

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

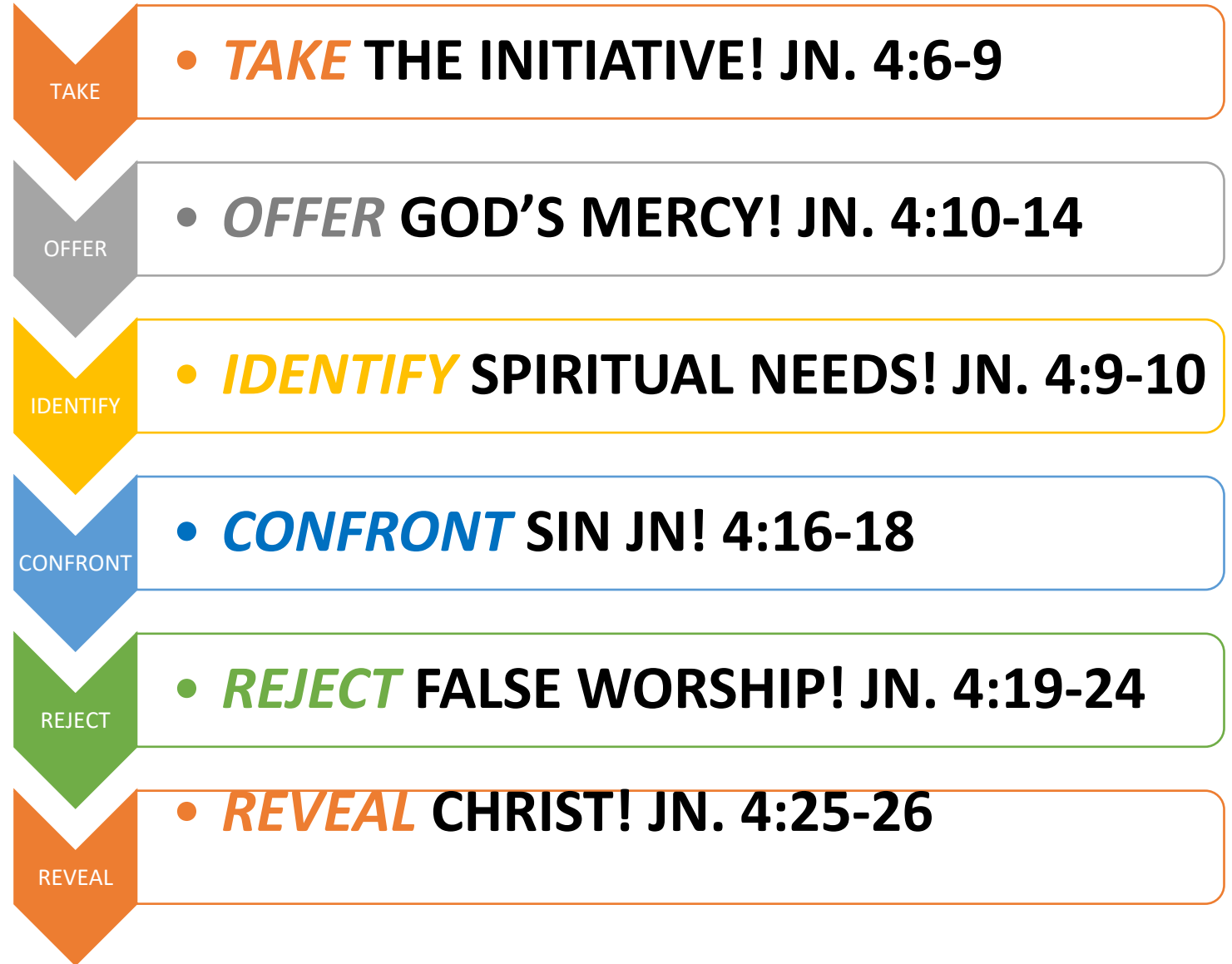


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's roots are massive and spread out, some resting on the ground and others draped over the stone walls of an old building. The stone is weathered and mossy. The background shows more greenery and trees, suggesting a jungle or forest setting. The overall scene is one of nature reclaiming human-made structures.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”



- *REPENTANCE* AND *ASSURANCE*
THE GENUINE ARTICLE.
- THE LORD'S *POSITIVE-NEGATIVE* PRODDING.
- DEALING WITH SIN.

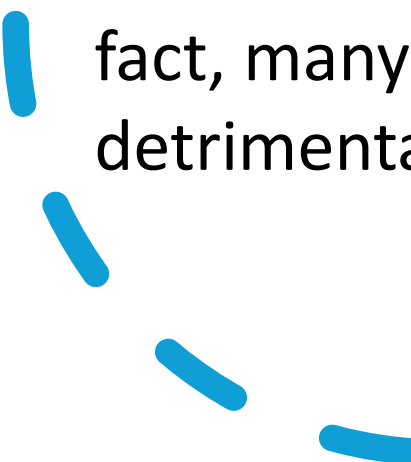
THE *FRUITS* OF REPENTANCE.

- What kind of evidence substantiates authentic repentance? When the **CROWDS** asked that question of **JOHN THE BAPTIST** in (LK. 3:10), he told them to share with their needy neighbors (LK. 3:11).
- To **TAX COLLECTORS** he said, ***“COLLECT NO MORE THAN WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO”*** (LK. 3:13).
- To **SOLDIERS** he said, ***“DO NOT TAKE MONEY FROM ANYONE BY FORCE, OR ACCUSE ANYONE FALSELY, AND BE CONTENT WITH YOUR WAGES”*** (LK. 3:14).

- In each case, he was calling for a ***SELFLESS ATTITUDE*** and ***KINDNESS*** to one's neighbors. That short list doesn't exhaust all the possible ***FRUITS OF REPENTANCE***, of course, but it demonstrates that ***GENUINE REPENTANCE*** ought to produce the kind of ***CHARACTER CHANGE*** that results in a qualitative difference in ***THE WAY WE LIVE***.
- ***JAMES*** wrote, ***"FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD"*** (JAMES 2:26). In a similar way, ***REPENTANCE*** that doesn't produce works is barren and useless. ***A PERSON WHO HAS GENUINELY REPENTED IS NEVER LEFT UNCHANGED.***
- The ***APOSTLE PAUL*** likewise looked for ***PROOF*** of ***REPENTANCE***. ***"I DID NOT PROVE DISOBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION,"*** he said, ***"BUT KEPT DECLARING... TO THE GENTILES, THAT THEY SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD, PERFORMING DEEDS APPROPRIATE TO REPENTANCE"*** (ACTS 26:19-20).

- The emphasis on **SELF-EXAMINATION** is consistent throughout Scripture. Because true repentance is one of the first indications of salvation, believers can and should look to the fruit of repentance for assurance. As Paul said, ***“IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE; THE OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, NEW THINGS HAVE COME”*** (2 COR. 5:17).
 - Scripture presents **SELF-EXAMINATION** as an essential prerequisite for ***authentic assurance*** (2 COR. 13:5).
 - THE EVIDENCES OF **TRUE SALVATION** CITED IN SCRIPTURE INCLUDE THE **FRUITS** OF ONE’S **BEHAVIOR** (1 JN. 3:18-19), **PATTERN OF LIFE** (1 JN. 3:24), and **WAY OF THINKING** (1 JN. 5:1-2).
- “DON’T BE MISLED: SALVATION IS IN NO WAY MERITED BY OUR WORKS, AND THEREFORE TRUE ASSURANCE IS NOT ULTIMATELY GROUNDED IN OUR PERFORMANCE.”***

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- ***SELF-EXAMINATION*** can destroy ***false assurance***, but you'll never find settled assurance merely by looking at yourself. In the end, we have to look away from ourselves and rest in the ***OBJECTIVE PROMISES OF GOD'S WORD***.
 - ***TRUE, LASTING ASSURANCE IS ANCHORED IN THE PROMISE OF SALVATION TO ALL WHO BELIEVE***. That promise is as true as God Himself and needs no empirical verification.
 - Still, ***SELF-EXAMINATION*** is a necessary and biblical aspect of ***GAINING ASSURANCE***. It is the process by which ***WE EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF OUR OWN FAITH. AND THE FRUITS OF REPENTANCE ARE THE EVIDENCE WE MUST SEEK***.

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- This is especially crucial in the contemporary evangelical environment. Multitudes believe they are saved merely because **SOMEONE TOLD THEM SO AFTER A CURSORY CONVERSATION, THE SIMPLE RECITING OF A CANNED PRAYER, THE RAISING OF A HAND IN A PUBLIC MEETING,** or sometimes even less.
 - ***PEOPLE HAVE NOT BEEN CHALLENGED TO EXAMINE THEMSELVES. RARELY DO THEY TEST THEIR ASSURANCE BY GOD'S WORD.*** As a matter of fact, many have been taught *that doubts* about their salvation can only be detrimental to spiritual health and growth.
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- ***BUT SCRIPTURE DEMANDS SELF-EXAMINATION.*** In fact, we're supposed to examine ourselves regularly, every time we partake of the ***LORD'S SUPPER*** (1 COR. 11:28).
- ***PAUL'S*** famous challenge to the believers at Corinth clearly has the doctrine of assurance in view: ***"TEST YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH; EXAMINE YOURSELVES! OR DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE THIS ABOUT YOURSELVES, THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU—UNLESS INDEED YOU FAIL THE TEST?"*** (2 COR. 13:5).
- And (HEB. 10:22) indicates that ***"FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH"*** comes from ***"HAVING OUR HEARTS SPRINKLED CLEAN FROM AN EVIL CONSCIENCE."***
- So, ***WE NEED TO EXAMINE OURSELVES*** in the process of coming to grips with ***ASSURANCE***. Nowhere is this made more plain in Scripture than **1 JOHN**, one of the key passages of Scripture on the subject of ***ASSURANCE***.

- In fact, the epistle was written with the express purpose of ***BUILDING THE ASSURANCE OF TRUE BELIEVERS***. JOHN wrote, ***“THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD, SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE”*** (1 JN. 5:13).
- His aim is ***TO DEEPEN THE ASSURANCE*** of genuine Christians—those ***“WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD.”*** He's not trying to provoke ***doubts*** in the presence of authentic faith; he is giving us a basis to ***“WE WILL KNOW BY THIS THAT WE ARE OF THE TRUTH AND WILL ASSURE OUR HEART BEFORE HIM”*** (1 JN. 3:19).
- Notice again, however, that ***OUR FAITH IN CHRIST IS THE ULTIMATE GROUND AND FOUNDATION OF TRUE ASSURANCE***. ***SELF-EXAMINATION*** is simply the ***PROCESS*** by which we examine whether ***OUR FAITH IS GENUINE AND OUR REPENTANCE IS REAL***.

- True believers should not be unnerved by the biblical call to ***SELF-EXAMINATION***.
- ***UNBELIEVERS*** and mere ***HEARERS*** of the Word, on the other hand, **NEED TO HAVE THEIR *SELF-CONFIDENCE* SHAKEN**.
- So, the ***APOSTLE JOHN*** names several ***PRACTICAL TESTS*** that may be used to determine the ***AUTHENTICITY OF FAITH***—including such things as
 - 1. OBEDIENCE:*** (1 JOHN 2:3-6; 3:1-10).
 - 2. SOUND DOCTRINE:*** (1 JOHN 2:21-28; 4:1-6).
 - 3. LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN:*** (1 JOHN 3:14-19; 4:7-11).

“THOSE ARE FRUITS OF TRUE REPENTANCE.”

DEALING WITH YOUR DOUBT!

- CAN YOU **KNOW** FOR CERTAIN THAT YOU ARE SAVED? IS IT EVER OKAY TO **DOUBT** YOUR SALVATION?

These are difficult questions, but both questions can be answered in just one verse in the book of 1 John. (1 JN. 5:13) ***“THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD, SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”***

- RIGHT AWAY THAT TELLS ME **2** THINGS:

You can be saved and **KNOW IT**, and you can be saved and **DOUBT IT**. **JOHN** wrote the book of **1 JOHN** in order that **WE MAY KNOW** — without a doubt — that we have eternal life. And he gave us **3** major tests to deal with that doubt.

THE COMMANDMENT TEST

- The first test is found in (1 JN. 2:3–5) ***“BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM, IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. ⁴ THE ONE WHO SAYS, “I HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM,” AND DOES NOT KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, IS A LIAR, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN HIM; ⁵ BUT WHOEVER KEEPS HIS WORD, IN HIM THE LOVE OF GOD HAS TRULY BEEN PERFECTED. BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE ARE IN HIM:”***
- A person who says he is saved but ***DOESN'T KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD*** is lying. I don't care whose church he is a member of, how much theology he has in his head, or what kind of experience he has had at an altar; ***JOHN*** says if he's not keeping the commandments of God, he doesn't know Him. He is not talking about **sinless perfection**, but that ***THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD ARE TO BE THE STANDARD BY WHICH WE CHART OUR COURSE.***

- There are many people who join a church as if they were joining a country club. There's no change and they continue to live the same ungodly lives. Those people have no reason whatsoever to think that they are going to heaven.

“IF YOU CAN *SIN WILLFULLY, KNOWINGLY, DELIBERATELY, AND HABITUALLY* AND FEEL *NO CONVICTION OR REMORSE*; YOU HAVE *NO REASON TO BELIEVE YOU ARE SAVED.*”

THE COMPANION TEST

- There's another test found in (1 JN. 3:14) ***“WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE, BECAUSE WE LOVE THE BRETHREN. HE WHO DOES NOT LOVE ABIDES IN DEATH.”*** Also notice (1 JN. 4:20) ***“IF SOMEONE SAYS, “I LOVE GOD,” AND HATES HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR; FOR THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HAS SEEN, CANNOT LOVE GOD WHOM HE HAS NOT SEEN.”***
- If God is love and we have the nature of God, then we are going to have love in us. If we don't have love, we don't have the nature of God. If we don't have the nature of God, we haven't been born of God. It is very clear that another birthmark of the believer is love for the brethren. ***WHEN I AM SAVED, NOT ONLY DO I WANT TO BE RIGHT WITH MY BROTHERS, BUT I WANT TO BE WITH MY BROTHERS. IF YOU LOVE JESUS, YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE HIS CHURCH.***

THE COMMITMENT TEST

- The third test is found in (1 JN. 5:10–12) ***“THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN THE SON OF GOD HAS THE TESTIMONY IN HIMSELF; THE ONE WHO DOES NOT BELIEVE GOD HAS MADE HIM A LIAR, BECAUSE HE HAS NOT BELIEVED IN THE TESTIMONY THAT GOD HAS GIVEN CONCERNING HIS SON. ¹¹ AND THE TESTIMONY IS THIS, THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON. ¹² HE WHO HAS THE SON HAS THE LIFE; HE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SON OF GOD DOES NOT HAVE THE LIFE.”***
- The word **BELIEVE** here really means ***“COMMITMENT”*** or ***“TRUST.”*** And that commitment and trust is in the present tense. I cannot find a single verse in the Bible that tells us to **LOOK BACK** to some experience for the assurance of our salvation.

“THE BIBLE DOESN'T DEAL WITH WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST FOR ASSURANCE.”

- As a matter of fact, **VERSE 13** says, ***"THESE THINGS HAVE I WRITTEN UNTO YOU THAT BELIEVE...."*** ***IT DOESN'T SAY, "BELIEVED."*** It means those who believe right now. Do you have that faith in your heart right now? Is there that trust and commitment to Jesus Christ right now? That's how to have assurance.
- **YOU CAN BE SAVED AND KNOW IT!** You can be free from nagging doubts. It's so important to get this issue settled. Everything else builds on the strong confidence that God has saved you and will never let you go.

"STAND ON HIS WORD, AND REST ASSURED IN YOUR SALVATION."