



Repent and Believe the Gospel

As you learned in chapter one of *Help! I'm Doubting*, a person might lack assurance for a variety of reasons. While we may feel alone in our struggle with doubt, each of these reasons is actually very common. If you were to ask other teens in your youth group, you would undoubtedly discover that others also struggle with lack of assurance. Here is the good news: for each “problem” that keeps an individual from enjoying the gift of assurance, there is a biblical solution. As God helps you identify the cause (or causes) of your uncertainty, He also provides all the wisdom and grace you need to grow and change. This study will help you identify specific steps of repentance and faith you can begin taking, by His grace.

How to do this study:

1. **Identify the cause of uncertainty.** Out of the common causes of uncertainty listed in chapter one, choose the one with which you most readily identify. If you see yourself in several of the stories, narrow down your choice to the scenario that most closely describes your struggle. If you have a hard time with this step, ask a trusted adult for help.

Common Causes of Uncertainty:

- *You don't know or don't believe God's Word*
- *You are focused on yourself instead of God*
- *You are living in disobedience*
- *You are not actually saved*

2. **Apply the Biblical Solution.** God loves us so much that He graciously provides a solution for our cause of uncertainty. We find that solution in His Word, which is the *only* resource with the ability to make us “wise unto salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15).

You will notice that God’s solution always comes back to **repentance** and **faith**. Knowing the underlying cause of our doubt and uncertainty enables us to turn to the right solution in God’s Word. But simply knowing what God says is not enough. We must also apply the solution to our lives. This is basic discipleship according to Jesus: hear and do what He says (Luke 6:46-49; John 10:27).

You can repeat these first two steps if there is another cause of uncertainty you need to explore.

3. **Adopt a Biblical Goal.** Before you get started, pause to consider: *what is your goal for doing this study?* Why is this topic important to you? What are you hoping will change in your life if you gain assurance of your salvation?

For many people, the goal for gaining assurance is simply so that they can “feel” better. But feelings are fickle things. They aren’t a reliable object on which to hang your faith. Thankfully, feelings don’t make a person saved or unsaved; God alone is the Savior. Wanting to feel better is an inferior goal. What better (more biblical) goal should you adopt? Gaining confidence regarding your secure standing in Christ should be about bringing glory to God. In each of the potential “causes” listed in the chart above, God is not receiving the glory He deserves. Before going further in this study, stop and pray that the Lord will help you adopt this *best* goal. You might pray something like this:

God, I want to glorify You. Please help me care more about Your glory than my own assurance. I pray that I would understand what You have said about the cause of my doubt, and humbly apply the solution You have provided.

Did you know that Christ wants you to be assured of His love for you? He provided salvation for you so you don't have to live in fear or doubt. The ultimate solution to fear and doubt is believing in Who God is and what He has said. We can know we are secure in His love because of what He has said in His Word.

Scripture calls you to test and carefully inspect yourself, to make certain that you are "in the faith" and that Christ is "in you" (2 Corinthians 13:5). God's Word is your only reliable examination tool, not your feelings. Approach His Word with a humble, teachable heart and God will give you grace (James 4:6).

Discuss this study with a trusted, spiritual adult. Inviting the help of others into our lives is a humbling step. God promises to bless such humility. You grow best as you learn and apply God's Word to your life alongside other believers in your local church. Don't skip this important step!

Cause of Uncertainty: You Don't Know or Don't Believe God's Word

Have you “gotten saved” over and over again? Do you pray every night in the quiet of your room for God “to save you” just in case you “didn’t mean it” the last time you asked? Are you basing your salvation on a feeling? A person may lack a sense of assurance because they do not **know** God well. It is difficult, if not impossible, to trust someone you do not know.

Chronic doubt is nothing more than chronic unbelief—a pattern developed, over time, of disbelieving God. It is a **choice** from which an individual can **repent**. When we “doubt” what God has clearly said in His Word, we are calling His character into question. To put it bluntly, we are calling God a liar (1 John 5:10).

Over time, a person who refuses to believe God’s Words gets into the habit of not believing. Repeating wrong thoughts to himself, this person becomes more entrenched in unbelief. As you read in the mini-book, you might be tempted to say, “I *can’t* trust God.” But it would be more accurate to confess, “I *won’t* trust God.”

If this describes you, don’t despair: there is good news! God invites you to know Him. This is precisely why He gave you His Word. He is not hiding. He reveals Himself on every page of Scripture. You *can* know Him. And you *can* trust Him. God does not have to earn your trust. He already is and always will be worthy of your trust.

Biblical Solution: Know and Believe God’s Word—Who He is and What He Says

Take a moment to consider the biblical goal discussed on pages 1-2 of this study: *God’s glory*. A chronic doubter is not giving God the glory He deserves. Understanding this enables you to see just how serious the sin of “chronic doubt” really is. As with any sin, God has provided the way for you to change.

1. Humbly repent

The first step to applying a biblical solution to chronic doubt is repentance. Unbelief is sin. Repentance begins with a recognition of your sinfulness in God’s sight, based on what God says in His Word. You have dishonored God by not choosing to believe the things that are always true about Him. Repent of your wrong thinking. Repent of placing your thoughts above God’s thoughts. In Romans 4, Paul recounts the story of Abraham’s faith in the promises of God. Even though what God said to him seemed impossible, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Romans 4:20). Abraham took God at His Word. Seek God’s forgiveness for not believing Him and not giving Him glory. Perhaps you need to borrow the prayer of the struggling father in Mark 9: “I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Then by faith, and through God’s strength, take action against your sin by practicing the positive growth steps that follow.

2. Get in (and stay in) God’s Word

In 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul confidently declares, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” If you get to know your God, you can have this same kind of confidence in the God who saves and guards you. For the chronic doubter, there are key truths from Scripture that you need to know—really know—inside and out in order to replace your pattern of unbiblical thinking. Here is a start:

Who God Is & What God Says:

- **Do you think He doesn't want to save you?**

This is why Jesus came—to seek and to save the lost. God desires that all men turn to Him in repentant faith. He wants to save!

Read: Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 1:15; Matthew 9:13; John 3:17; Luke 5:32; John 10:9-11; Romans 6:23; Matthew 1:21; 2 Peter 3:9

- **Do you think He isn't able to save you fully and completely?**

Jesus Christ, the eternal Savior, completely saves (to the fullest possible degree) those who trust in Him. The all-powerful God holds all who are in Christ safely in His mighty grip. He will not fail to complete the work of salvation He began in your life.

Read: Romans 5:9-11; John 10:27-30; Romans 8:1-4, 31-39; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 7:25

- **Do you think He doesn't love you?**

God's love for you is not based on your performance, but rather, on Christ's finished work. His perfect love for those who are in Christ removes all fear of future judgment.

Read: John 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; Ephesians 2:4, 5:2; Galatians 2:20; John 17:23; Romans 5:8, 8:32; 1 John 4:17-18

- **Do you think God won't keep His Word?**

God is both **willing** and **able** to do what He has promised. God is not a liar. He will always act in accordance with His character and He will always keep His promises.

Read: 2 Timothy 2:13; Romans 10:13; John 8:26; John 3:33; 1 John 5:20; Psalm 19:7-11

Whose word will you trust—your own or God's? Get to know your God! He is the **gracious, all-powerful, loving, faithful** Savior. He is not a liar. Trust His character—who He is. Hold fast to His promises—what He has said.

Consider working through this list, one verse at a time. Use a tool like *Keys to Your Own God & I Time* to dig deeper into each passage.¹ Ask God to give you understanding. Memorize the verse you are studying so that you can meditate on it throughout the day. Prayerfully apply it to your life. Thank God for the truth you are learning about Him. Humbly and prayerfully be in God's Word every day—and He will change you. Guaranteed!

3. Practice Believing

Simply put, you must choose to trust God. Through much practice, you developed the habit of wrong thinking about God, yourself, and what He says about salvation. By God's grace, you can stop "practicing unbelief" and begin to "practice believing" instead. God renews our minds through His Word.

Capture your thinking—you must be active in identifying and correcting wrong thoughts. Instead of listening to your doubts, rehearse gospel truth. Think on things that are true (Philippians 4:8). Use the chart below to start the process of capturing and correcting your thinking. Ask a trusted, spiritual adult to help you apply the specific truths from God's Word to correct your wrong thoughts.

Your thoughts are like a carefully constructed playlist on your phone. You need to delete your old "playlist" of sinful thoughts and replace it with a new "playlist" by memorizing gospel-saturated

¹ You can find *Keys to Your Own God & I Time* on the LifeLine for Teens website.

verses. Store up God’s Word in your heart so that you can immediately access it whenever a wrong thought comes to mind (Psalm 119:9-11). It might help you to audibly say “no” to a wrong thought. Refuse to indulge it for even a moment. “Think Bible” instead.

Because you have chosen to allow untrue thoughts to habitually dominate your thinking, change will take time and effort. But it is not an effort you can do on your own. Call out to God for help. With practice and grace from God, you can develop a new habit.

Repent of unbelief. Know God. Practice believing. Put your confidence in your Savior and His Word, not in your own thinking. Trust what He did for you. Trust what He says to you. God’s Spirit will minister to your heart through His Word, giving you assurance of His love for you in Christ (Romans 5:5). Refuse to base your salvation on a feeling. Instead, base it on the unchanging, unfailing promises of God. God will allow your sense of assurance to grow as a *result* of obedient faith.

Capture Your Thinking	Correct Your Thinking
<i>List your wrong thoughts about God, yourself, or what God says about salvation:</i>	<i>Write out specific truth from God’s Word that corrects your wrong thinking:</i>

Cause of Uncertainty: You Are Focused on Yourself Instead of God

Faith needs an object on which to rest. We place faith in an airplane—believing it will get us safely from one destination to another—when we purchase a ticket and board the flight. We place faith in a chair—believing it will support our weight—when we sit down. In a similar way, faith for salvation is only as good as the object in which your faith is placed. Airplanes can malfunction. Chairs can break. Sadly, many people in the world place their faith in an untrustworthy object—like a false god, or their good works, or a religious act. They may be entirely sincere, but their faith will ultimately fail to save, because it is resting on an unworthy object. The only worthy object of faith is God Himself, in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Even a genuine follower of Christ may lack assurance of salvation because of a misplaced focus. It is quite possible to look to yourself for assurance. A focus on self can look like placing significant weight on the prayer you prayed, or knowing the time and place of your conversion. A focus on self can also look like continually inspecting your life, in an unhealthy way, for evidences of salvation. Are you always striving to gain God’s approval, but feeling like you never quite have it? God has provided a way of escape for this endless cycle of doubt and fear. But you have to look in the right place.

Biblical Solution: Focus on God Instead of Yourself

The gospel begins and ends with God—not you. Looking to self for assurance is a distortion of the gospel message. There’s only one Savior, and thankfully, it isn’t you (Isaiah 43:11)! God never intended for you to look to yourself for security. That’s why Jesus came—to secure eternal redemption for His children (Hebrews 9:12). *The gospel is about a Person.* Salvation brings us into a relationship with this Person. This is the focus of the gospel message throughout the Bible: forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to a holy God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Could it be that your lack of assurance is revealing that you have turned your gaze away from Christ? If salvation is about a relationship, then assurance will not come by getting to know *yourself* better—it will only come as you put your focus back on Him and grow in your relationship with Him.

1. Humbly Repent

Just as you cannot be saved by looking to yourself, you will never gain assurance by looking to yourself. You need to repent of misplaced trust. A desire to be in control, trying to figure God out, placing more confidence in what you did than what Christ has done, wanting assurance from a different source—all of these demonstrate pride. Repentance is the starting point for any biblical change in your life.² Confess your sinful self-focus. Turn away from your pride and humbly seek God’s forgiveness.

2. Set Your Gaze on Christ—and keep it there

“It is finished.” Spoken by Jesus Christ on the cross, these are some of the most hope-giving words in all of Scripture (John 19:30). Christ accomplished all that is necessary for your salvation. His work is complete, sufficient, and effective (John 17:4). The work of salvation is *all* on Him (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). Because He is the “author and finisher” of your salvation, Scripture calls you to continually look to Him (Hebrews 12:2). Don’t allow anything to distract you from looking to your Savior in these specific ways:

² See page 9 of this study for a fuller explanation of repentance.

- **Look to Christ for Righteousness—not your behavior:**

One of the wonderful things about Christ’s work is that His death and resurrection not only provide for your need of *forgiveness*, but also for your need of *righteousness*.

Whoever believes *into* Christ receives the credit for His payment for sin. God removes our sin debt and then credits us with Christ’s righteousness. Justified means that your record of sin is gone forever; you are declared innocent. But it also means that you are declared righteous, worthy, approved by God. God never sees those who are “in Christ” apart from His Son. We don’t deserve this standing. We could never earn this standing. But praise God, He gives it to those who trust in Him.

This legal standing is unchanging and eternal. In Christ, we can never come under condemnation because our sin—past, present, and future—has been dealt with (Romans 8:1). If you are **justified**, then you already are being **sanctified**, and it is certain that you will be **glorified** (Romans 5:2; 8:30). Read through Romans chapters 5 and 8 to see this 100% guarantee for yourself. His salvation is 100% effective.

Because of our pride, we are still tempted to look to self to make sure that we are secure. It is human nature to try to establish our own righteousness. Grace scares us, because it makes us totally dependent on someone else—it requires us to abandon trust in ourselves. Why do we think we are more trustworthy than God? If your future and eternal safety depend on what you do, then you are in serious trouble. Our righteousness comes from Christ, not ourselves.

- **Look to Christ as Your Only Way to the Father—not your prayer:**

We tend to think of salvation as a point in time in the past when we prayed and asked Jesus “into our hearts” and received forgiveness of sins—with the result that we won’t have to go to hell. The focus is on a prayer we pray—an event. It’s all about us. Where did these ideas come from? Not the Bible.

While it is true that we often express repentant faith through prayer to God, it is not a prayer that does the saving. (As if we had that kind of power!) It is not by our invitation (asking Jesus to come into us) that we are saved. It is actually the other way around. God invites us into Christ. The focus in Scripture is on God’s action. Prayer simply gives outward evidence of what God is doing in the inner person. That means that salvation happens before you even pray. When God saves us, He graciously produces in us a heart of genuine repentance and we believe into Christ by faith. We are justified—our sin is pardoned, and Christ’s righteousness is applied to us. The Spirit of God places us into Christ.

This concept is beautifully illustrated in John 10 by the Lord Himself:

- **The Son knows His sheep and gives them eternal life.**

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish. (vv.27-28a)

- **The sheep are held safely in the hand of the Son.**

Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. (v.28b)

- **How do the sheep become His? The Father gives the sheep to His Son.**

My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all. (v.29a)

- **The sheep are held safely in the Father's hand.**

And no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. (v.29b)

Who is doing the action? Not the sheep. Jesus says, “I give” and “My Father...gave.” Who is doing the safeguarding? Not the sheep. Jesus says, “neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” and “no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.” The Son and the Father work in union with each other to save and keep you (John 10:30).

There is no mention, ever, of a believer having a direct connection to God the Father that bypasses the Son. As in the example above, the sheep relate to God the Father *only* through God the Son. But notice, the opposite is also true. Through the Son, we have access to God and are held safe and secure in the His hand. Isn't it interesting that the Bible doesn't mention anything about us having to hold onto Him?

You are not at the center of the gospel story. The place of prominence belongs to Jesus Christ. Search the Bible, and you won't find a place where salvation is based on your prayer. It is far better to rest in Christ's ministry of prayer for you (Hebrews 7:25). He never stops representing you before His Father. He is your Advocate (1 John 2:1).

Know the truth and rejoice in the truth. The truth will “make you free” from insecurity, doubt, and fear (John 8:32). Don't follow the dead-end road of looking to yourself for assurance. Eternal security for the believer is already settled—God settled it at the cross and the empty tomb. A sense of assurance will come as you turn your gaze away from yourself and back onto your wonderful Savior.³

³ One of the best places in Scripture to learn about the absolute security of the believer is Romans chapters 5 and 8. Take time to prayerfully read and study these chapters. Consult a good commentary to help you work through the harder sections.

Cause of Uncertainty: You Are Living in Disobedience

God may graciously withhold a sense of assurance from a believer who willfully persists in sin. A believer cannot expect to feel close to the Lord while grieving the Spirit of God through disobedience.

When a believer sins, his or her standing before God doesn't change. The Heavenly Father doesn't disown His children when they do something wrong, just as a loving parent or guardian doesn't disown their children when they do something wrong. However, God graciously convicts His children when they sin. He loves His children too much to allow them to live comfortably with something that will hurt them. If you feel God's conviction, receive this as a gift; allow it to drive you to the biblical solution!

Biblical Solution: Repent of Sin and Obey God

As we read in chapter three of the mini-book, Christ calls believers to *repent* and *believe* the gospel (Mark 1:15). While we might think of these as one-time commands telling us how to be saved, Christ is actually calling His followers to life-long obedience to these commands. Keep repenting. Keep believing—not in order to be saved, but because you are saved. Repentance and faith—this is how we grow as believers. If the cause of your lack of assurance is disobedience in your life, then the next right step for you is repentance.

1. Humbly Repent

Repentance is a change of heart and mind away from sin and toward God. Repentance implies movement—both inward and outward. God uses His Word to convict your heart, to teach you that you are wrong. Godly sorrow over your sin leads you to do something about it. God tells us clearly what those actions should be:

Proverbs 28:13 *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*⁴

Repentance includes both **confessing** sin and **forsaking** sin. To confess means that we “say the same thing” to God about our sin that God says about our sin. We agree that He is right, and we are wrong. Many people confuse *confession* with simply *admitting wrongdoing*. Biblical confession is always tied to God's Word. When we see what God's Word says about a specific sin, we are compelled to humbly confess it without making any excuses. God's Word exposes where we are wrong so that we will seek Him for forgiveness and cleansing. True confession is specific (e.g., *God, You say that my bitterness towards my parents is sinful*), not vague (e.g., *I'm such a bad Christian*). Finally, confession must always begin with God—for He is the main Person you have sinned against.

True confession will then lead to the act of forsaking. To forsake means to abandon, desert, or leave behind. You are done with your sin, determined, by God's grace, to do the right thing instead.

Confess and forsake your sin so fellowship can be restored with your Savior. Prayerfully work through the steps below:

- **Identify your sin.** What have you been doing/saying, desiring, thinking/believing that is contrary to God's Word? What sin have you been tolerating in your life?

⁴ See also Romans 6:13; Ephesians 4:21-32; Colossians 3:15-17.

- **Spend time in God’s Word reading and meditating on what He says about that specific sin.** Use a concordance or online Bible program to search for a passage on that topic. Better yet, ask a trustworthy believer to help you.
- As God works in your heart through His Word, take time to **humbly confess your sin** to Him. Admit your need for God’s cleansing. Seek His forgiveness. If necessary, seek forgiveness from others whom you have sinned against.
- **Forsake your sin.** Turn your back on it. Make no “provision” to return to it (Romans 13:14). Take necessary steps to make it hard to sin again.

2. Dependently Obey

Turning *away from* sin means you must also *turn to* something else. Replace your disobedience with obedience to the words, ways, and will of God. Demonstrate your repentance by eagerly pursuing what is right. Again, we learn what is right from God’s Word. Like repentance, biblical obedience will be specific and observable. Identify at least one action step you need to take in order to pursue what is right. Rely on God for strength to obey. He promises to give grace to the humble (James 4:6)!

The following verses demonstrate the close connection between *knowing* the certainty of your salvation and *obedience*:

- **1 John 2:3** *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*
- **John 10:27** *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*
- **John 15:10** *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.*

A God-given sense of assurance grows, like fruit, out of the soil of obedience.

While you won’t obey perfectly this side of heaven, you can make progress in your growth every day. Jesus came to save you from the penalty of sin, but He also came to save you from the power and practice of sin in your life. He will not fail in this task.

3. Rest in God’s promise to forgive.

If you have turned away from your sin and asked God to forgive you, then you can be certain that He will forgive you. If you continue to feel a sense of shame over *forgiven sin*, allow it to prompt you to “think Bible.” Replace wrong thinking with truth about God.⁵ God is merciful and gracious (Psalm 103:8). God is faithful (Deuteronomy 7:9). He promises to forgive all who ask Him (1 John 1:9). Stop looking at your sinful past and instead look to Christ. He is your Advocate (1 John 2:1-2). Memorize passages that help you “preach the gospel to yourself every day.”⁶ Sing songs of worship to the Lord—thanking Him for His magnificent mercy.

This biblical solution leads us to remember the **purpose** of salvation. Read through the verses below and identify God’s purpose for saving people (look for phrases that begin with *that, so that*):

2 Corinthians 5:15 *And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

⁵ Utilize the chart on page five to capture and correct your wrong thinking. You can learn to “think Bible” about forgiveness and shame.

⁶ This phrase became popular through the writings of Jerry Bridges. Consider passages such as: Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 53:6; Psalm 130:3; Micah 7:19; Romans 4:7; Romans 8:1; and Ephesians 1:7.

Romans 8:3-4 *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Romans 7:4 *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ... that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

Titus 2:14 *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

John 15:16 *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*

When we don't live according to our purpose, we are certain to feel disordered, empty, and insecure. The answer: **repent** and **believe** the gospel. Get back to the place of unhindered fellowship with your Lord. Get in the Word and allow it to produce godly fruit in your life.

There is one last thing for you to consider. Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Paul is saying that an identifying characteristic of God's children is that they are "led"—ruled by and subject to—the Spirit's leading. They live as if God is in charge and they submit their lives to what He says in His Word. In contrast, unbelievers do not acknowledge God's authority in their lives. They determine to follow their own desires and will. Perhaps you aren't sure you belong to Him, because you are consistently living as if you were the one in charge. If your life is dominated by this characteristic, it is possible that you really aren't one of God's children. Please take time to carefully consider the *cause* and *biblical solution* on pages 12-15.

Cause of Uncertainty: You Are Not Actually Saved

Lack of assurance may be an indicator that you aren't actually saved. Many people who doubt their salvation reference a profession they made at an early age, perhaps in response to a poor presentation of the gospel (some adults unintentionally present the gospel to children in a misleading way). As they grow older, they wonder if the profession they made at the age of four or five was real. Often, when expressing their doubts, a well-meaning adult will seek to give assurance by reminding them of a prayer they prayed or a testimony they gave of accepting Christ as Savior—even though they may not remember it clearly. Doubt may go away for a while, only to resurface later. Over time, fear of what others think hinders them from admitting the truth.

God may be using your lack of assurance to reveal that you don't actually belong to Him. If you think this may be true of you, please don't allow the opinion of others to keep you from seeking answers in God's Word. Read this biblical solution carefully, asking the Lord to open your eyes to the truth.

Biblical Solution: Repent and Believe the Gospel

Awareness of the gospel differs from *submission* to the gospel. You may have heard the good news of Jesus Christ since before you could walk, but knowledge of gospel facts doesn't necessarily lead to salvation. Demons believe in the existence of God—and even tremble in fear before Him—but they do not yield to His sovereign rule (James 2:19; Mark 1:23-24).

In a similar way, you may know a lot about God without living in submission to His sovereign rule in your life either. Like many others, you may have prayed a prayer to be saved as a way to escape hell and then continued to live *your life your way*, pursuing *your* own goals and desires, with little or no thought of God. Here's the problem: Christ saves people so that they will live for *God* and not *themselves* (2 Corinthians 5:15). In Christ, all things are made new in the life of the believer (2 Corinthians 5:17). Scripture speaks of salvation as a radical transformation made by God in the lives of those who trust Him—from death to life, darkness to light, old to new (Acts 26:18; Romans 6:13; Colossians 1:13). Are you missing God's great purpose and still living life for yourself? Do you lack evidence of new life in Christ? If you answered "yes," then please consider the following steps:

1. Check Your Spiritual Vital Signs

Jesus clearly taught that spiritual life will result in spiritual fruit (John 15:2, 4, 8, 16). God saves us for this purpose: to bear spiritual fruit. The life of Christ in the believer produces the fruit of obedience (Romans 6:17, 22; John 15:16). Outside of a relationship with God, all you can do is bear "fruit unto death" (Romans 7:5). But through union with Christ, you can, and you will, "bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4).

Life cannot be hidden. Every genuine believer will be growing to some degree. But many professing believers have a dead "faith without works" kind of testimony (James 2:26). Their lives are dominated by sin; they don't care about God's Word; they don't seek deeper fellowship with God or other believers; their lives are not progressively becoming more like Christ. All vital signs point to the only reasonable conclusion: this person is *spiritually dead*.

While salvation does have a beginning point, when you are born anew, it isn't simply a past event that will impact your life someday in the distant future when you die. The New Testament portrays salvation as an ongoing, active event in the life of every believer. Nowhere in Scripture are we called to look back to a "prayer" for assurance of salvation. Rather, all of the writers of the

New Testament emphasize the ongoing nature of spiritual life. If there is no “fruit of the Spirit” in your life, then it is a good indication that you do not have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you (Galatians 5:22-25). A lack spiritual growth and fruitfulness may indicate a lack of spiritual life.

2. Check for Evidence of the Spirit of Christ in You

So often when seeking to gain confidence about their salvation, people will refer back to the time when they prayed the sinner’s prayer. But the Apostle Paul gives a better way to know if we are truly saved or not. The ultimate test is not “did you make a profession,” but “does the Spirit of Christ dwell in you?” Notice what Paul says about this in Romans 8 (emphasis added):

Romans 8:9-11 *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

Romans 8 clearly defines the Christian as one in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. Verse 10 describes what is true of this person *now*. While sin remains in the “body” as an enemy believers must always fight, the “Spirit” is also at work producing righteousness. Verse 11 describes what is true of this person’s *future*. The fight with sin will one day be over, and just like their Savior, believers will be raised to eternal life. Eternal life is the inevitable end of all who place their trust in Christ (Romans 6:23).

How can you know if you have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you or not? Paul indicates that if you are truly saved, you will not be able to miss the Spirit’s work in your life. He provides several clear examples in Romans 8:

Those who <i>do not</i> have the Spirit:	Those who <i>have</i> the Spirit:
8:4—live according to the flesh	8:4—live according to the Spirit
8:5—set their minds on the things of the flesh	8:5—set their minds on the things of the Spirit
8:6, 13—ultimately results in death	8:6, 13—ultimately results in life and peace
8:7—hostile to God; do not and <i>cannot</i> submit to God	8:12—no longer a slave to the flesh; do not <i>have to</i> sin
8:8—cannot please God	8:13—put sinful deeds of the body to death by the Spirit’s enabling
8:12-13—enslaved to sin, continually indulging fleshly desires	8:14—led by the Spirit of God

Don’t miss this important point: it is the Spirit’s role, not yours, to grant assurance of salvation (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 John 3:24).

Romans 8:16 *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

The Spirit’s witness about you is what really matters, not what you say about yourself.

3. Turn to God in repentant faith and be saved.

If you have no signs of spiritual life, and you do not see evidence of the Spirit's work in your life, then you need to be saved. God has provided the *only* solution for your spiritual need: repent and believe the gospel.

Gospel simply means “good news.” This good news only makes sense if we stop to think about the **bad news** that makes this news so good.

Romans 5:12 *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

Romans 5:19a *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.*

Who is this *one man* who brought sin into the world? It was Adam. As the first man, Adam serves as the representative head of the human race. This means that his actions (and the consequences of his actions) are placed on each one of us. Because we begin life “in Adam,” we share his sinful nature, his disobedience, his condemnation, and his sentence of death. Being “in Adam” leads to death.

But before we're tempted to place all the blame on Adam, we need to remember that each one of us is also guilty of committing our own sin (Rom. 3:10; 23). So we are *born* as rebels and we *choose* to be rebels against God.

Sin is the breaking of God's law. God demands a penalty for sin. And that penalty is death. Eternal death. **Death is the inevitable result of sin.** Romans 5:12 says that death came into the world through sin. Death then spread to all people because all have sinned (Romans 3:23; 5:12). And the summary verse of Romans 6 says, “The wages of sin is death” (v.23). This is very bad news, which is why it is so vital that we move out of Adam and into Christ.

Our sin is so great, our separation from God so wide, and our ability to achieve God's standard falls so short that we cannot resolve this problem on our own. We need someone who can stand in our place. Someone who can pay our debt and grant forgiveness. We need someone who can bring us to God. We need a *new* representative. And that is exactly what Jesus became for us (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Romans 4:25, 8:3).

Romans 5:15-19 . . . *much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. . . even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life . . . so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* (emphasis mine)

As our representative, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness. Adam had one law to obey and he failed. Jesus lived under the Law of Moses—over 600 laws!—and He obeyed perfectly. Not only did He never sin, but He always did what was right. He always did the things that were pleasing to God! Jesus Christ is called the “second Adam.” He came to do what the first Adam did not do. And just as being “in Adam” leads to certain consequences, so does being “in Christ.” But instead of death, the inevitable consequences of being in Christ are grace, justification, righteousness, and life.

So how do we move out of Adam and into Christ? In Romans 5:1, Paul tells us that the only way to be justified and have peace with God is *by faith*. As you read in chapter two of the mini-book, Jesus invites sinners to believe “into” Him. Faith in Christ actually takes a person and moves him

into Himself—the object of faith. The opportunity to move out of Adam and into Christ is only possible because Christ came in obedience to the Father’s will—He took on a body, lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death, and rose again.

Salvation requires movement: movement out of Adam and into Jesus. God moves you out of Adam when you recognize your sinful condition and humbly admit you need a Savior. Moving out of Adam means moving away from everything else that you might try to rely on to gain a right standing with God—and moving instead towards Christ as the only Savior. **Repent**—turn from your sin—and **believe**—place your faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. This is how a person moves out of Adam and into Christ.

Who can be saved? Anyone who is willing to abandon their self-effort and works of the law and trust entirely in Jesus Christ and His finished work on their behalf will be saved.

Romans 10:13 *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

This is the promise God makes: He will save *any* individual—regardless of a sinful past or fearful doubting—who calls out to Him for salvation. Won’t you respond to this Good News by believing *into Jesus Christ* today?