



NG Study Guide: 1 John 5:6-13 “Confidence in Eternal Life” [6.3.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: More so than any other world religion, Biblical Christianity is a very rational, evidence-supported faith. God’s witness proves beyond a reasonable doubt the truth of the Gospel and therefore gives the Christian a confident hope in the reality of eternal life.

I. God's witness proves Jesus is the Christ (God in the flesh, Messiah) [v.6-10]

The word used for witness in v.6-10 can also be translated to mean “testimony”. A testimony is defined as a “firsthand authentication of a fact” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). John tells us that the testimony concerning Jesus as Messiah is more than a mere human testimony; it is the testimony of God Himself. God’s testimony is given to us, by John, in the form of three witnesses:

A. The three witnesses [v.6-8]

6 This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7 For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

1. Water

The water represents Jesus’ incarnation, as both water and blood are present in the natural birth process. Water and blood were also present at Jesus’ death when the spear pierced His side and blood and water poured out, representing the birth of the Church (John 19:34). Water also represents Jesus’ baptism. This representation was particularly relevant in John’s letter as he was writing to combat Gnosticism, which, among other heresies, taught that Jesus was not actually God. At Jesus’ baptism, God confirmed Jesus’ identity in the form of a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17)

2. Blood

The blood represents Jesus’ death on the Cross, where God also confirms Jesus’ identity as Messiah. This is seen through some supernatural phenomena, such as darkness at midday, an earthquake and

the tearing of the temple veil (Matt 27:45; 50-53). However, the proof of Jesus' deity is seen most powerfully in His Resurrection

a. What is the evidence for the Resurrection?

i. The empty tomb

The story of the empty tomb is recorded in very old source material, dated to within five years of Jesus' death; not sufficient time for it to develop as a legend. No first century skeptic argued against the empty tomb, rather all of them sought alternative explanations for the missing body. Claims that Jesus' body was stolen by the disciples, religious leaders or the Romans do not hold up under historical scrutiny.

ii. The eyewitness accounts

Throughout Scripture, it is recorded that various individuals/ groups experienced appearances of Jesus alive from the dead, including the Apostle Paul's claim that He was seen by over 500 people at once. (1 Co. 15). Much like the empty tomb, this cannot be dismissed as legend. Many of the people who had seen the risen Jesus were still alive and aware of Paul's letter, yet there is no historical record that even one person opposed the recorded claims.

iii. The transformed lives of the disciples

After the time of Jesus, church history tells us that all of Jesus' disciples went on to live lives marked by great persecution and suffering as a result of their claims about Jesus. All except for John died martyr's deaths. Had the Resurrection been stage, surely at least one of these ordinary men would have buckled under such great pressure. Yet none of the disciples ever recanted.

3. Spirit

Moving away from the historical evidence, the Holy Spirit enables the believer to have a personal experience with the truth of Jesus. Romans 8:16 confirms the Christian's experience with the Holy Spirit is "God's Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God". The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is available to all who would repent and believe and has the potential to be a more powerful witness than any historical evidence.

B. God's witness to the truth of Jesus demands a response [v.9-10]

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. 10 He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

John wants his reader to understand there is no middle ground, either the testimony about Jesus' identity is true or isn't true. Each individual must decide whether or not he or she will believe God is telling the truth about Jesus or is lying about Jesus. There is no room to halfway believe the Gospel.

II. God's witness gives confidence of eternal life [v.11-13]

If the testimony concerning Jesus is true then it also proves the follower of Jesus has eternal life.

A. Jesus is the only way to eternal life [v.11-12]

11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

The Greek word used for life in v.11-12 is the word *zao* which means spiritual life as opposed to *bios* which means physical life. Because of who Jesus is and what He has done, He brings the believer into a better life that is only available in Him. The Gospel's truth stands because only Jesus can reconcile peo-

ple to God while simultaneously dealing with human sin. Only Biblical Christianity supplies a righteousness/ forgiveness that isn't earned but is freely given as a gift. The Christian is then able to have complete confidence that he or she has received this gift.

B. Living for Jesus proves you have received eternal life [v.13]

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

“These things” refers to everything John has written about in his letter thus far. This is a pivotal verse in understanding the context and purpose for John’s writing. He wants Jesus’ followers to be confident of the eternal life they have so that they can continue believing even in the face of life’s challenges. The believer searching for confidence of eternal life can find proof in the lives they are living. Some of the markers of the authentic Christian life discussed in 1 John include; knowing God’s love for you (4.7-11; 4.17-21), loving God supremely (2.1-7; 2.15-23), obedience to God (5.1-5), spiritual growth (2.8-14), spiritual discernment (2.24-29; 3.24-4.6), and a love for others (3.10-23; 4.12-16). The idea of *continuing* in your belief connotes a steadfastness that would transcend life circumstances in which you might be tempted to compromise in your faith. When your life demonstrates these markers, you *know* you have eternal life.

Study Guide Qs

Q1: What are some of the objections to Christianity in our culture?

Q2: How have you personally encountered the witness of the Holy Spirit in your life as a Christian?

Q3: If eternal life is received as a free gift, why is living for Jesus still important and how does it prove someone has eternal life?

Q4: How does confidence in eternal life help you not to compromise your faith even in life’s challenging circumstances?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Consider the evidence for the Resurrection mentioned in this study. Discuss how this encourages you in your faith and helps you to live with confidence in eternal life?

2. Examine the list of characteristics of the Christian life given towards the end of the study. Write down some of the ways God has grown you in those areas and discuss how you hope for continued growth in your present season of life.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

As the weather has grown warmer and the days longer, people are looking to be outside more often. Consider if you have any neighbors who struggle to care for their lawns and other outdoor areas due to age or other limitations. Mobilize your group to show the love of Jesus by offering to help them with this so they might enjoy their outdoor areas this summer.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. Feel free to use an icebreaker question or activity** to get to know one another better.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.
 - b. How would each of us like to apply the truths we learned to our life?** This question may be answered simply by completing the study guide. Nevertheless, it will generally be beneficial for leaders to encourage each participant to conclude the study by considering how he or she desires to apply the lessons learned.