



BE SURE

DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

How do you know that you truly love God and are saved? Having assurance of your faith may be something that comes easily; but for many of us, at one time or another, there is doubt. This doubt can come from pride, life circumstances, or a misunderstanding of grace.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE ASSURANCE IN YOUR FAITH?

The author of Hebrews defines it like this, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1) This isn’t a blind faith, but a faith that rests on hope—hope in the promises God made. These promises hold weight because, not one of them has proven false. Furthermore, Jesus secured these promises when He died and rose again, which is why the Apostle Paul says, “All the promises of God are ‘Yes!’ in Christ Jesus.” (2 Cor. 1:20)

A CAUTION

So how do we know we’re saved? John says, “By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.” (1 John 2:3) This isn’t legalism. It’s the result of the Holy Spirit changing your heart. If you’ve been given a new heart, you will walk as Jesus walked. (1 John 2:6) If you find yourself continually walking with the world, disobeying God’s commands, and thinking you are a good person deserving of heaven, you should be concerned for your soul. Your questions of assurance may be valid, because anyone who is in the light of Christ does not walk in the darkness. (1 John 2:9) The light helps us see the darkness—including the darkness in our own souls—and turn from it. If you find yourself in darkness today, repent and place your faith in Jesus. He is the only one who can save you.

AN ENCOURAGEMENT

John does not claim we will be perfect or sinless in this life. Instead, he says the opposite: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8) The idea that a Christian could live a perfect life is a lie. We have a fleshly nature that battles within us daily—a reality that the Apostle Paul wrote about in Romans 7. Instead of ignoring this battle, John tells us to turn to Jesus: “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” (1 John 2:1) Our salvation does not rest on our ability to be perfect or less sinful. It rests on the sinless God-man, Jesus Christ.

This discussion guide is made up of the following sections:

1. DISCUSSION

These questions are designed to help you get into God's Word, apply the sermon, and guide your group discussion. Use the questions that fit best with your group's situation or needs. Beyond your Small Group, these questions can also be used in the context of a Bible study, a discipleship relationship, or personal study.

2. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

These questions are created specifically with families in mind and we hope they're useful in facilitating family discussion (maybe around the dinner table, or another family devotional time). These questions are applicable for all ages, including young children. We pray these bless you as a family.

3. NEXT STEPS

Whether you take these steps or find other ways to respond, we hope you intentionally pray about, act on, and obey God's Word.



WEEK ONE

“YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE”

1 John 5:11-13

DISCUSSION

1. Read 1 John 5:11-13. Why does he say that he wrote these things? Why do you think he felt it was important that people are assured of eternal life?
2. How might this assurance of our faith affect our daily lives? What are some noticeable ways that assurance could be seen by others?
3. According to John, what is required to have life? What does he mean when he says, “whoever has the Son”? What does it look like to have the Son?
4. Humans were created in the image of God for relationship with Him, but we fell. How is our fallen identity impacted by God’s gift of eternal life? How should we view ourselves, if we have Jesus?
5. Everyone wants to be loved. Where does that desire come from? How does “having the Son” fill that desire?
6. What do you think it means when John says, “to you who believe in the name of the Son of God”? In other words, what does it mean to believe in a name, specifically Jesus’ name? What are some truth statements you support if you “believe in His name?”
7. What is the purpose of eternal life? How can we live in light of eternity daily? In other words, what does it look like to embrace the fact that this life is a vapor, or that this light momentary affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory? Find scriptures that help shape the vision of eternal life, and discuss.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. What is eternal life? Why is there death in the world?
2. Why did God offer us eternal life? How did He do it?
3. When John says that we can have life in Jesus, what does he mean?
4. How does eternal life change the way we live now?

NEXT STEPS

- Contemplate what it means to “have Christ.” Thank God for giving you sight to see the foolishness of the world and His greater power. Pray for strength to embrace this eternal reality and calling. Ask God to help you engage others with this wonderful truth.
- Prayerfully consider ways that you could better live in light of eternity. Make a list of ways that you can be actively “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” (Eph. 5:16)

DISCUSSION

1. What is your greatest assurance that what you believe about Jesus and the gospel message is true? Are there areas of faith where you struggle with assurance? What are the main sources of this doubt?
2. The apostle John had the privilege of seeing Christ and hearing Jesus’ teaching first hand. Why is John’s eyewitness testimony important to our assurance in the gospel message?
3. What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? Why is He called the Word of Life?
4. Why do you think John began this letter in such a way?
5. When you think of the word “fellowship,” what comes to mind? What are some key characteristics of Christian fellowship? What does it look like to have fellowship with the God?
6. What gets in the way of our fellowship and communion with God? What facilitates communion with God? What is the relationship between fellowship with God and joy?
7. How does joy-filled fellowship with God and His people provide assurance that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true?
8. In light of this passage, how can we encourage one another to seek fellowship with God and joy in God?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Who first told you about Jesus? How do we know Jesus is real?
2. How do we communicate with God?
3. How does Jesus give joy?
4. What does it mean to belong to God?

NEXT STEPS

- John writes this letter, so that the believers might have joy and experience fellowship with God. Consider asking someone to encourage you to spend time meditating on, praying over, and then applying 1 John over the next few weeks. You might ask a spouse, friend, Small Group member, discipler, or accountability partner. If this person is willing, you can provide them with encouragement in this area as well.
- Pray that your reading of 1 John will help you know Christ more, and that you will experience greater joy and fellowship with Him. Ask God to draw you near, give you greater assurance, and protect you from worldliness.

DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the truths about God behind the phrase, “God is light”?
2. How does sin cause us to lose our assurance? Why would someone who walks in darkness claim to have fellowship with God?
3. How does fellowship with God keep us from darkness? How does darkness/sin keep us from God?
4. This passage teaches that all believers continue to sin in this life. What are we to do when we sin? Why is confession of our sins such an important part of both our prayer life and our ongoing walk with God?
5. What are some of the lies you’re tempted to believe when you sin? Why is coming clean with your sin—even if there are consequences— a better choice than trying to hide your sin in the darkness?
6. What does the practice of confession of sin look like in your life? How should it look?
7. Why are Christian community and accountability important in helping us walk in light rather than darkness? What are ways we can be more honest with one another about our struggles and sins (walking in the light)?
8. Who would you say is your greatest advocate and why? What makes a good advocate?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. When we do something wrong (i.e. sin), how should we respond to God? If we sin against another person, how should we respond to them?
2. How can you incorporate confession into your marriage and/or family?
3. What is an advocate? Why is it important to know that the Father sent Jesus to be our Advocate when we fail?
4. How can you be like Jesus and act as an advocate for others around you?

NEXT STEPS

- Practice a time of confession by reading Psalm 51 and confessing your own sins before the Lord. Afterwards, praise and thank Him for His mercy and cleansing you have through Jesus.
- Spend time with your Small Group, a family member, a friend, or someone you meet with for discipleship or accountability. Choose to walk in the light by sharing some of your current temptations with them. If you need to confess any sins, confess them and cling to God's restoring grace.

DISCUSSION

1. What does John mean in v. 5 when he claims that God’s love is “perfected” in those who remain faithful to God’s Word?
2. In vv. 4-5, John makes a connection between the love of God and the keeping of His commandments. How does this differ from secular perspectives on godly love?
3. Throughout this letter, John continually speaks of God’s love for us and our love for one another. How are these two loves related?
4. According to vv. 7-8, the commandment to love one another is not a new concept. However, John also says that this commandment has a new reality, made possible through Jesus. What is this new reality that John refers to (v. 8)? Why is this so important to understand as we seek to live out this commandment?
5. Read John 1:4-9 and 1 John 2:8-11. Why do you think John uses this language of light expelling darkness to refer to the work of Christ in us?
6. What are some implications of Jesus’ words “whoever hates his brother is still in darkness”? How do these words affect other areas of life, including how we view those who are different from us and those who are in need?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. What separates a Christian from a non-Christian?
2. Why is it so important to be obedient to God's Word?
3. Where should our love for other people come from?
4. How does God help us be obedient to His Word each day?

NEXT STEPS

- Take some time to genuinely evaluate if your belief in God is a belief that works. Ask a spouse or accountability partner to evaluate the quality of obedience he or she perceives in your life as it relates to loving God and loving others.
- As a review, read through 1 John 1:1-2:11. Write down themes and truths that stick out to you. Which ones are convicting? Meditate on them and consider how you might apply those verses to your life. Follow up this exercise by praying for strength and humility as you seek to be an obedient disciple.

DISCUSSION

1. From what you know about the rest of the Bible’s teaching, why does John’s use of the word “world,” refer to the fallen world, not the physical creation or people in the world? Why is rightly understanding “world” in this passage important?
2. John makes a distinction between “the world” and “things in the world” (v. 15). How would you differentiate the world from the things in the world?
3. How does love for the world directly compete with love for God? Share personal examples that help support or explain your answer.
4. Three primary categories of “worldliness” are presented in v. 16. Which of these areas tempts you the most? When you are tempted in one of these areas, what desires or idols do you find your heart chasing?
5. What are some practical and spiritual tools that help you resist the temptation to walk in the flesh?
6. According to v. 17, what are the respective results of worldliness versus godliness? How can we use these truths to fight sinful temptations and desires when they arise?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. What are some ways we know the world is against God's kingdom?
2. How can we follow God and resemble His kingdom rather than the world?
3. What are some ways you are tempted to disobey God?
4. How can we, as parents, help encourage you to obey God and fight sin?

NEXT STEPS

- Fighting the love of the world is not only an external battle. It's an internal battle as well. Think about internal sins or temptations that often lead to external disobedience to God. What are ways you can begin addressing these internal battles and pursue the will of God?
- Read 1 John 4:17. Though we are not to love the world, we are still to be in it and love those in it. Consider practical ways you can be involved in the world with a gospel-purpose this week.

DISCUSSION

1. The word "love" is used in many ways in our culture. What are some ways love is shown as described in the Bible? What are some ways that it is not?
2. Similarly, what are some attitudes and actions opposed to love (Ex: bitterness, resentment, selfishness, racism, abuse, bigotry) that pop up in your heart?
3. Read vv. 8-9. If you continue in your sins, what does that choice communicate about your values, and who are you aligning yourself with? Where can you find the power to overcome sin? (vv. 6, 9)
4. What does John mean when he says, "he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God?" How does this resonate with you? Why should we be worried if we continue on in sin?
5. Theologians refer to a believer's continued path toward Christ-likeness as "progressive sanctification." How does this text support the idea of progressive sanctification? Should we become more sinless as we mature in our Christian faith? How long is too long to struggle in sin?
6. What does John mean when he says sin is lawlessness?
7. How do you become a child of God? How does being a child of God change the way we live? How does it change our relationship with God? With others?
8. What are some of the works of the devil that Jesus came to destroy?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Why does God expect those who believe in Him to love and obey Him? How does He empower us to do that?
2. How does God's work in believers relate to their works?
3. Why did Jesus come? (v. 8)
4. How does Jesus purify believers? How might someone's life change when this happens?

NEXT STEPS

- Are there any sins on your heart? Confess to God (and others, if need be). Pray for strength to live righteously. Find someone, or a group of people, to support you in your desire to live righteously.
- Pray for someone who has confessed to know Jesus, but seems to be aligning with the devil. Pray that God would break through, and that they would be freed from destruction.

DISCUSSION

1. Who is the “one another” that we are to love?(v. 7) How can we love those who are different than us?
2. According to v. 7, what is the difference between being “born of God” and being one who “knows” God? (Hint: The first word is a completed action [born] while the second is a continuous action [knows])
3. Why is the warning in v. 8 so important to consider?
4. What does v. 10 tell us about God? Who loves first? What is the greatest evidence of that love?
5. Verse 11 has a conditional clause (since this, then that). What is the meaning of the conditional verse?
6. Why does John use the word “beloved”? (vv. 7, 11) How can that encourage us when we do not love perfectly?
7. God’s love is made complete (perfected) in us. How can we complete God’s love? (v. 12)

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Where does love come from?
2. What do we show people when we choose not to act loving toward them?
3. Why should we love others?
4. When we love others, what are some ways that they might see God through us?

NEXT STEPS

- This passage starts with a command to love one another. When have you not done that? Do you need to confess that and mend relationships?
- Consider getting your Small Group together to demonstrate love to your community. Pray and think through ways that your serving can be accompanied with the truth of the gospel.

DISCUSSION

1. John says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” How do God’s commandments demonstrate His love? Why do you think people have a hard time seeing this truth?
2. What does John mean in this passage when he speaks of “the world”? What does it look like to overcome the world? How is that done?
3. How does belief in Jesus relate to overcoming the world?
4. If Jesus has already overcome the world, what is He waiting for? Why not come and make all things new? Read these passages and discuss. (Matt. 28:18-20, John 14:12, 2 Peter 3:9)
5. How does obeying God prove that we have overcome the world?
6. How does obeying God prove that we love our neighbor? (1 John 5:2)
7. John says that even some who were previously in the church, but left, were never a part of it (1 John 2:19). What does it mean to truly believe that Jesus is the Christ— the Messiah? (1 John 5:1) What are some distinguishing markers of being an overcomer?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Why would we desire to overcome the world?
2. How does Jesus overcome the world, and how can we?
3. How does being an overcomer shape the way we live, both toward God and others?
4. Why is it good to obey God's commands? How does that show that He loves us?

NEXT STEPS

- Find a way to love your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This could be done through spring cleaning, yard work, gardening, or watching someone's kids. Get creative! This is also a great way to share the love of God with unbelievers.
- Spend time meditating on the love of God. Find verses throughout the Bible to aid in this process. How does God's love relate to His desire to make us overcomers? Thank Him for His love and grace.

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