

Introduction

Scripture frequently warns us to evaluate whether our profession of faith is genuine and our eternal relationship with God is genuine. This does not mean that we can lose that relationship ... just that we should examine whether our faith is genuine.

We should take these warnings seriously. At Jesus warned in [Matt 7](#), some will stand before God in judgment, thinking they have eternal life, but will be sent to eternal condemnation because they did not know Christ.

The letter of 1 John is not really written as a warning. Instead, it is written to give assurance to those who have genuine faith. The evidences of genuine faith in 1 John are definitely applicable to the warning passages in Scripture. But the goal is not to warn; rather, the goal is to describe genuine faith and what it looks like in daily life **so that those who have faith in Jesus might have assurance rather than doubts.**

How can you have assurance of your relationship with God? [1 John 5:1-4](#) gives three things that are true of all who know God. Interestingly, all three things describe aspects of the heart that are displayed in our life. This means that a person could **appear** to have genuine faith, but without a changed heart, appearances mean nothing. This also means that a person who has a changed heart will also have a changed life. Therefore, assurance comes from examining your heart **and** your life.

How can you have assurance of your relationship with God? [1 John 5:1-4](#) says that **those who are born of God live by faith, love, and holiness.**

Faith

First, **those who are born of God have faith in Jesus.** [1 John 5:1](#) “1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...”

Born of God

What does it mean to be born of God? This letter (1 John) refers to God’s people as “children of God.” [1 John 3:1](#) “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God...” [1 John 3:2](#) “Beloved, we are God’s children now...” The letter equates being born of God with knowing God. [1 John 4:7](#) “... whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”

There are two important implications from Scripture regarding being God's child. First, Scripture teaches that **salvation is relational, not transactional**. That is, salvation is not primarily about being set free; it is primarily about knowing God. Look at [Galatians 4:4-7](#) "4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to **redeem** those who were under the law, so that we might receive **adoption** as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! **Father!**" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a **son**, and if a son, then an heir through God." Christ redeemed us so that we might be adopted by God ([Gal 4:5](#)). Through Christ, we can call God our Father ([Gal 4:6](#)). Through Christ, we are no longer slaves; we are sons ([Gal 4:7](#)). That is, God does not free us from sin and death to make us slaves to something or someone else; **He sets us free for the purpose of adoption** as sons. Jesus said in [John 17:3](#) "3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." **Salvation is relational**.

Second, Scripture teaches that **we become children of God by new birth, not birth**. That is, no one is part of the people of God by birth. Read Jesus' explanation to Nicodemus in [John 3:3-6](#) "3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the **kingdom** of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the **kingdom** of God. 6 That which is born of the **flesh** is flesh, and that which is born of the **Spirit** is spirit." Verse 6 makes an important distinction between physical and spiritual birth ([John 3:6](#)). Notice that physical birth (born of the flesh) is **not** the qualification for being in God's kingdom (being God's people); only those who are born again are God's people ([John 3:3](#), [5](#)). This new birth, refers to being filled with the Holy Spirit and being made spiritually (and eternally) alive ([John 3:6](#)). You are not a child of God by being born into a Christian family or being born as a physical descendant of Abraham. You become a child of God when you are filled with the Holy Spirit and made alive in Christ. **We become children of God by new birth**.

So, when [1 John 5:1-4](#) describes "children of God" or those who are "born of God," it refers to those who have been redeemed by Christ (set free from sin and death), adopted by God into an eternal relationship with Him, and born again through the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the Christ

Notice how verse 1 describes those who are born of God. [1 John 5:1](#) “1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God ...” *What does it mean that Jesus is the Christ?* The Greek word Χριστός (**Christ**) is equivalent to the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ (**Messiah**) (cf. [John 1:41](#); [4:25](#)). The Messiah (Christ) was the one whom God promised to send to **redeem** (set free) His people and **rule** over them forever.

In the first century, there was a great misunderstanding about the purpose of the Messiah. This misunderstanding continues even today. The common expectation was that God would send a Savior to **save Israel** from **political oppression** and rule over Israel forever. For example, before Jesus’ ascension, His disciples asked in [Acts 1:6](#) “... “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

There are two major mistakes with this idea. First, Jesus came to rule over God’s kingdom which consisted of people from **all nations**, not just Israel. Jesus said that He came to fulfill the Messianic prophecy of [Daniel 7:13–14](#) “13 “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that **all peoples, nations, and languages** should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (cf. [Matt 26:64](#); [Mark 14:62](#)). **Jesus rules over God’s Kingdom in all nations.**

Second, Jesus came to save from **sin and death**, not from political oppression. Look at [Romans 8:1–3](#) “1 There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of **sin and death**. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he **condemned sin** in the flesh.” By His death, Jesus condemned sin and the results of sin (death) ([Rom 8:3](#)). In Jesus, we are set free from sin and death ([Rom 8:2](#)). Therefore, we are no longer condemned ([Rom 8:1](#)). Our greatest need is not freedom from political oppression; that is temporary. **Jesus came to save from sin and death.**

Faith in Jesus

*How does a person **become** a child of God?* As we have read, no one is born a child of God; we become children of God through new birth when we are made alive by the filling of the Holy Spirit. Scripture is clear that not everyone is filled with the Spirit, is a child of God, or is forgiven of sin. *So, how does a person **become** a child of God?* [1 John 5:1](#) “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God ...” **New birth comes through faith in Jesus.**

This letter has already addressed the fact that your response to Jesus determines your relationship with God. [1 John 2:22-23](#) “22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.” [1 John 4:14-15](#) “14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” No one who denies Jesus knows God ([1 John 2:23](#)). Knowing God comes through faith in Jesus as the Son of God ([1 John 4:15](#)).

All of this is summarized well in [John 1:12-13](#) “12 But to all who did **receive** him, who **believed** in his name, he gave the right to become **children** of God, 13 who were born, not of **blood** nor of the will of the **flesh** nor of the will of **man**, but of **God**.” No one is a child of God through physical birth or human effort ([John 1:13](#)). A person becomes a child of God through faith in Jesus ([John 1:12](#)).

Summary

*How can you have assurance of your relationship with God? The first test listed in this passage is faith. **Those who are born of God have faith in Jesus.** Do you have faith in Jesus - that He is who He says He is and who Scripture says He is?*

Love

Second, **Those who are born of God love Him.** [1 John 5:1-3](#) “... everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” **Love for God is displayed in a couple of ways.**

Loving others

Those who love God love other believers. While Scripture encourages us to love all people, even our enemies, notice that this verse speaks of love for other believers. [1 John 5:1](#) “... everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.” Jesus said in [John 13:35](#) “35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”” **Whether you love other believers is evidence for or against your profession of faith.**

Look at what this letter says about loving other believers. [1 John 2:9](#) “9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.” [1 John 2:11](#) “11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” [1 John 3:10](#) “... whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.” [1 John 3:14](#) “14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.” [1 John 3:18](#) “18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” [1 John 4:7-8](#) “7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” [1 John 4:20-21](#) “20 If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” This letter is clear - **those who love God, love other believers.**

Obeying God

Second, **those who love God obey Him.** [1 John 5:2-3](#) “2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” These verses indicate that you **cannot separate a love for God and obedience to God.** Anyone who says, ‘I love God, but I will live my life however I want,’ proves that he does not love God.

This clarifies our relationship with God. We cannot say this of every relationship. For example, a parent should not say, ‘Because I love my children, I will obey them.’ We are not over or equal to God. He is our Lord, our King, our Creator. Therefore, **we express our love to Him by trusting that His will is right and obeying Him.**

Why does verse 3 state that God’s commands are “not burdensome?” Obedience **can be** burdensome. Jesus criticized religious teachers of His day for making God’s commands burdensome. He said in [Matthew 23:4](#) “4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.” Religious teachers expanded upon the OT commands. If the OT said to rest on the Sabbath, the teachers carefully defined what was and what was not rest. You can get your donkey out of the ditch on the Sabbath ([Luke 14:5](#)), but you cannot carry your bed ([John 5:10](#)). They took the commands of God and **expanded** them.

Jesus did the opposite; He **summarized** the commands of the OT to **loving God and loving others**. [Matthew 22:37-40](#) “37 And he said to him, “You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” This does not mean that Jesus intended that **murder** was now okay. Those who love their neighbor do not murder them. This does not mean that Jesus intended that **idolatry** was now okay. Those who love God do not worship idols. His point was that **those who love God and love their neighbor will obey God**.

Obedying the one whom you love is not burdensome. Those who love God delight in His will. Listen to the response to God’s will in [Psalm 119](#). [Psalm 119:16](#) “16 I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.” [Psalm 119:35](#) “35 Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.” [Psalm 119:47](#) “47 for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.” [Psalm 119:70](#) “... I delight in your law.” [Psalm 119:77](#) “77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight.” [Psalm 119:143](#) “143 Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight.” [Psalm 119:174](#) “174 I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight.” **Those who delight in the Lord delight in His will.**

Summary

*How can you have assurance of your relationship with God? **Those who know God believe in Jesus and love God**. Both faith and love are expressed in our actions. Is your faith in Jesus expressed in your devotion to Him? Is your love for God expressed in your love for others and obedience to God?*

Holiness

Third, **those who are born of God resist false teaching and temptation**. [1 John 5:4](#) “4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

Overcoming the world

What does it mean to overcome the world? “World” in 1 John is contrasted with the people of God and the things of God. Let’s look at two passages that explain how believers overcome the world. First, [1 John 2:15–17](#) “15 Do not **love** the **world** or the **things** in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is **passing** away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” We overcome the world by rejecting the things of the world ([1 John 2:15](#)), the things that draw our eyes and affection away from God ([1 John 2:16](#)), the things that are passing away ([1 John 2:17](#)). **Overcoming the world describes rejecting temptation.**

Second, [1 John 4:1–5](#) “1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many **false prophets** have gone out **into the world**. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and **the world listens** to them.” We overcome the world by discerning false teaching ([1 John 4:1](#)) and by refusing to listen to false teaching ([1 John 4:5](#)).

Overcoming the world refers to rejecting the things of the world and the teachings of the world and devoting ourselves to God through faith in Jesus. When we desire created things over the Creator, we are overcome **by the world**. When we believe false teaching over Scripture, we are overcome **by the world**.

Our faith

How do we overcome the world? The verses we just read describe what it means to overcome the world. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that we reject temptation and reject false teaching by our own power and effort. Notice how we overcome the world in [1 John 5:4](#) “... And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

The point here is that **I do not overcome the world. Christ overcomes the world.** [John 16:33](#) “33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” **My victory comes through my union with Christ.** He overcomes the world for me.

A great example of this is the mis-interpreted story of David and Goliath ([1 Sam 17](#)). Scripture typically interprets Scripture **typologically**; that is, all of Scripture points to fulfillment in Christ or through Christ. However, people typically interpret the story of David and Goliath **allegorically**, concluding that, like David, we can defeat the “giants” that we face in life. That is not the point of [1 Sam 17](#). The lesson of David and Goliath is that we need someone to fight for us. We are not David in the story. We are the soldiers in Israel who are hiding in fear from the giant. I **cannot** overcome the world; Christ overcomes the world for us.

Summary

How can you have assurance of your relationship with God? The third test in this passage is that **those who are born of God resist false teaching and temptation**. More specifically, we abide in Christ who overcomes those things through the Holy Spirit working in us. *Do you evaluate and flee from false teaching? Do you merely **hope** you can resist temptation or do you **flee** temptation?*

Conclusion

As a child, I got to witness a lot of animal births on my dad’s farm and my grandpa’s farm. Sometimes, I even had to help with births. There is nothing enjoyable about helping pull a dead calf. Sometimes animals were born with deformities, such as one nostril, two tongues, etc. Eliana and I once saw a cow that had two extra legs growing out of its neck from absorbing its twin in the womb. One thing that I never saw though was a pig giving birth to a cow or a dog giving birth to a cat (at least not naturally). **If we are children of God, we will display the indwelling Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives.**

How can you have assurance of your relationship with God? When we have faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit makes us alive as new creations - created in the image of Jesus. That is, the Holy Spirit changes us completely. We have a new heart and a new life. *How can you have assurance of your relationship with God?* [1 John 5:1-4](#) says that **those who are born of God live by faith, love, and holiness.**