

*Don't Have Doubts When You Should Have Assurance  
And Don't Have Assurance When You Should Have Doubts.*

# THAT YOU MAY KNOW



HOW TO BE SURE YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE AS  
TAUGHT FROM THE BIBLE IN THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN

**Jimmy D. Brown**

THAT YOU MAY KNOW

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## Introduction: It's A Balancing Act

Imagine a server walking with a platter piled high with delicious foods.

His only objective is to get to the table without spilling any of the contents, but it's not going to be easy. The platter must remain balanced if he is going to make it and there is little margin for error.

If he tips the platter too far to either side, things are going to get messy.

That's how I feel as begin writing this little book about assurance. It's a tricky topic to address because there is a fine line between giving assurance and giving false assurance.

*I don't want to remove doubt where it should be present  
nor create doubt where it should be absent.*

It would be terrible for someone who is a Christian to think that they are not one, and even more terrible for someone who is not a Christian to think that they are one.

If the platter tips too far to one side, things will get messy.

Because of this, I'm a little hesitant to undertake such a writing project. But I've seen too many people fall into one of these two camps...

1. Those who have many evidences of genuine saving faith, but have little peace in their hearts about eternity because they aren't sure they will make it to heaven.
2. Those who have little or no evidence of genuine saving faith, but think they are heaven-bound because of some long-ago decision, church affiliation or moral goodness.

It appears these people are already tipped to one side or the other.

And it troubles me greatly to see believers so doubtful and unbelievers so assured.

So, at the risk of making a mess, and with much prayer for grace to win out in the lives of those who might read this, I will pick up the platter of the gospel and start walking toward the table.

Why?

Because I believe God wants us to know that we have eternal life (or know that we don't, so we can

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receive it while there is still time). Look at the words from the Bible in 1 John 5:12-13...

*Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.*

That's one of the main reasons why John (under the inspiration of God) wrote this epistle.

He says so himself.

John speaks the precious words "*that you may know*" to believers in Jesus so they can be assured that eternal life is theirs.

*Eternal life is secured by, and guaranteed through, saving faith in Jesus.*

Throughout the rest of the epistle of 1 John, he cites numerous evidences of true saving faith so we can let the truth of Scripture reveal our true spiritual condition.

*If we really believe in Jesus, then we really have eternal life.*

We just need to make sure we believe in the way the Bible describes believing.

In this short book, we'll take a look at 31 portions of John's epistle to test the genuineness of our faith in Jesus. For each day's reading, there is a two-part "*assurance thermometer*" (for lack of a better description) that looks like this...

- Assurance should increase if (*a specific evidence is present*).
- Doubt should increase if (*a specific evidence is absent*).

The more evidences of saving faith in Jesus that are present, the more we can be assured that we have eternal life.

And, if there are little or no evidences present, we can remove all doubt by repenting and believing the gospel right here, right now.

Again, this is tricky. My desire is not to add some kind of extrabiblical gauge to our lives that we rely on to strengthen our assurance of salvation.

Rather, it is intended to help us examine our lives to see if what Scripture says a Christian thinks like, speaks like, acts like and looks like is seen in us.

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With that in mind, let me make three statements before we move to the first reading...

1. When looking for evidences of saving faith, it is helpful to look at the “*overall trajectory*” of your life as a whole rather than at individual moments. This will avoid basing your assurance on a few highlight or lowlight instances that don’t accurately reflect your entire life. Also, giving more weight to who you are recently rather than who you were formerly is important.
2. Genuine Christians grow in their faith and live out their faith at vastly different speeds and in vastly different ways. It is best to keep your eyes on Scripture rather than on comparing yourself with someone else. While there will be some similarities between all Christians, there will be a lot of differences too. The important thing is that you are growing in your faith and living out your faith.
3. Ask God to reveal your true condition as you read these selections from the Bible and consider their meaning. Pray that He would point you to evidences of the genuineness of your faith and give you greater assurance of eternal life. Or, if He sees something different in you, that you would too so you can have an opportunity to trust Jesus while there is still time. God is merciful and gracious. If you mean it, He will answer it.

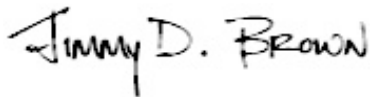
God wants genuine believers to know for sure that their eternity is secure. What blessed assurance we can have that eternal life is ours because we are His!

So, my hope for you is two-fold by the time you read the closing words of this little book...

That you know Jesus.

That you *know* you know Jesus.

All For Him,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy D. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

### 1.

#### THE EXISTENCE OF ETERNAL LIFE

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. -*

1 John 1:1-3

- Assurance should increase if we believe the testimony of the Bible that eternal life is the inevitable outcome for those who have a saving relationship with God.
- Doubt should increase if we think this life is all there is, that there is no hope for resurrection, and that death is the final destination for all human beings.

We cannot be assured we have received eternal life without first being assured of the existence of eternal life. The historical reality of the finished work of Jesus on earth to live, die and rise for sinners is the guarantee that eternal life is future reality for all who believe in and belong to Him. He really came. He really lived perfectly. He really died for our sins. He really rose from the grave. He really is coming again. He really will deliver eternal life to us. That Jesus is who the Bible says He is and did what the Bible says He did is the ultimate assurance that we can join Him in living forever if our faith is in Him. Eternal life is found in fellowship with Jesus.

#### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How has the good news of Jesus changed your perspective on life and death?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

### 2.

#### HOW WE LIVE OUT OUR LIVES

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. - 1 John 1:5-7*

- Assurance should increase if we are increasingly, though imperfectly, “walking in the light” (thinking, feeling, desiring, acting and speaking like Jesus).
- Doubt should increase if we continue “walking in darkness,” unchanged in how we live and unconcerned about what God wants from us and has for us.

The genuineness of our relationship with Jesus is seen in how we live out our lives. It affects how we think. It affects how we feel. It affects how we desire. It affects how we act. It affects how we speak. Walking in the light means looking to the Light of the World for what is true, what is right and what is good so that by His gracious help we can flee the darkness of sin. A Christian is someone who has faith in Jesus that is demonstrated by loving obedience, though imperfectly executed. As the gospel transforms our lives, we no longer love the darkness because God isn't in it, and we desire to be with Him in the light.

#### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How has your relationship with Jesus changed how you relate to people, the world and sin?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

### 3.

#### ADMITTING, BELIEVING, CONFESSING

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. - 1 John 1:8-10*

- Assurance should increase if we agree with God about our sin – that it is an offense to Him, it deserves condemnation and we cannot make things right.
- Doubt should increase if we think we don't sin or that sin isn't a big deal or we don't need to turn to Jesus in repentance and faith in order to be forgiven.

We can know that the gospel message has taken root in our hearts when it leads us to confess our sins to God and seek His gracious forgiveness. To confess our sin is to agree with God that by nature and choice our thoughts, desires, motives, attitudes, feelings, words and actions are wrong, and we need His help to make them right. Coupled with confession is the belief that Jesus died on the cross in our place to pay the debt of our sin so we don't have to. In seeing our sin the way God does (confessing), we have the promise that our faithful and just God will no longer hold its debt against us. It has been paid, and we have been pardoned.

#### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*Are you confident that your sins are forgiven? Why or why not?*



## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

4.

### WE WILL SIN LESS

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. - 1 John 2:1-2*

- Assurance should increase if we actively make war against our sins instead of making provision or excuses for them.
- Doubt should increase if we sin without any real attempt to guard against temptation in advance or fight against temptation when it appears.

Christians are no longer enslaved to sin and have the power to resist it, which we will increasingly do as we grow in our faith and in the likeness of our Savior. Though we will not be sinless, we will sin less. And while our sin should cause us godly sorrow that leads to repentance, it should not rob us of our assurance of salvation. On our behalf and in our place, Jesus has met God's demands for perfect obedience and perfect payment for sin. Rejoice, for the gospel will have the final word! Jesus forever intercedes on our behalf before the Father, his perfect life graciously exchanged for our imperfect ones. For us, the wrath of God has been removed by the grace of God.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How do you handle sin in your life, especially those that recur?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

5.

### WE WILL DO AS HE SAYS

*And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. - 1 John 2:3-5a*

- Assurance should increase if we seek to know and do what God commands of us because we trust and love Him (rather than out of religious obligation).
- Doubt should increase if we don't do what God says and don't care what God says, choosing instead to live in whatever way gets us what we want in life.

A personal relationship with Jesus always includes following Him in trusting and loving obedience. If we have faith in Him, we will do as He says. If we have love for Him, we will do as He says. We cannot have assurance that salvation is ours unless there is evidence that we are His. One evidence is seen in a changed life that increasingly, though imperfectly, grows to keep the commandments of Jesus more fully in more areas of our lives. We don't think, feel, desire, speak and act like He says in order to become His; we do these things because grace has already made us His. And that same grace now helps us to live like it.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What does "loving obedience" to Jesus look like in your life?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

6.

### WE BECOME LIKE JESUS

*By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. - 1 John 2:5b-6*

- Assurance should increase if our actions and words and thoughts and goals and service and love have grown more Christlike since our profession of faith.
- Doubt should increase if neither we nor others see in us any real likeness to the life that Jesus lived or the message that Jesus shared.

We can have assurance that we are in Jesus as we become like Jesus. This is strong evidence that we are abiding in Him, for only by His presence and power in our lives can we be changed so that His ways become our ways. This transformation is not accomplished by human strength, but by the gracious work of our Heavenly Father in us. Throughout our lifetimes, He replaces our desires, thoughts, motives, attitudes, words and actions for those of Jesus. He commands. We obey. He empowers. We change. We look more like Jesus today than in the days behind, but not as much as we will in the days ahead.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How has your life changed since you first came to know Jesus?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

7.

### THE GOSPEL WARMS OUR HEARTS

*Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.* - 1 John 2:9-10

- Assurance should increase if we have Biblical love (which is felt and shown) for family members, friends, acquaintances, strangers and even enemies.
- Doubt should increase if we have ongoing hatred for any individual person or group of people that we treat badly or want the worst for.

The genuineness of our faith in Jesus is put to a simple test: do we habitually hate or love? While there are moments in which unforgiveness, hostility and indifference may be present in our lives, true believers are not marked by a lifestyle of hatred for others. Rather, we pass on in our relationships with others the love we receive from our relationship with God. The gospel warms our hearts to those who are not like us, not for us and not kind to us. We can know we have passed from darkness into light when we care about people that aren't easy to care about because we want to show them that Jesus cares about them.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*Do you love all people, or is there hatred in your heart for one or more persons?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

8.

### SCRIPTURE, NOT CULTURE

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. - 1 John 2:15*

- Assurance should increase if we value the things of God (His ways, His will, His word) more than we do the things of this world (as seen in how we live).
- Doubt should increase if (in seeking happiness) we routinely prioritize things that are anti-God, draw us away from God or become a substitute for God.

A love for the better things of the kingdom of God progressively replaces the love we have for the world when we become followers of Jesus. This doesn't mean we don't love the people of the world, but rather we don't love the philosophies and principles and pleasures of the world which are opposed to God. We are to live in the world as lights for Jesus without living like the world with its sinful values, desires and ways. God radically enables this in us by His grace. As the otherworldly love of the Father captures our hearts, we look more and more to scripture, not culture, for what we are to love and how we are to live.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What do your bank account, calendar and thought life indicate you love most?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

9.

### WE LONG FOR HEAVEN

*For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. - 1 John 2:16-17*

- Assurance should increase if we live with eternity in mind, striving by grace to do things that will matter in heaven, while looking forward to getting there.
- Doubt should increase if we live as if this earthly life is all there is, with little concern about eternity and no real desire for seeing Jesus in the world to come.

Worldliness values the sinful more than the godly, the temporary more than the eternal, the earthly more than the heavenly and the now more than the later. But this fleeting life is not all there is, and those who do the will of God have set their sights on something that will be infinitely better that will last infinitely longer. By His motivating, guiding, empowering grace... We long for heaven. We lay up treasures in heaven. We live for the King of heaven. Assurance is ours even though we do not perfectly keep the will of God because the will of God will perfectly keep us as we trust in Jesus. We will live forever as He does.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How eager are you to reach heaven? Why?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

10.

### WE ARE STILL FOLLOWING HIM

*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. - 1 John 2:19*

- Assurance should increase if we are following Jesus today with daily rhythms of prayer, Bible reading and loving obedience (imperfectly executed).
- Doubt should increase if we are not currently or regularly seeking to know and follow Jesus with no real effort or intention to stay close to Him.

Every Christian has a first and final step of faith here on earth as we follow Jesus. We take that first step by putting our trust in Jesus, and we continue taking steps with Jesus until we get to our heavenly home to join Jesus. Yes, we will stumble along the way, but Jesus will never let us fall away. Yes, we will take missteps along the way, but Jesus will always correct us when we stray. Those who endure to the end by God's grace are truly Christians, truly saved and truly headed for eternal life with Him. A reason to be assured of our salvation is that we not only started following Jesus, but we are still following Him.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What does "continuing" with Jesus look like for you right now?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

### 11. WE BELIEVE

*No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. - 1 John 2:23-25*

- Assurance should increase if we believe everything the Bible says about Jesus (His nature, His claims, His work, His roles, His commandments, His promises, etc.)
- Doubt should increase if we reject anything the Bible says about who Jesus is or what Jesus does, or if we add to what the Bible has revealed about Him.

Denial should lead to doubt. If we deny the Bible's revelation of who Jesus is and what Jesus does, we should doubt we have eternal life in Him. The facts about Jesus and His redeeming work are precisely what brings assurance to those who believe! We believe He came to save sinners like us. We believe He lived perfectly on our behalf. We believe He died in our place. We believe He rose victoriously from the grave to defeat sin and death. We believe He's coming back. This is our confession: Jesus is the Christ, and He alone can bring about the eternal life promised by God for those who believe the unchanging gospel.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What do you believe about Jesus?*



## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

12.

### STRIVING FOR HOLINESS WHILE RESTING IN GRACE

*And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. - 1 John 2:28-29*

- Assurance should increase if we long for Jesus to return and we live in ways that would not make us ashamed if He came back today.
- Doubt should increase if we don't look forward to Jesus returning and we live in ways that would shame us if He came back today.

Our hope in the return of Jesus has a two-fold effect upon our lives. First, it creates in us a confident feeling towards His return because we know our right standing with God is based on His righteousness and not our own moral performance. We do not fear His coming; we long for it. Second, it encourages and transforms us to become more like Jesus as His return draws closer because we want to live fruitfully for His kingdom. We do not ignore His coming; we prepare for it. As the born-again children of God who abide in Jesus, our practice is built on His perfection. We strive for holiness while resting in His grace.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*Do you long for Jesus to come back today?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

13.

### GOD IS THE DECISIVE FACTOR

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. -*

1 John 3:1a

- Assurance should increase if we trust that God loves us and calls us to be His children of His own doing and not because of our moral performance.
- Doubt should increase if we think we have to try hard to be better and do more in order for God to continue loving us so we can remain His children.

Our assurance of salvation is strengthened as we marvel at this truth: God is the decisive factor in us being born again. He gives us His love. He calls us to be His children. He helps us walk in newness of life by His Spirit. None of this is deserved because of who we are, nor earned because of what we do. It is a gift of God lavished upon us by His grace. Though we were not His children, we now are, and so shall we ever be because God makes it so. We didn't get ourselves saved, and we can't keep ourselves saved. The good news is, our salvation is secured by a Savior who never loses a single person whose faith is in Him.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*Are you confident that God loves you, or are you trying to earn His love?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

14.

### A STRAINED RELATIONSHIP, A SAVING RELATIONSHIP

*The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. - 1 John 3:1b*

- Assurance should increase if following Jesus has created conflict for us because what we believe, what we say and what we do exalts Him.
- Doubt should increase if we live so much like the world around us (by its beliefs, values and standards) that we blend in with little or no friction.

When we choose God's ways over the world's ways, it will cause friction between us and the people around us who do not know Him. If we are for Jesus, they will be against us. Even though we strive to show His love to them, they will call us everything from old-fashioned and foolish to hate-filled and dangerous. And it will affect how they treat us. We will be ridiculed, rejected and reviled because we show affection for and allegiance to Jesus. But we can rejoice, for proof that we know Him looks like this: We will have a strained relationship with the world because we have a saving relationship with God.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What kind of personal conflict does being a Christian cause you?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

15.

### REAL FAITH LEADS TO REAL CHANGE

*Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. - 1 John 3:8-9*

- Assurance should increase if we do not practice sin (and we do hate, confess and fight against recurrent sin, intending for it to never happen again).
- Doubt should increase if we excuse, downplay, ignore, justify or rename our sin so we can repeat it because we love it and have no desire to forsake it.

Christians will sin, but we will not practice sin. Those who have God's Spirit living inside of us will not live perfectly, but we also cannot live in a pattern of willful sin without regret or repentance. The marks of those who make a practice of sinning and are not God's children are evident: They have no real desire for change. They make no real effort to change. They show no real evidence of change. This is because they have no real faith in Jesus. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and set us free from sin. He gives believers a new identity with new desires and a new power to change what we practice in how we live.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How do you normally respond to your sin?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

16.

### HE MAKES US INTO NEW PEOPLE

*By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. - 1 John 3:10*

- Assurance should increase if we regularly strive to know and do what God wants (practicing righteousness while resting in grace).
- Doubt should increase if we generally don't consider or care about what God wants us to do (because we are not being transformed by grace).

There are evident contrasts between those who are children of God and those who are children of the devil. It is seen visibly in how we live. Saving belief in Jesus never leaves you the same, but rather always changes you from someone who practices sin into someone who practices righteousness. This becomes obvious over time because genuine Christians inevitably, though imperfectly, obey God's commands, uphold God's truth and believe God's promises. He makes us into new people by His grace and presence. We can know which side we are on because we can see that Jesus is changing how we live and love.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What evidences of "practicing righteousness" are in your life?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

17.

### ACCOMPANIED BY SINCERE LOVE

*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? - 1 John 3:14-17*

- Assurance should increase if we love other people and demonstrate that love through acts of service, sacrifice and softheartedness towards them.
- Doubt should increase if we treat others coldly by ignoring them or their needs when we have the opportunity and means to help.

Jesus didn't come to live, die and rise in order to make bad people good; He came to make dead people alive. Everyone He raises from spiritual death into life experiences the inside-out change that only He can produce by His indwelling presence and power. The love that He showed in laying down His life for us opens our hearts so that we love others in a similar way. We see their needs. We feel compassion toward their needs. We help meet their needs in whatever way we can. Spiritual life is always accompanied by sincere love. Our love for others is not what makes us Christians; being Christians is what makes us love.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How often do you think about others and ways you can help them?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

18.

### THE GOSPEL REMOVES CONDEMNATION

*By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. - 1 John 3:19*

- Assurance should increase if we rest wholly in the finished work of Jesus on our behalf as the guarantee of our salvation.
- Doubt should increase if we live as if we have to try harder to do more and be better in order for us to hold on to our salvation.

There are times when we feel like we have not done enough or said enough or become enough. Our hearts will condemn us because we know that we don't perfectly measure up. No matter how hard we try, we will never look as much like Jesus as we know we should, and so we will feel the accusations of Satan, others and even ourselves for not doing more. But our assurance is never based on us doing enough; it is based on Jesus doing all that is necessary in His atoning work for us. The Law condemns. The gospel removes condemnation. God knows who are truly His, and He wants us to know that we are truly His.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How do you feel when your sins and shortcomings are exposed?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

19.

### THE ORDER IS IMPORTANT

*And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. - 1 John 3:23-24*

- Assurance should increase if we understand that commandment-keeping is the result of getting saved and not the requirement for getting saved.
- Doubt should increase if we think we must do something more than trust in Jesus to be saved or that we don't need to do anything more after trusting in Jesus.

Personal trust in Jesus brings the new affections and actions we demonstrate because of the new life we are given by the presence of His Spirit. The order is important: Believe. Saved. Obey. (Not... Believe. Obey. Saved.) We are saved by grace through faith and then embark on a life of loving obedience by faith as we grow through the same grace that enabled us to first believe. It is all a gift! Step one is to welcome Jesus into our lives for Who He is. Step two onward is to let Jesus be Who He is for us personally: Savior. Provider. Leader. Counselor. King. Treasure. Even with our many missteps, His Spirit helps us to know, follow, enjoy and model Jesus.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What do you believe about the relationship between faith and works?*



## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

20.

### WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT HIM

*Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. - 1 John 4:4-6*

- Assurance should increase if we look to Scripture, rather than culture, for what to believe and how to live. (Scripture has greater influence in our lives.)
- Doubt should increase if we look to culture, rather than Scripture, for what to believe and how to live. (Culture has greater influence in our lives.)

What the world says is opposed to what God says, and the genuineness of our faith in Jesus is revealed by which side we listen to. We are either of the world and not of God, or we are of God and not of the world. People who are not true believers resist and reject the true doctrine of the Bible. They don't understand it. They don't agree with it. They don't live by it. But those who have truly been born again turn to God's Word to guide their lives instead of adopting the world's views and values. Jesus-centered lives begin to replace man-centered ones. What we believe about Him changes what we believe about everything else.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What role does the Bible play in your life?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

21.

### A FAITH THAT SAVES IS A FAITH THAT LOVES

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. - 1 John 4:7-11*

- Assurance should increase if the love of God is being reproduced in us so that our lives are characterized by love for the people around us.
- Doubt should increase if self-love rules in our hearts rather than the kind of “love God, love people” fruit that is produced by the Holy Spirit in us.

Birds fly. Flowers bloom. Honey sweetens. Water dampens. Light illuminates. They ought to do these things because that’s how they were made. This is their nature and design, and it is right to expect them to act in a certain way just as it is right to expect saving faith in Jesus to work itself out in love. It’s appropriate. It’s automatic. When God’s grace remakes us into people of faith, the love we receive from Him ought to burst forth from us into acts of love for others. We can’t help but love. We can’t stop loving. We will live this out imperfectly, but this is for sure: A faith that saves is a faith that loves.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How does your faith express itself in love?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

22.

### BY WHAT THE WORLD REJECTS AS FOOLISHNESS

*By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. - 1 John 4:13-16*

- Assurance should increase if our testimony is that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world (not just accepting it as true, but entrusting our lives to it).
- Doubt should increase if we don't believe Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world (by either rejecting it as false or refusing to embrace it).

No one who is a genuine believer would deny that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world. We confess this. We celebrate this. We cling to this. All of our earthly and eternal hopes are pinned to the precious truth that Jesus has come into the world to save the world. This is not a conclusion that we have come to on our own, but it is evidence that we really belong to God. For only the inner presence of His Spirit can cause us to believe and be changed by what the world rejects as foolishness. By this we know! What sweet assurance is ours when we come to know and to believe the love that God has for us in Jesus.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What is your testimony about Jesus?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

23.

### WE ARE SAFE IN JESUS

*By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. - 1 John 4:17-19*

- Assurance should increase if we are eager for the return of Jesus, unafraid (but reverent!) to stand before God because His grace has made us ready.
- Doubt should increase if we have a sense of dread at the thought of Jesus returning and us standing before God because we fear what might happen.

As we approach the day when all will stand before God in judgment to receive either eternal life or eternal punishment, we can be certain we are safe in Jesus. This is true because... We stand covered by His grace. We stand filled with His love. We stand dressed in His righteousness. None of this is our doing, but is the result of God first setting His affections upon us and wooing us by His kindness so we might love Him and others in return. We did not go looking for Him; He came looking for us. We once were lost, but now are found. And so we (empty of fear and full of confidence) can eagerly await the return of Jesus.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How "safe" do you feel as the day of judgment draws nearer?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

24.

### WE LOVE LIKE GOD INSTRUCTS US TO LOVE

*If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. - 1 John 4:20-5:2*

- Assurance should increase if we love other people in the way that the Bible defines love, including the way Jesus models it and the Holy Spirit produces it.
- Doubt should increase if we love other people in unbiblical ways based on worldly definitions and expressions which are commonly accepted.

Christian love has two parts: affection and action. Love feels something on the inside. Love does something on the outside. But it is critical that our love is biblical, for knowing what God has to say about love keeps us from forming our own opinions on what is right and wrong in how we feel about and treat other people. The Bible that commands us to love others is the same one that tells us and shows us how to love others. Anyone can love, but what makes our love an assuring sign of our God-given salvation is that we love like God instructs us to love. We are to let Scripture, not culture, define love for us.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What does loving other people look like for you?*

## *THAT YOU MAY KNOW*

25.

### IT TAKES BURDENS AWAY

*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. - 1 John 5:3*

- Assurance should increase if we feel that lovingly keeping God's commandments (though not always easy to do) is a blessing, not a burden.
- Doubt should increase if we feel that keeping God's commandments is a burden (which we begrudgingly do, if at all), not a blessing.

For genuine believers, God's commandments are not burdensome because of the love we have for Him, the help we receive from Him and the joy that comes through Him as we do what He tells us to do. When His commandments are rightly understood and rightly followed, we do not see them as "restrictive rules" that rob us of happiness, but as "gracious guardrails" which keep us from things that rob us of happiness. God always leads us to what is good and right and true, and away from sin with its deadly consequences. Christians know this: Obeying Him doesn't add burdens to our lives; it takes burdens away from them.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How do you feel about God's commandments?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

26.

### IT IS NOT US, BUT CHRIST IN US

*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? - 1 John 5:3*

- Assurance should increase if our faith in Jesus encourages us and empowers us to resist worldly influences as we wait for Him to fully deliver us from them.
- Doubt should increase if our “faith” in Jesus produces little or no resistance against the anti-God values, beliefs and practices of this world.

While there are outward evidences (such as loving others, keeping commandments, practicing righteousness and growing in Christlikeness) of lives that have been transformed by the power of the gospel, doing these things is not what saves us. Eternal salvation is never gained by human effort, but rather by putting our faith in Jesus and resting in His saving work on our behalf. It is not us, but Christ in us, that overcomes the world. We can be confident we will gain ultimate victory over sin because Jesus has already made it into a conquered foe. Here and now, we live by faith in the Son of God Who loves us and gave Himself for us.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*What role does faith in Jesus have in your everyday life?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

27.

### HOW THEY RESPOND TO JESUS

*Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. - 1 John 5:10-12*

- Assurance should increase if we believe all of the Bible is true and can be trusted (because God's testimony about Jesus is revealed throughout it all.)
- Doubt should increase if we don't believe all of the Bible is true (for if some of it is false, there can be no confidence what is said about Jesus is not false).

We can be as certain of our salvation as the certainty of God's testimony about everything Jesus said and did. God said it. We believe it. And, in that moment, we have God's testimony, and we have God's gift of eternal life because we have God's Son. We aren't believing a lie, because God is no liar. We aren't believing in vain, because it results in salvation. We aren't believing without evidence, because it changes us over time. All sinful human beings will either receive the wrath of God or the grace of God, depending upon how they respond to Jesus. Eternal life is a gift, and it is only found in Him.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How confident are you that all of the Bible is true and trustworthy?*



## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

28.

### WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE HAVE

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. - 1 John 5:13*

- Assurance should increase if we trust that God works in us to produce and sustain our saving faith in Jesus, rather than in our effort to secure eternal life.
- Doubt should increase if we think becoming and remaining a believer in Jesus Christ rests in our effort, rather than on the power and promise of God.

Those who believe in Jesus can know they have eternal life through Jesus. First, there is the promise of God to grant eternal life to all who receive it by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Second, there are doctrinal, moral and social evidences that show the genuineness of saving faith as God works to change our lives. Third, there is the presence of the Spirit living in us to testify of our union with Jesus and keep us connected to Him. From beginning to end, it is the power of the gospel that saves. God wants us to know with certainty who we are and what we have: Believers in Jesus Christ. Receivers of eternal life.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*Why do you think you have eternal life?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

29.

### ARE THERE SIGNS?

*If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. - 1 John 5:16-18*

- Assurance should increase if we are serious about fighting against sin even though we know that all of our sin is completely forgiven and cannot condemn us.
- Doubt should increase if we are flippant about sin because we think grace will cover it and there is no real cause for concern because God will just forgive it.

God gives us the opportunity while we are still breathing to not only pray for others but also to examine our own lives for unrepentant sin. Are there signs of... Personal rejection of what the Bible says about Jesus? Practiced disobedience to the commands of Scripture? Persistent lack of love for other people? These are evidences that we do not have saving faith or eternal life. God is gracious to warn us while there is still time to repent and believe, to receive forgiveness and be saved. He will protect us from permanent spiritual death if we will turn from sin to Jesus. There is grace for all who will receive it.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How little or much do you care about sin in your life?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

30.

### THE BIBLE CLEARLY DESCRIBES

*We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. - 1 John 5:19*

- Assurance should increase if we are different than we used to be in how we think, feel, desire, speak and act because the power of the gospel has changed us.
- Doubt should increase if we find that any power other than that of Christ is what controls how we live (and there is no real spiritual transformation).

The Bible clearly describes what someone who has been spiritually reborn looks like so we can know that we are a part of the family of God. We have been set free from the world. We have been set free from the evil one. We have been set free from our sin. There has been a transfer of power in our lives, and we are now gladly under the gracious rule of our heavenly Father, able to do all things through the strength that Jesus supplies. As those who have been born again, we grow. Sometimes slowly. Sometimes rapidly. We are not perfect, but our faith in, knowledge of, love for and likeness to Jesus is different than it used to be.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*How has believing in Jesus changed your life?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

31.

### OUR SALVATION RESTS

*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. - 1*

John 5:20

- Assurance should increase if our hearts and minds have been opened to the truth about Jesus, and we embrace what we know of Him.
- Doubt should increase if what we know of Jesus doesn't make us want to know Him more, trust Him more, obey Him more and love Him more.

Jesus has come, and the benefit of His coming is that we may have eternal life through Him. Our salvation rests not in us trying harder, doing more or being better people; it rests in us knowing the Son of God. Jesus did it all. Jesus paid it all. Knowing Him is what transforms the things we say and do. He graciously gives us the desire to change, the power to change and the endurance to change. God loves us just as we are, but He loves us enough to never leave us as we are. We rebel; He restores. We fall, He lifts. We try; He enables. We grow; He produces. Because we know Jesus, we can also know we have eternal life.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER

*Do you know Jesus?*

## THAT YOU MAY KNOW

### CLOSING

*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. - 1 John 5:21*

The world offers many false and cheap substitutes for the true and priceless Savior, and each one demands that we place it at the center of our lives instead of Jesus.

- Flee anything that robs you of your affection for and allegiance to Him.
- Flee any teaching that denies Who the Bible says He is or what the Bible says He did.
- Flee any thought that says His grace isn't enough to save you or that you can live sinfully because you are saved.
- Flee any temptation to replace God with something else as the source of your hope and happiness.

We are to keep ourselves from idols because idols keep us from Jesus.

In one sense, that's the essence of sin...

*Sin is loving anything more than we love God.*

It is a heart issue.

When we are born again, God begins to change us from the inside out. He starts to transform how we feel about Him and how we feel about our sin.

*As a result of loving Him, we start hating our sin.*

One of the strongest evidences that you are a genuine, growing Christian is that you want to be freed from your sin, not just forgiven of it.

It's not just escape from the penalty and consequences of sin that you desire, but escape from the power and control of sin as well.

We are not perfect, but we want to be.

We will fail, but we wish we wouldn't.

## *THAT YOU MAY KNOW*

We like some wrong things, but we long for change.

Jesus will soon fully deliver us from sin, but until then, let us pray for Him to progressively replace our taste for wrong things with new appetites for the better things He has for us.

So, with all of these evidences, there is an undercurrent of love that is at work.

We repent because we love Him.

We follow because we love Him.

We resist temptation because we love Him.

We obey because we love Him.

We forgive others because we love Him.

We seek His will because we love Him.

We serve because we love Him.

We witness because we love Him.

We reject idols because we love Him.

We endure because we love Him.

We long for His return because we love Him.

This is the greatest evidence of them all ... that we love God. It is seen in how we think and feel and desire and speak and act. Love for God fills our hearts and rules our lives.

Perhaps this whole thing of talking about evidences and assurances isn't so tricky after all. Maybe it's actually quite simple and all comes down to one thing...

*Does your life show that you love God?*

That's how you know.

All For Him,

*Jimmy D. Brown*

## Connecting With Me

If you have questions about any of the enclosed material, or if you have any other questions about life with Jesus, please reach out to me by using the *Contact* form at the bottom of the page at *JimmyBrown.com* (making sure you enter your email address correctly). I will personally reply back to you, usually within 24 hours (excluding holidays or weekends).

*NOTE: There are a number of free resources available at [www.JimmyBrown.com](http://www.JimmyBrown.com), and I regularly add more to the site. Check back often for additional materials to access at no cost.*

### Other Connections

- Social media (personal page): [www.Facebook.com/thejimmydbrown/](http://www.Facebook.com/thejimmydbrown/)
- Daily devotions: [www.FinishLineFaith.com](http://www.FinishLineFaith.com) or [www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/](http://www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/)
- Travel / mission vlog (with my wife, Paula): [www.TheMissionAmerica.com](http://www.TheMissionAmerica.com)

*If this resource has been helpful to you, please reach out and let me know.  
And please pass this document on to other people who may, by the grace of God, be helped too.*