




THE COMMUNITY

That You May Know | ASSURANCE

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

1 John 5:9-13

In this brief passage, John summarizes the main purpose of 1 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.

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 eternal life is a gift from God, and 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 if there are non-Christians in the group. 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.

What’s the Big Idea?

The Bible says that believers can know, and that God wants us to know, that we are saved, and therefore safe. The basis of our assurance is the certainty of God’s promise to give us eternal life when we place our faith in Jesus. This assurance is bolstered as we see our lives being changed by Jesus.

What’s the Problem?

Many Christians are unsure if they will really go to heaven when they die. Some think it is presumptuous or arrogant to claim to know that you are going to heaven. Others may think that they are saved, when they really aren’t. This lack of assurance, or false assurance, can keep us from loving and obeying Jesus.

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That You May Know | Assurance

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.

What's Our Response?

Knowing that heaven is a gift that we cannot earn or lose should motivate us to obey God out of gratitude, rather than out of fear. The point of the study is to give the members of the group who have placed their faith in Christ that assurance. The study might cause some to question if they have made a decision to trust Christ. You may close by passing out a Four Spiritual Laws booklet and encouraging anyone who cannot remember a time when they trusted Christ, or might be unsure if they ever have, to read through the booklet and commit to surrendering their life to Christ.