it is a genuine, enduring love for those that you now understand to be more than friends or acquaintances—they are family. As believers, church becomes more of a joy than a chore. Sure, just like any family, there are bumps in the road and some family members are easier to love than others. But overall, believers long to love, serve, pray for, and fellowship with other believers.

In 1 John 4:20, the apostle reiterates this idea, going so far as to say that anyone who claims to follow Christ but hates his brother is “a liar.” This is coming from a person who spent 3 years in close quarters with eleven other disciples, as well as with Jesus himself. I wonder if there were times when Peter was a bit too bull-headed or that Thomas’ doubting became boring? During these years, we can be certain that John saw Jesus “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) as He dealt with these men who were surely as hard to love as you and I are. John knew that genuine followers of Jesus would reveal this same “grace and truth” toward other believers.

Application Point: How would you characterize your love for other Christians? If you are looking for assurance that you are truly saved, look in your heart and examine your desire to love other believers.