

1 John 3:19-24



Drawing Near in Assurance of Faith

Barna Survey on Doubt, 25 July 2017



† **65% of American Christians self-reported spiritual doubt.**

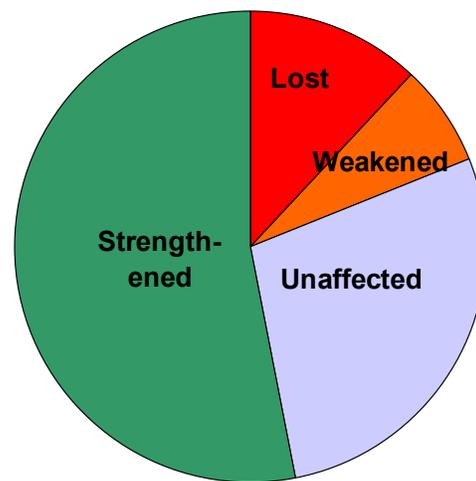
† **RESPONSES:**

- **45% stopped attending church**
20% looked for help from church!
- **29% stopped reading the Bible**
29% turned to the Bible for answers!
- **25% stopped talking to anybody**
about religion/ 40% started talking!

† **BIGGEST INFLUENCES ON RECOVERY FROM DOUBT**

- Believing friends & family 38%
- Church 16%
- Pastor 12%

Doubt's Effect on Faith



July 25, 2017 – Barna Survey: Two-Thirds of Christians Face Doubt

Higher percentage among Millennials, Men, and College graduates

RESPONSE TO DOUBT:

- 45% stopped attending church services/20% looked for help from church
- 29% stopped reading the Bible/29% turned to the Bible for answers!
- 29% stopped praying
- 25% stopped talking to anybody about religion/40% started talking!

RESULT:

- 12% lost faith entirely
- 7% weakened faith.
- 28% no change
- 53% Faith was strengthened
- Overall doubt has positive results.

BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON RECOVERY FROM DOUBT self-reported by survey respondents who claimed to be Christians but not part of a church:

- Believing friends & family 38% (lack lowers results by a few percentage points)
- Reading Bible 25%
- Church 16% (non-attendance lowers results: 20% lost faith, only 34% faith strengthened)
- Pastor 12%
- Note how much more powerful your influence is from the pew than my influence is

Heb. 10:22 “...draw near... in full assurance of faith”

THREE WAYS

APART FROM OUR FIVE SENSES

THAT WE CAN GROW IN ASSURANCE.



Illustration of box: How do I determine my relationship to it?

- I could use my 5 senses, but what if I'm not sure of my senses? Maybe I can't see because I'm in a pitch black cave. Maybe I have leprosy and lost sense of touch...
- I can think of 3 ways outside my senses that I could determine the relationship:
 1. Rely upon an electronic sensor (that is not dependent on my senses) and that can tell me that I am in contact with the box.
 2. Consider my relationship to the box. If I am relating to it, then I am in a relationship with it, whether or not my 5 senses can detect it.
 3. Notice what effects the box has on me. If I eat it, it will make me sick and change my behavior. If it shelters me from rain or cold so that I don't get sick, I can experience the result.

This is a goofy example with an object, but it illustrates 3 ways that we can grow in assurance of our relationship with God, which I see at the end of 1 John 3. We can't see, touch, hear, taste, or smell God, so how do I have assurance of my relationship to Him when I'm not sure?

1. Instead of relying upon my self to sense the relationship, I can rely upon God's ability to discern what is true about my relationship with Him. *That is assurance that comes by faith.*

2. Instead of depending on my 5 senses, I can consider my relationship with God. If I am relating to Him through prayer, I am in a relationship with Him, whether I feel it or not. *That is assurance that comes by faith.*

3. Instead of relying upon feelings about my relationship, I can notice the effect God has on my actions. If I am doing what can only be done in the power of the Spirit (that is, remaining in faith and love), I have the Holy Spirit. *That too is assurance that comes by faith.*

Heb 10:22a says, “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith”

How do we arrive at that “full assurance of faith”? Let's look at these three ways expressed in 1 John 3:19-24...

1. Assurance is Based on God's Knowing

3:19 And by this we will know that we are of the truth, and, in front of Him, we will assure our hearts, 20 because if the heart is condemning of us [we will know] that God is greater than our heart, and He knows all.

- Main word is "know" (γνωσομεθα... γινωσκει)
- Omniscient God (not our heart) is only valid source of knowledge
- Doubt, fear, and sin can be fought with truth and faith.
- Prayer, scripture, and fellowship can reassure your heart!
- Biblical Christianity is unique among world religions in offering assurance of salvation!
- Condemn = κατα-γινωσκη = literally "against-know"
- When info sources disagree, go to God for the final word!
- Practice reassuring your heart now before you have to do it on judgment day!
- Forgiveness through Jesus Christ (not the goodness of our intentions) is the grounds for assurance.



- The central word in this sentence is the word "know." We know something, therefore we can be assured of it, and that knowledge is based on the fact that God knows all things.
- The source of our knowledge is a God who is greater than us and is omniscient. But our heart may be condemning of us, knowing full well all of our shortcomings and sin. This can lead to doubts and fear. The fact that you examine yourself to see if you're really saved is good, and the fact that you doubt means you had some faith in the first place.
- However, doubt & fear are also tools of the devil, the "accuser," so we must work against the accusations and condemnations of the devil and of our hearts. Truth and faith must be employed against these condemnations. When we remember a sin we've done that makes us feel terrible, we must reassure our heart that we asked Jesus to forgive that sin, that His blood is powerful enough to cleanse that sin, and that we are in fellowship with God now. Only by reminding ourselves of these truths can we have confidence before God.
- There are plenty of people in the world whose religion gives them no confidence in the judgment day. Two billion Muslims and Hindus believe that our good and bad deeds are all that determine our afterlife, and there is no way of knowing whether you've done enough good or done too much bad. They have no confidence when their heart condemns them. (Anecdote about my children's Roman Catholic friend who has no assurance.)
- The word for "condemn" is literally "against-knowing;" it is a contradiction of the "we will know...that we are of the truth" at the beginning of v.19. The resolution of this contradiction of knowledge is found in the knowledge of God: "God is greater...and He knows everything."
- Whether or not this verse is speaking of the second coming of Christ, there will be plenty of times between now and then that we will need to practice this assuring of a condemning heart.
- Some people say that we can assure our hearts by the fact that an omniscient God knows our motives, so He'll overlook our sin as long as we had good intentions, even if we fell short of them. There is no Biblical basis for this, so it is a vain hope. Instead, we must be using our faith in God, His forgiveness through Jesus Christ, and our fellowship with Him in righteousness and love as grounds for His assurance, not our good intentions.

2. Assurance Results in Relating to God

3:21 Loved ones, if our heart is not condemning us, we can have an open conversation directly with God. 22 And whatever we are requesting, we are receiving from Him, because we are keeping His commands and we are doing the acceptable things before Him.

† Benefits of assuring our heart: 1) Confidence to Pray, 2) Answers to Prayer!

† *God does not condemn His children; it's your heart that's the problem.*

Hebrews 4:16 "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (NKJV)

† Obedience minimizes static and orients you to ask for the right kind of things.

- (It doesn't create a good relationship with God or earn answers to prayer)
- But what if I haven't received what I prayed for?



•Read vs. 21-22

•If we have effectively stilled the condemnations of our heart by the truth, we will have open communication with God both in prayer now and face-to-face when Jesus Christ is revealed! And, not only will we have a confident, open talk, but He will respond generously to us (v.22).

•Notice it is OUR heart which does the condemning of the believer, not God. If someone feels a barrier in their relationship with God, it is on THEIR part, not God's, for "all the persons of the Godhead are in favor of their assuring their hearts before God" (Candlish 320). That's why the burden is on us to examine our hearts and deal with anything that would invite condemnation. Living in sin will hurt our conscience, and the Holy Spirit will convict us of this, so we must deal with sin. We cannot live in sin even if we have forgiveness available. We must "purify [ourselves] as He is pure."

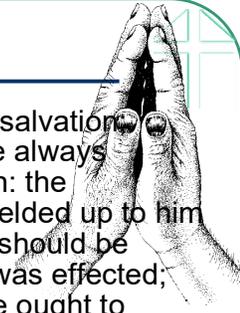
•"If we, upon examination of our own hearts find that we have unclean hands--were careless in dealing with [someone] as regards the welfare of his soul for eternity...not treating him kindly as regards his own good... If there be even a lurking suspicion of duty possibly neglected or of wrong possibly done, rest not till all is righted..." (Candlish 327) Then, with a clean heart, "Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" in prayer! (Sublett 90/Heb. 4:16).

•Whereas the previous verses emphasized the word "know," these next few verses emphasize the word "command." Not only is the knowledge and reassurance of the truth an assurance that brings confidence before God, but keeping the commandments results in receiving what we ask (v.22) and in mutual abiding in God (V.24).

2. Augustine on unanswered prayer

“The saints... are always heard in that which respects their eternal salvation; it is this that they desire: because in regard of this, their prayers are always heard... the apostle was heard for salvation, though not for his wish: the devil was heard for his wish, but for damnation. For that Job was yielded up to him to be tempted, was in order that by his standing the proof the devil should be tormented... Demons then were heard in their request... Their will was effected; [but the Apostle Paul’s] weal was perfected. Agreeably with this, we ought to understand that God, though He give not to our will, doth give for our salvation.

For suppose the thing thou have asked be to thine hurt, and the Physician knows that it is to thine hurt; what then? It is not to be said that the physician does not give ear to thee... Then let there be in you charity, my brethren; let it be in you, and then set your minds at rest: even when the thing ye ask for is not given you. Your prayer is granted, only, ye know it not. Many have been given into their own hands, to their own hurt: of whom the apostle saith, “God gave them up to their own hearts’ lusts.”... Learn to beseech God that ye may commit it to the Physician to do what He knows best. Do thou confess the disease, let Him apply the means of healing. Do thou only hold fast charity.”



•Don't read too much into this promise. The Devil asked God to torment Job and his prayer was answered. The demons asked Jesus to let them go from the man into the herd of pigs, and they got what they asked for too, but obviously they weren't keeping his commands. On the other hand, the Apostle Paul prayed three times to be delivered from whatever his “thorn in the flesh” was, and God didn't answer that prayer. Augustine explained, “The saints...

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- (It doesn't create a good relationship with God or earn answers to prayer)

- Prayer = "war-time walkie-talkie" (John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad*)

- **John 15:16** "...I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit... that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give..." (NKJV)

- Cf. 1 John 5:15 "whatever we ask according to His will"

† "[R]ight action is presented both as a work of obedience and as a work of freedom, as enjoined and also as spontaneous." (Westcott)



- It is true that I am more inclined to fulfill the request of one of my children when they have been obedient to me and seeking to please me than when they are being disobedient and obnoxious. Furthermore, when we are seeking to obey and please God, we won't be asking Him for the wrong things.

- Westcott (119) says, "The sole object of the believer is to do thoroughly the part which has been assigned to him: his petitions are directed to this end and so are necessarily granted."

- John Piper expounds on this in the second chapter of his book *Let the Nations Be Glad*: God has designed prayer as a strategic tool for the building of His Kingdom in the midst of a spiritual war, not as an "intercom" to request luxuries from the comfort of your couch at home! God gives a command for us to execute and He expects us to use our "wartime walkie-talkie" of prayer to get what we need to fulfill His command (Read pp. 45-46?).

- The unqualified "whatever we ask" in this passage is qualified later in 5:15 as "whatever we ask according to His will." (Sublett)

- Although the parallelism "keep His commandments" and "do what is pleasing" could be written off as Hebraistic parallelism, Westcott (119) notes different shades of meaning: "Under this twofold aspect, right action is presented both as a work of obedience and as a work of freedom, as enjoined and also as spontaneous." In other words, our relationship with God is not merely rules that we obey, but a living relationship where we go beyond mere letter of the law to joyfully fulfill the spirit of the law too, consumed with pleasing God. The verb "keep" connotes an alertness, a watchfulness, even guarding--not just mechanistic obedience. The phrase "the acceptable things before Him" is speaking of plural "things" and is well-translated by the KJV and NAV "the things that are pleasing in His sight."

- This kind of action leads right into our third point...

3. Spirit-empowered Obedience Assures

3:23 And this is His command:

that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ
and that we should be loving one another,
just as He commanded us.



- † "Belief is the voluntary assent to an understood proposition, and when we say we believe a man, or believe in a man, we mean we accept as true what he says. Hence when we believe Jesus' name, we mean we believe what He said." ~Gordon Clark
- † The Name is a "compressed creed"
 - "Jesus" = historical savior;
 - "Christ" = Messiah divinely anointed to be ultimate prophet, priest, & king.
- † The twofold command is repeated from Jesus' teaching on the two greatest commandments (Mark 12:28-31/Matt. 22:34-40), which was repeated from the law of Moses (Deut. 6:5 & Lev. 19:18)

•So, we are instructed to keep the command of God, but what ARE God's commands? Verse 23 spells it out for us in chiasmic structure, starting and ending with the idea of the "command" and enumerating the two facets of the command in-between, those two things being "believe" and "love."

•"Belief is the voluntary assent to an understood proposition," wrote Gordon Clark, in his commentary on 1 John (119), "and when we say we believe a man, or believe in a man, we mean we accept as true what he says. Hence when we believe Jesus' name, we mean we believe what He said." In fact, the Name itself is a "compressed creed" (Westcott 120) confessing Jesus to be the Son of God, a historical man (Jesus), and the promised Messiah (Christ).

•This (Aorist) "definite, decisive act of faith" (Westcott 120) is the intended result of the command of God, just as interactive love is commanded and intended also. John has already discussed love at some length in v.11-18, what it is, and what it isn't. This kind of love is not one-way; it is a community where each member shows love to "one another."

•These are both ancient and new commands, for they were given by God to Moses in the "Shemah" and in Leviticus: "Love the Lord thy God with all... and love thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus reiterated these two great commandments, telling people to believe in Him and to "love one another."--the exact words are used in which Christ Himself gave the commandment on the eve of His Passion (John 13:34). And now this commandment given by God and reiterated by Jesus, John brings up again to remind his readers.

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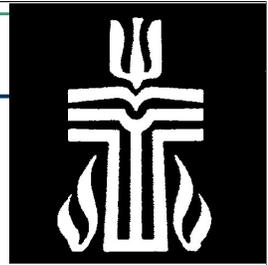
24 And the one who is keeping His commands is remaining in Him, and He in him. And in this we know that He is remaining in us, through the Spirit which He gave to us.

† **Results promised** in 1 John for keeping these commands:

- "abide forever" (2:17), "know Him" (2:3),
- "love is perfected in us" (2:5), "born of God" (2:29),
- "God abides in us" (4:5), assurance of salvation (5:10ff).
- "confidence before Him and whatever we ask, we receive" (3:22ff),
- "love God" (5:3), "love the children of God" (5:2),

† **The Holy Spirit** is the SOURCE of our knowledge (εκ του πνευματος -"out of")

- Are we living as though our bodies are a temple of the living God?
- God/Jesus "gave the law" (εδωκεν εντολην) to be obeyed just as He "gave... the Spirit" (του πνευματος... εδωκεν). (Past tense=already gave)
- The Spirit gives us desire & ability to love: **Rom. 5:5** "...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (NKJV)



•When we keep these commandments, we are having mutual fellowship with God where we remain in Him and He remains in us. And that's not the only promised result of keeping these commands; we "abide forever" (2:17), we "know Him" (2:3), "love is perfected in us" (2:5), we are "born of God" (2:29), "God abides in us" (4:5), we have "confidence before Him and whatever we ask, we receive" (3:22ff), we "love God" (5:3), we "love the children of God" (5:2), and we have assurance of salvation (5:10ff). All are direct results stated in I John of keeping these two commands! Now, are you convinced they're worth keeping?!

•John goes on to tell us the form in which God remains in us: the Holy Spirit. The Spirit lives in our bodies and He lets us know that He is there. John uses the preposition "out of," saying literally "that He is remaining in us, out of the spirit" indicating that "the Holy Spirit is the SOURCE of our knowledge (out of)" (Clark 121).

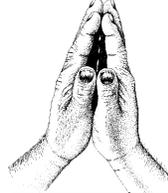
•"Many of today's social problems that affect the general well-being of the body could be alleviated if we only took care of it with thoughts of who is living inside... we allow our bodies to be cluttered up with fat, drugs (nicotine, alcohol, etc.) and just general poor condition. We have divine guests within and ought to treat the premises as such" (Sublett 91). Are we living as though our bodies are a temple of the living God?

•Here's another interesting parallel. The same Greek word "he gave" is used of both the "commandment" in v.23 and of "the spirit" at the end of v.24. God/Jesus "gave," as a singular act, the law to be obeyed just as He "gave" the Holy Spirit. They have both been already given; there no need to go seeking after another word to tell you what to do and there is no need to beg the Holy Spirit to come, for both have already been definitely given! Praise God for telling us clearly how to please Him and for enabling us to obey Him by the inner empowerment of His Spirit within us!

•The spirit is of God, is bigger than us, and influences us in a particular way towards righteousness and love: **Rom. 5:5** "...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (NKJV) If what we are doing can only be done by the Holy Spirit, we can be assured that we are in a right relationship with God!

Heb. 10:22 “...draw near... in full assurance of faith”

1. **Instead of relying upon self to sense a relationship with God,**
Rely upon God's revealed sense of what is true.
2. **Instead of depending on the 5 senses,**
Consider: Relating to Him through prayer IS a relationship with Him.
3. **Instead of relying upon feelings,**
Notice the effect God has on actions: Abiding in faith and love means the Holy Spirit is in you!



1Jn 3:19-24 Greek edition & English translation by N.W.



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| <p>19 και^{-A,B,lat} εν τουτω γνωσο-μεθα^{Maj&TR=Present} οτι εκ της αληθειας εσμεν και εμπροσθεν αυτου πεισομεν τας καρδιας^{A,B=singular} ημων</p> | <p>3:19 And by this we will know that we are of the truth, and, in front of Him, we will assure our hearts,</p> |
| <p>20 οτι εαν καταγιωσκη ημων η καρδια οτι μειζων εστιν ο θεος της καρδιας ημων και γινωσκει παντα</p> | <p>3:20 because if the heart is condemning of us [we will know] that God is greater than our heart, and He knows all.</p> |
| <p>21 αγαπητοι εαν η καρδια ημων^{-A,B} μη καταγιωσκη ημων^{-B,C} παρησιαν εχομεν προς τον θεον</p> | <p>3:21 Loved ones, if our heart is not condemning us, we can have an open conversation directly with God.</p> |
| <p>22 και ο εαν αιτωμεν λαμβανομεν απ^{s,A,B,C} παρ=^{Maj,T,R} αυτου οτι τας εντολας αυτου τηρουμεν^{-s,A=Subjunctive} και τα αρεστα ενωπιον αυτου ποιουμεν</p> | <p>3:22 And whatever we are requesting, we are receiving from Him, because we are keeping His commands and we are doing the acceptable things before Him.</p> |
| <p>23 και αυτη εστιν η εντολη αυτου ινα πιστευσωμεν^{-s,A,C+12=Present} τω ονοματι του υιου αυτου ιησου χριστου και αγαπωμεν αλληλους καθως εδωκεν εντολην ημιν^{-049,Maj,T,R}</p> | <p>3:23 And this is His command, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and that we should be loving one another, just as He commanded us.</p> |
| <p>24 και ο τηρων τας εντολας αυτου εν αυτω μενει και αυτος εν αυτω και εν τουτω γινωσκομεν οτι μενει εν ημιν εκ του πνευματος ου ημιν εδωκεν</p> | <p>3:24 And the one who is keeping His commands is remaining in Him, and He in him. And in this we know that He is remaining in us, through the Spirit which He gave to us.</p> |