

Show Me the Way (Finding Assurance of My Salvation)

PURPOSE: To help my students gain assurance of their salvation.

OTHER TITLE OPTIONS: “Without a Doubt,” “In Search of Certainty”

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- **Two gospel tracts for each student.** I recommend either “*Steps to Peace With God*,” by Billy Graham, or “*The Four Spiritual Laws*” by Bill Bright. (We will use one this week and next as well. Why repeat it? Remember that it takes time for things to sink in. In Billy Graham crusades, a person usually has to attend about three nights before he/she will make a decision.)
- **The song “The Wall,” by Kansas, or “Show Me the Way,” by Styx,** if you choose to use this option.

HINT: You may be able to get more than two lessons out of this. If you generate a lot of discussion or just see that you’re running short of time, wrap things up and cover the rest another week. This is too important to skim through.

Introduction

To kick off this lesson, I’ll describe two guys and then ask you what they have in common.

- The first guy is **an incredible football player.** He was a record-setting, professional superstar – the type hero that many athletes would worship. But while this quick and powerful running back was confident on the playing field, he wasn’t so confident about a bigger issue. One day, an interviewer asked him what he feared - an interesting question for a player so quick and powerful that his opponents feared him. But his answer was revealing. What did he fear? In his own words, “*Dying and going to hell. But I hope I don’t, because I’ve been a good person.*” (*Found in Sports Magazine*)
- The second guy is **Chris Farley**, the comedian. Can you name some of the TV shows and movies he played in? (Here are some: “*Saturday Night Live*,” “*Tommy Boy*”, “*Black Sheep*”, “*Beverly Hills Ninja*”, “*Edwards and Hunt*”, “*It’s a Dog’s Life*” and “*Almost Heroes*.”) Before he died in 1997 at 33 years of age he revealed his serious side in an interview. He admitted, “*Lust, gluttony, booze and drugs are most of the things I confess to. I can’t help it. I hope to God that God will forgive me my sins. I don’t know.*” (“*’SNL’ alum’s death echoes Belushi’s*,” The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, by Lyle V. Harris, 12-19-97, p. G02)

IDEA: Consider using and discussing the songs “Show Me the Way” (Styx) or “The Wall” (By Kerry Livgren of Kansas.) (Don’t confuse the latter with the Pink Floyd song by the same Title.) Both songs paint a vivid picture of the agony of spiritual doubt. Discuss the songs after they are played. Livgren later became a Christian, and has a powerful testimony.

DISCUSSION: So, what did these guys have in common? (Were all outwardly successful, but inwardly they were troubled because they didn’t know whether or not they would go to heaven.)

These three guys had what most people think it takes to be happy. The first was a successful athlete, the second a successful entertainer. But their outward success didn’t give them an inward peace. And no matter how much fame we achieve or money we gain in this life, we can still go to bed at night fearing the future if we haven’t dealt with our spiritual doubts. So this week and next, we’re going to attack our doubts head on. Could anything be more important than making sure we have a place reserved for us in heaven?

As Jesus put it, “**What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Lk. 9:25)**

Let’s pray as we begin. Each of you pray silently that God will speak to you today to clear up whatever doubts you are facing.

I. Is Certainty Possible?

IDEA: Video Interviews.
Go out during the week and ask students or people in general if they think a person can really know for sure, this side of heaven, whether God will let them into heaven or not. Show portions of the video to introduce this point to your class.

This is the first big hurdle to cross. Many people don’t think anyone can know for sure where they would go if they died today. So let’s go to the Bible to see what it says. Who will read I John 5:13 for us?

“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.”

Discussion: What does this verse say to those who don’t believe they can have assurance of their salvation? (We *can* know that we have eternal life.)

So if it’s possible to know that we have eternal life, nothing is more important for us to figure out while we’re here on earth. How can we get that assurance?

II. How Do I Clear Up My Doubts?

When we receive Jesus (John 1:12), we receive His Spirit (Rom. 8:9) who leads us (8:14), gives us a relationship with God (Rom. 8:15), and testifies with our spirit that we are His children (8:16; cr. I Jn. 3:24; 4:13). So God’s Spirit has a part in assuring us of our salvation.

DISCUSSION: But according to the verse we just read (I John 5:13,) some Christians still have doubts. What do you think causes doubts? (Let them respond.) This week and next, we'll try to help the common kinds of doubters we find. If none of these doubters look like you, then let's talk further after the series is over.

Doubter #1 “Theodore Thinker” (Not to be confused with Theodore Cleaver, better known as “*The Beaver.*”) –

The Symptoms: “*I’m just not sure the Bible is God’s Word.*” When Theodore thinks about other religions, he wonders if they might be right and Christians might be wrong. When he sees hypocritical Christians and all the evil in the world, he wonders if God might not be so good after all. Do you doubt your salvation because you have doubts about the Bible?

The Prescription: Look up these verses to find a prescription for seekers. If you’re not sure about the bible, take the prescription yourself. If that’s not your problem, listen carefully so that you’ll know how to help others. Who will read each of the following verses? After each is read, someone else tell me how you think this verse applies to “Theodore Thinker.”

Hint: Don’t tell students the principle (for example, “Pray”) before they read each verse. If they can draw the principle out of the Scriptures themselves, then they will **a)** realize that they can understand and apply Scripture themselves **b)** remember it better **c)** stay awake longer during the lesson (since they are involved) **d)** understand that the authority for these answers rests in the Word of God, not you.

Word of God, He will answer.)

ILLUSTRATION: “Dave” was a committed Christian student, who not only stayed out of trouble and attended youth fellowships, but had also led many others to Christ. But in his own heart, he was troubled by doubts about the Christian faith. So he began to pray regularly that God would show him the truth. Over time, and by applying the following principles, God helped him overcome his doubts.

1. Pray

“This is the confidence that we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him.”
(I Jn. 5:14,15)

Discussion: Someone tell me in your own words what this verse is saying. (If we ask God for something that’s in His will for us to have, we’ll get it.) How does this apply to people who aren’t sure if the Bible is true? (We know it is God’s will for us to believe. So if they ask God regularly to show them that the Bible is the

I Jn. 5:14,15 – “Ask” is in the Greek present tense, which could be translated “continually ask.” So, this verse doesn’t promise that a person who asks only once should expect an immediate answer.

Are you troubled by doubts about the Bible? Then pray daily that God will lead you out of doubt and into faith.

(In some groups it would be appropriate to ask a volunteer to pray out loud for those in the group who struggle with doubts.)

2. Be willing to follow Jesus

(Jesus is speaking) “If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” (John 7:17)

Discussion: Okay, in your own words, what is this verse saying? (If we’re willing to obey God, we will know whether or not what Jesus said was from God.) So, if you’re a “Theodore Thinker,” what do you do with this principle? (Check your heart to make sure you’re willing to follow God.)

ILLUSTRATION: *Steve, a student at the University of Georgia, was sharing his faith with a skeptical student, who said he had intellectual problems with the Christian faith. Steve wanted to cut through the fluff and make sure where the real roadblock was. So he asked, “If I could demonstrate to you that Jesus really did all the miracles He claimed to do, pulled off His own resurrection, and was truly the Son of God, would you be willing to give Him your life?” The student kind of smiled and said, “I suppose that’s the real problem. I’m just not willing to give up my partying.”*

This guy had a heart problem that was disguised as a head problem. If you want to clear up your doubts, make sure that your heart is open. If you’re not willing to follow God, don’t expect Him to clear up all your doubts just to satisfy your curiosity.

REVIEW: So, if you’re a Theodore Thinker, start by praying, then check your willingness.

3. Read the Bible

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” (Rom. 10:17)

DISCUSSION: In the light of this passage, what should a doubter do? (Read the Bible.)

OBJECT LESSON: (Hold up a sealed envelope.) Tell me, do you believe the contents of this letter? (They will respond, “How can we? We don’t even know what it says.) Right. And many people who doubt the Bible don’t even know what it says. Many find that their questions are answered by simply reading the Bible. Even if you’re not sure if the Bible is true, read some in it each day. Because *“faith comes from hearing the message.”*

4. Study the evidence

(Speaking of Jesus) “After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.”(Acts 1:3)

DISCUSSION: Is God against using evidence to prove our faith? (No. If Jesus gave “many convincing proofs” for His resurrection, then evidence is not a bad thing.)

ILLUSTRATION: Remember “Dave,” the high school student who was troubled with questions. He went through this whole process. He prayed, checked his heart, continued to read the Bible, and finally began to do some serious study of evidence for the Christian faith. He read books like Josh McDowell’s **More Than a Carpenter**, and **Evidence That Demands a Verdict**. Eventually, God used these books to give him a solid faith, and help him to reach others.

So, doubts can be a way to a stronger faith and more powerful ministry, if you attack your doubts by seeking God. Remember Jesus’ disciple that some call “Doubting Thomas?” He said that he wouldn’t believe in Jesus’ resurrection until he saw the nail marks in his hands, put his finger in the nail holes, and his hands in to his side. (John 20:24,25) A week later, Jesus appeared to Him. And instead of rebuking him, He showed him the evidence. He told Thomas,

“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe. Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:27,28)

If you feel that a book like *More Than a Carpenter* would be helpful to you, tell me after class and I’ll get you a copy.

Doubter #2: “Forgetful Fred”

The symptoms: “I prayed a prayer for salvation years ago, but now I can’t remember exactly what I thought and prayed. What if I really didn’t understand?” Other people drift away from God after their decision for Christ. And as they look at the way they live, they wonder if they were ever really saved at all.

ILLUSTRATION: Have you ever had an event that you had to wake up really early for, and your parents weren’t around to make sure you were up? Whenever I set my clock for something really important, I usually turn off the lamp, but then begin to wonder if I really set it for AM instead of PM, or whether I left the alarm switch on or off. So I roll back over, turn on the lamp and check the alarm to make sure I set it right. I think it’s only natural that when you’ve got a lot riding on something, you want to make sure you’ve done it right. For some of you, it’s time to double check to make sure your salvation is secure.

The Prescription: You can solve this problem by coming before God with a booklet that explains how to become a Christian. (Hand out the booklet of your choice. I recommend either “*The Four Spiritual Laws*” by Campus Crusade for Christ, or “*Steps*

to Peace With God,” by Billy Graham.) Simply pray, “God, You know the doubts that I’ve been struggling with. I may have already made this decision before, but I can’t rest until I make sure. I don’t want to go another day without knowing that I’m really headed for heaven.” At this point, go through the booklet page by page, reading the Scripture and making sure you understand it all. Sincerely pray the prayer at the end.

ILLUSTRATION: *One student wrote his name and the date on the back of the tract. Then he locked it in a small safe he kept in his bedroom. After that, whenever Satan came to him with doubts about what he said or thought or did when he received Christ, he simply took the booklet out of his safe so that he could see exactly what he had done.*

CONCLUSION

As we said at the beginning, there’s nothing more important than making sure you are headed for heaven. Look over the booklet by yourself today before you go to bed. Pray the prayer if you’re ready and are uncertain whether or not you did it right in the past. And don’t miss next week, when we’ll talk about other problems that make us doubt.

Who will pray for us as we dismiss?

Show Me the Way (Finding Assurance of My Salvation) Week 2

MATERIALS NEEDED: A pencil and paper for each small group to record their insights. A pencil and paper for each student to list his sins. Enough tracts for the entire group. (I recommend “*The Four Spiritual Laws*,” by Bill Bright, or “*Steps to Peace With God*,” by Billy Graham.)

Introduction

ILLUSTRATION: *It was the 1924 World Series, the bottom of the ninth inning, and Goose Goslin (who was eventually inducted into the hall of fame) was up to bat for the Washington Generals. The Generals were down one run and desperately needed to tie it up. The pitcher fired the ball. Goslin connected, sprinted for first base, then rounded second and third as the Generals’ fans cheered him on. And I’m sure they went absolutely wild in that final stretch as they watched him beat the ball to home plate. But to everyone’s utter dismay, the umpire ruled him out. He was obviously safe. Was this official blind? The umpire stepped up to the mic, calmed the furious crowd, and explained, “The runner missed first base.”* (Heard from a speaker. Don’t have documentation.)

Some of you are doing some neat things for God. You’ve made some positive changes in your life. You attend Christian meetings. You may even pray, read the Bible, and tell others about Jesus. But although things on the outside are looking up, you still can’t get that peace on the inside that they are right with God.

Perhaps the problem is that although you are doing a lot of Christian things, you never started the Christian life right. Like Goose Goslin, you’re sprinting around the bases, but you never really touched first base.

Last week we began a series that we entitled, “Show Me The Way,” to learn how we can gain an assurance of our own salvation, how we can know that we’re right with God, how we can be certain that if we died today, that we’d be in heaven tomorrow. Today, we want to make sure that we’ve all touched first base.

PRAAYER: I’ll give you a moment to pray silently that God will touch your heart as we cover perhaps the most important message you could ever hear.

ILLUSTRATION: *In a private conversation, a confident, cool high school student was asked if he gave any thought to spiritual things. He answered, “You know, sometimes I stay up nights just wondering if I’m going to heaven when I die.” We’re doing this series to help you clear up those agonizing doubts.*

REVIEW/DISCUSSION: Last week we tried to help two doubters, “*Theodore Thinker*” and “*Forgetful Fred*.” What caused “Theodore’s” doubts? What would you suggest to help him? What about “Forgetful Fred?” Now let’s meet “*Dry Eyed Donna*.”

Doubter #3: “Dry Eyed Donna”

The Symptoms - “*I didn’t get emotional when I received Christ.*” Donna sees some people get very emotional when they receive Christ. Since she didn’t, she wonders if her experience was for real.

ILLUSTRATION: *A high school student went forward at a revival service to receive Christ as his personal Savior. But he almost returned to his seat when he noticed that a lady near him was in tears, while he didn’t feel any special emotion. But he decided to go through the counseling and make his decision anyway. Although he didn’t get emotional, I’m sure the decision was real. The student’s name was Billy Graham! This is how he described his salvation experience: “No bells went off inside me. No signs flashed across the tabernacle ceiling. No physical palpitations made me tremble. I wondered again if I was a hypocrite, not to be weeping or something.... I simply felt at peace.”* (Just As I Am, pp. 29-31)

The Prescription: Go back to first base and make sure you’ve done what Jesus asked of you. Look up John 3:16 and reflect on it.

(Jesus speaking) **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”**

Jesus is telling us who will have eternal life. Does He say, “**whoever weeps**” when he believes has eternal life? No. Does He say “**whoever gets very emotional**” when he believes has eternal life? No! He says “**whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**”

Now think with me for a moment. Let’s imagine that a person believes in Jesus, trusts Him to save him, but he doesn’t get eternal life. What would that say about God? (He would be a liar.) So if we are trusting Jesus, believing in Him for eternal life, then **our salvation is as secure as God’s promise.**

Doubter #4: “Emotional Roller Coaster Rhonda”

The Symptoms: - “*Sometimes I don’t feel close to God.*” Rhonda’s living for God, but she’s not as bubbly as some other Christians she knows. Sometimes she gets down, even depressed about things. But these other Christians seem perky, bubbly, and enthusiastic all the time. It makes her wonder whether she’s got the real thing or not.

The prescription: Go back to first base and make sure that you’ve done what Jesus said you need to do to be saved. Let’s look back at John 3:16. Did it say, “**Whoever has a bubbly personality will be saved?**” No! It says that “**whoever believes**” has eternal life.

Are you like “Roller Coaster Rhonda,” questioning your faith because of your feelings? Remember, salvation is based on *facts*, not *feelings*. If the Bible says tells us that whoever truly believes is saved, then you can rest assured that God doesn’t lie. You’ve just got to learn to trust Him.

Doubter #5: “Wishy Washy Willie”

The Symptoms: *“I don’t act like a Christian should act.”* Willie goes to church on Sunday and an occasional outing with his youth group. He even prayed a prayer for salvation at a retreat one summer. But he seldom opens his Bible at home and just blends into the crowd at school. Fact is, he lives his life just like the non-Christians that he hangs around. So sometimes he questions whether he’s a Christian at all.

The Prescription: Take a long, hard look at your lifestyle.

Although the verses will assure some doubters, they may give doubts to some of you who are falsely assured. They will comfort the afflicted and afflict some of the comforted. We’ll just let the Word do its business in each heart.

BIBLE SEARCH ACTIVITY: The book of I John contains many passages that tell us how to know if we are really God’s children. Let’s divide into small groups and appoint a reader and a secretary to record your insights. In this Bible search, you’re looking for how to tell a true believer from an unbeliever. A volunteer reads a verse, another tells what the verse says about assurance. After each group has had sufficient time, have one person report to the whole group what they learned. Someone can record the results on an overhead or chalkboard. (Large Group option: Have a person read a verse, ask for another volunteer to say what the verse says about assurance, and have another person to write the insight on a blackboard/overhead.)

NOTE: The Greek tense of these verbs is important. When the verses speak of “walk in the light” or “keep his commandments,” the Greek present tense is used. This tense signifies continual action, and indicates a habitual lifestyle, not perfection. So, as you read these verses, ask yourself, for example, “Is my day to day walk one of walking in the light, or walking in the darkness?” I John 1:8 clarifies that we’re not speaking of perfection.

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (See also James 3:2.)

Am I a Christian? (I John's Lifestyle Exam)

[Study note - Although some commentators (e.g., BKC, Schnackenburg, Brooke) takes “these things” in I Jn. 5:13 to refer exclusively to the immediate context, most commentators that I read persuasively argue for it referring to the entire book (so Westcott, Bruce, Dodd, Haas, Marshall, Plummer, NBC, WBC, EGT). But whatever you take as the reference of this verse, there can be no doubt that a (if not *the*) dominant theme of the book is: “How can Christians know that they have eternal life?”]

Real Christians...

- obey God’s commands (**2:3,4**; cr. 1:6; 2:17, 3:24; 5:2,3)

“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

- walk like Jesus walked (**2:5,6**)

“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 live in him must walk as Jesus did.”

- love their brothers (**3:14,15**; cr. 2:9-11; 3:10,14-18;3:23;4:7-12,19-21)

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.”

- believe in Jesus (**5:1**; cr. 2:23; 3:23, 4:15; 5:10-12)

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.”

- do what is right (**2:29**; cr. 3:10)

“If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.”

- don’t continue to sin (**3:6**; cr. 3:7-9;5:18)

2:3,4 – “*have come to know him*” is in the Greek perfect tense, describing a past experience which has continuing results.

“*obey his commands*” doesn’t speak of perfect obedience.

“The question is whether I am trying (and to some extent succeeding) to keep God’s commandments.” (Marshall)

2:5,6 – It’s not clear in the Greek whether “this” points to what follows or what precedes. Marshall concludes it points forward, but suggests it makes little difference, since to walk like Jesus is simply a concrete, practical way to express keeping his Word.

“*in him*” - While Marshall and others see this as another way to express “the state of the true Christian,” BKC sees it as speaking of our fellowship with Him rather than our permanent relationship with him.

“No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.”

- love God (5:1,2)

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.”

Now again I want to emphasize that John's not talking about perfection. Some people get so sensitive that when they miss a quite time they question whether they are saved or not. But just the fact that you are trying to meet with God, and feel bad when you sin, shows that the Spirit is working in your life.

So, if my lifestyle is centered around me, me, me, rather than loving others and living for God, I shouldn't have an assurance of my salvation. It doesn't matter how much I cried when I prayed at that retreat or revival years ago. ***According to I John, the way I know if I was really born again at that retreat is to look at how I'm living now.***

Are you believing in Jesus now? Are you following Jesus now? Do you love your brothers and sisters in Christ now?

ILLUSTRATION: *Let's imagine that Terry (perhaps use the name of an outgoing guy in your group) goes out for freshman football. The coach says that he can join the team as long as he commits himself to attend practices and do what the coach says. Terry gets all excited and tells the coach he'll do it. But the next day in practice his coach begins to note some odd behavior. When Terry's supposed to be running laps, he's sitting under a shade tree reading Mad Magazine. “What are you doing?” demands the coach. “Well, this issue just came today, and I was getting a little tired after the first lap. I'm not really into the sweating and getting out of breath thing.”*

By the end of the week, Terry begins skipping practices altogether. The coach finds him at school and asks if he's been sick. “No,” Terry explains. “I just didn't realize that practice would be from 3:30-5:00. Do you realize that you've scheduled practices when the reruns of Gilligan's Island come on? I never miss them.”

DISCUSSION: What do Terry's actions tell you about his original commitment to the coach to play Freshman football? (He either didn't understand the commitment or didn't really mean it.) Precisely! And I think that this is exactly the point I John is making. If you're goofing off in your relationship with God today, you'd better take a hard look at that decision you made years ago.

As someone said, “*The faith that fizzles at the finish, was flawed from the first.*”

If you question your faith because you are a “Wishy-washy Willie,” it’s time for you to wake up and realize that you may not be in the faith at all. If you want assurance of you’re salvation, I challenge you go get off the fence, repent and receive Jesus today.

GETTING IT INTO YOUR LIFE: *One student who struggled with doubt read slowly through the book of I John. As he came to each of the above passages, he put a check by each passage as he realized that he passed each test.*

Doubter #6: “Shameful Sally”

The Symptoms - “I don’t think God could ever forgive my past.” Sally looks at the ways she hurt her parents, her friends and others, and can’t believe that God could ever forgive her. Maybe she got strung out on drugs, got pregnant, or killed someone in a gang fight. She considers herself the worst of all sinners.

The Prescription – Let me introduce you to a worse sinner than you. Here’s what he wrote:

“...I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man.... Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.” (I Timothy 1:13,15,16)

1:13 – The Greek word for *violent* means “a violent, insolent man” (AG) [*insolent* means insulting or disrespectful (dictionary)]

Do you know who wrote that? It was the Apostle Paul, the guy who wrote most of the books of the New Testament and one of the most incredible Christians who ever lived. Do you know what he was like before he became a Christian? He blasphemed Jesus, tried to force Christians to blaspheme him, and was such a violent man, and so furiously enraged at Christians that he persecuted the church and Jesus, imprisoning Christians and having them beaten and killed (I Tim. 1:13; Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1,2,4,5; 22:4,5,7,19,20; 26:9-11). But Paul wants you to know that if God can still have mercy on him, then nobody’s too bad for God to save.

So, you think you’ve been bad! Have you beaten or killed any Christians lately? Even if you have, I’ve got good news for you. It’s in I John 1:7b:

“...the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

From how much sin? (“**all sin**”). Can you say it with me? (“**all sin**”) Can he purify us from hurting our parents? (“**all sin**”) from premarital sex? (“**all sin**”) from pornography? (“**all sin**”) from killing Christians? (“**all sin**”).

Now do you see why the word “*gospel*” means “*good news?*” There’s no sin in your past that’s so black that God can’t take out the stain and leave you as white as snow. His forgiveness is there for the asking. Look at I John 1:9:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

ACTIVITY: Write down a list of things that you’ve never felt completely forgiven for. (Don’t worry. I’ll never see this list!) Now write in bold letters over this list **“I John 1:9.”** Now, wad it up or tear it into small shreds and throw it into this garbage can.” It’s gone. Dropped into the deepest sea. Forgotten. Doesn’t it feel great!

The Greek word for “confess” is derived from the legal usage. Speaks of confessing or acknowledging sins. Honestly facing a fact. (Dict of NT Theology)

Doubter #7: “Try Hard Terry”

The Symptoms - “How can I ever know if I’ve done enough good deeds? Terry thinks that in order to get into heaven, his good deeds have to outweigh his bad ones. So how can he ever know if he’s done enough good?

The Prescription – You’ve missed the main point of the gospel. Check out Ephesians 2:8,9:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”

DISCUSSION: According to these verses, what saves us? (God’s grace, through faith) And how do our works help us get saved? (They don’t.) What do you think it means that “no one can boast.” (At judgement day, no one will be boasting about how many good deeds they did to earn heaven. God will get all the credit for saving us.) Does it say that we *have been saved* or *are hoping to be saved*? What difference does it make? (I don’t have to wait to see if God has saved me. When I received Christ, He saved me then.) That’s how John could speak of knowing that we **“have”** eternal life (I Jn. 5:13), rather than waiting to see if we receive it in the future.

So, although our lifestyle provides evidence that we are saved, it is not our lifestyle that saves us. Once a person is saved through faith, his/her lifestyle will change.

III. An Opportunity for Certainty.

We introduced this lesson with a baseball player who lost out because he missed first base. Some of you may be unsure whether or not you ever touched your spiritual first base. Do you know for sure that if you died today, you’d be in heaven tomorrow? Here’s how you can know.

(Leader, take a tract of your choice, give a copy to each student, and go through it with them. If time has run short, simply leave them with a tract, and go through one next week. You don't want to rush through something that is so important. You want to give them time to think it through, and even ask questions if they don't understand it.)

Idea: If you have students who have been trained in how to share the gospel, divide up into small groups and let them go through the gospel with the group using a tract of your choice. (Highly recommended: Four Spiritual Laws, Campus Crusade for Christ, Steps to Peace With God, by Billy Graham.)

“Show Me The Way” (How to Know That You’re Headed For Heaven)

Introduction

An entertainer and an athlete that have something in common.

“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Luke 9:25)

I. Is Certainty Possible?

“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.” (I John 5:13)

II. How Do I Clear Up My Doubts?

Doubter #1 – “Theodore Thinker”

Illustration: “Dave Has His Doubts”

Prescription:

- Pray (I John 5:14:15)
- Be willing to follow Jesus (John 7:17)

Illustration: “Steve Cuts Through the Fluff”

- Read the Bible (Romans 10:17)

Object Lesson: “What’s In This Letter”

- Study the Evidence (Acts 1:3; Jn. 20:27,28)



Doubter #2 – “Forgetful Fred”

Illustration: “Setting That Alarm”

Prescription: Pray again, this time for assurance.

Overhead sheet

Week 2

“Show Me The Way” (How to Know That You’re Headed For Heaven)

Introduction

Illustration: “The Runner is Out!”

Illustration: “Sometimes I Just Stay Up Nights”



Doubter #3 – “Dry Eyed Donna”

Illustration: “No Bells Went Off Inside Me”

Prescription: John 3:16

Doubter #4 – “Emotional Roller Coaster Rhonda”

Prescription: John 3:16

Doubter #5 – “Wishy Washy Willie”

I John’s Lifestyle Exam: What are real Christians like?

Illustration: “Terry Goes Out For Football”

Doubter #6 – “Shameful Sally”

Meet the Chief of all Sinners! (I Timothy 1:13,15,16)

Here’s the good News! (I John 1:7,9)

Doubter #7 – “Try Hard Terry”

The Prescription: Ephesians 2:8,9

III. An Opportunity For Certainty

“Show Me The Way” (How to Know That You’re Headed For Heaven)

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