




THE COMPASS

A TOOL FOR DISCIPLERS

Assurance of Salvation

Conversation On the Journey

John wrote his first epistle specifically to help a group of believers know that they were saved and to show them the proper basis for that certainty. In this short letter, he says at least nine times that we can know that we are safe in Christ. A survey of the book, with a special emphasis on 1 John 5:9-13, can help you communicate the essence of his message and give proper assurance to your disciples. Because our assurance is predicated on the Gospel, you may also help someone who is not a genuine believer to realize that and begin a relationship with God.

You might introduce the topic by asking your disciple, “On a scale of 1-100, how sure are you that you will go to heaven when you die?” Interact with them about their answer. Find out if their confidence is sometimes higher or lower, and why. Try to understand what the basis of their confidence is. Then offer to walk them through a study of 1 John 5:9-13 to see what God has to say about the topic.

Here are some key observations to point out, and questions to ask, as you guide your disciple through a process of self-discovered learning:

This passage claims to be the testimony of God Himself. The basis for our assurance isn't what we think or feel, or what we once heard someone once say. This is God's solemn declaration of fact. This testimony expresses two critical things:

First, that eternal life is a gift. “God has given us eternal life.” He didn't sell it, or offer a trade. There was no auction, or quid pro quo. Eternal life is a gift. You can't earn it, or even warrant it. It is a gift.

Second, that gift comes wrapped in the person of His Son. “This life is in His Son.” It's not found anywhere else. “He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God, does not have life.”

Notice though, that John's purpose (and ours) isn't only to give assurance that eternal life is found in Christ, but also to give assurance that Christ (and therefore eternal life) is found in us.

In verse 13 he wrote, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son

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This Week's Excursion

It is critical that a new believer knows that being saved means you are safe. Using 1 John as a guide you want to show:

1. It is possible to know that you have eternal life.
2. The gift of eternal life comes through faith in Jesus.
3. There are experiential realities that can bolster this assurance.

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of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” The “things” he is referring to aren’t only the immediately preceding verses, but the entire book. Permeating this epistle is the phrase, “We know.” In each case, John says we know we are saved (or have the Son) because of the changes in our lives. If you scan through the book you’ll find three main ways we can know that we have the Son:

We know because of our obedience: 2:3; 2:5; 3:10

We know because of our love: 3:10; 3:14; 3:18

We know because the Spirit lives in us: 3:24; 4:13

It is critical to note that these three lines of evidence are not the causes of our salvation, but the result of it. If we are saved, we will necessarily grow in obedience and love, and we will experience the Holy Spirit more fully. Recognizing those things in our lives gives us great assurance that the Gospel has taken root in our hearts. He doesn’t present these to us as the rungs of a ladder we must climb in order to earn salvation. Rather, they are given as the signposts that accompany salvation.

When we sin we might fearfully believe a lie that we are not really His. Our hearts can condemn us that we aren’t living up to His perfect standard. John is exhorting us to look at the overall changes that develop as we grow in faith. Seeing our own love and obedience grow over time 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.” 1 John 3:18-20

†End

Next Steps

Knowing that our salvation is secure means we are truly safe, and ought to motivate us to greater obedience, love, and yieldedness to the Spirit. We do these things not to earn eternal life, but because we already have it. Ask your disciple to examine her life for the evidence that the Gospel has produced a real change. Encourage her to pursue intimacy with God and see the effects in her life.

Side Trails

“That you may Know.” Cru. Comm. New Life Publications. Transferable Concept 1: How you can be sure you are a Christian. Bill Bright. New Life Publications.

Order at crustore.org

So Great Salvation. Charles Ryrie. Moody publishing.
Eternal Security. Charles Stanley. Thomas Nelson Publishing.
How Can I Be Sure I’m a Christian. Donald Whitney. Nav Press.

Order at christianbook.com



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