

## How Can I Be Sure? (John 6:60-69, 1 Corinthians 15:1-14) ALL AGE

How can I be sure of my faith? Good question – should we be sure in first place? Culture likes being sure – starts from when born: **SLIDES**

Last one quite apt – in desperation to avoid 1 risk, we create another. No such thing as certainty, why ‘health and safety’ so intrusive and doomed to fail. But our culture still aims for it. E.g. On my list for this year – Health and safety policy, and risk assessments for key activities, like bellringing. Might moan, but built in to our lives in other ways – ‘insurance’ – being sure we’re provided for. Buying a house and deciding whether to take out life insurance, 3 options. How can we be sure?

And same in realm of faith – **how can we be sure?** Think our culture needs an answer to this question even more than previous generations.

BUT to recap – Previous weeks – Jesus’ claim to be Son of God, and evidence to back it up – importance of that – his death on cross for our wrongdoing, God taking punishment on himself. Means the way is clear for us to have relationship with God we were always meant to have.

Don’t know how you received that message: some dubious; some joyful; some grudging (e.g. Nicky Gumbel EXPAND)...

What NG missed and came to realise is that it’s not a religion, it’s a relationship. God wants to know us and be our friend, even our Father. It’s also not just a path to follow, it’s a whole new life (SLIDE): 2 Corinthians 5:17 ‘If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation! The old has gone, the new has come.’ Radical, life-changing stuff.

Lots of eggs – Paul (NT), Nicky Cruz (gang leader), CT Studd (wealthy toff), Fred EXPAND

Listen to these heroes, and wonder if this would really be true for us.

- Maybe challenge of society forcing us to conform
- Maybe ourselves, something that holds us back:

- Commitment issue
- Distraction issue
- Feelings issue
- Personal issue – crisis (doubt God’s love, or anger, or just worn out)
- Faith issue – doubts over whether true, or science etc – **like some of disciples in John 6: ‘this is a hard teaching, who can accept it?’**

(**SLIDE**) Nagging doubt. Want to start by saying doubt isn’t wrong. We all have doubts, it’s natural. It’s what we do with them. So let’s think about this question:

How can I be sure? What would an empowered life look like?

3 gifts from God to us:

**GIFT 1 = BIBLE (note on cover) – Word of God (SLIDE)**

Why – feelings change, but God’s promises don’t. Bible’s claim to be God’s word – and therefore has power: ‘my word does not return to me empty’

SHOW GIDEON BIBLE – always contains list of promises (see index, opening pages)

Here are some promises: (**SLIDE**)

To WORN-OUT – Matt 11:28: ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.’

(**SLIDE**) TO LONELY – Matthew 28:20: ‘And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’

How would you define faith? (**SLIDE**) Faith is ‘being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see’ i.e. taking God’s promises and daring to believe them.

At heart of it is promise of life:

- In some senses, this promise is there all the time – when baby born, what do we celebrate. Biological explanation: ‘what a well-adapted set of genetic material!’ – not what most parents say!
- Jesus – bios life and zoe life – ‘I have come that they might have life and have it in all its fullness’ – ultimately eternal life. God’s greatest gift to us – life with him forever. **This is what kept Peter going: v68 ‘To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’**

As an aside – if not sure – read bible and pray for 6 weeks – guarantee your life will change (Shaun, ask God to reveal himself to you, to show you he’s real – and he will)

### **GIFT 2 = BLACKBOARD – Work of Jesus (wipes slate clean – DEMONSTRATE) (SLIDE)**

We don’t, and cannot, earn forgiveness, but Jesus Christ died on the cross so that we might be reconciled to God. Every other religion = DO **(S)** (consequence, lack of assurance, ‘try harder’); Jesus = DONE **(S)** – **confirmed by resurrection ch15v20: ‘But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...’**

Not an excuse to do what you like, but it is a gift and frees us from constant pressure to earn God’s favour (most people still do – but truly liberated have learnt that lesson)

**(S)** John 3:16: ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.’

So our faith rests on what God has done (not us), because he loves us

### **GIFT 3 = WINE – Witness of Spirit (SLIDE)**

Not left on our own to try and work it all out. Spirit comes to live with us and transforms us from within:

- Our characters
- Our relationships

## Examples of work of Spirit

- New love for God
- Desire to read bible
- Desire to pray/talk to God
- Sense of forgiveness
- New concern for others
- Enjoyment of worshipping God
- Desire to meet with other Christians
- Sense of God's presence
- ULTIMATELY Sense of being God's child – all about relationship:

Romans 8:15-16: 'The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.'

In summary – doubt is natural, we're human. So how can I be sure? 3 gifts from God to us:

- Word of God – incl eternal life
- Work of Christ – forgiveness
- Work of (Holy) Spirit – changing us from inside, power to live for God

Faith – daring to believe God's promises. (SLIDE) **3 choices:** reject, half-hearted 'toe in water' (always feel cold) or dive in (e.g. of swimming pool).

Can't force choice – encourage you to dive in!