

## **“The Testimony of God” (1 John 5:6–12)**

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“How do you know?” That’s one of the most important questions we can ask. How do we know that anything is true? This is actually quite a complicated subject, one that a whole branch of philosophy, called epistemology, deals with. But you don’t have to be a philosopher to wrestle with the question of truth. We all want to know certain truths. Many of us struggle with health issues. We want to know what’s happening in our bodies and how they can be healed. How do you know what’s happening in your body? You rely on a doctor’s testimony. And how does he or she know? The doctor uses previous experience and education to diagnose the problem and probably also uses the results of various tests. How does the doctor know that what he or she was taught in medical school is true, and that the results of those lab tests or scans are accurate? He or she trusts medical professors and textbooks, as well as the machines that perform those tests. In the end, that doctor relies on faith. And if you trust the doctor, so do you.

Think about all the things you know. How did you acquire that knowledge? Some of it you learned from your parents. You trusted their testimony. Other things you learned from teachers and professors and from books. You trusted their expertise, their opinions, and their information. We learn things from reporters, who report events that we did not personally witness, and we trust their reports. What we think we know of history comes to us from eyewitness reports, gathered by historians. If we come to believe their writings as history, we trust that they are telling the truth.

We learn other things from so-called experts, whether they are scientists or mechanics. If you’re not a car person, and your car has a problem, you trust a mechanic’s diagnosis of the problem. You trust they’re not ripping you off. Now, if you’ve brought your car into a mechanic and he tells you that your car needs a repair that will cost \$1,000, you might consult other sources. You might ask a friend, or search online to see if that estimate sounds right. But you’re still putting faith in what other people say. You’re then trusting in the testimony of two or more witnesses.

Even if we explore the world ourselves to learn something, we must still use faith. We trust that our senses work, that our eyes see what is actually there, that our ears hear actual sounds, and so forth. And we must trust that our minds accurately process these senses. We must

have faith that we're not crazy, that our water isn't drugged to keep us from perceiving reality, that we're not living in a perpetual dream.

So, all knowing comes down to faith. And faith is an incredibly important issue when it comes to knowing God. We believed that we can be reconciled to God because of his grace, which is received by faith, by trusting in God and his promises. How do we know that we can trust that Christianity is true?

Over the past three months, we've been exploring a book of the Bible called 1 John, which is a letter written by one of Jesus' first followers. John is writing a letter to Christians to let them know that what they first heard about Jesus is the truth. He's doing that because there are others who claim to be Christians, who once were in their churches, but who have left and are now teaching very different things about Jesus. John wants his readers to know the truth about Jesus and not buy into lies.

Last week, we saw that John says, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. . . . For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:1, 4–5).<sup>1</sup> It's obvious from that passage alone that believing is very important. The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world, because he or she is united to Jesus, who overcomes the world for his people. But what is the content of this faith, and how do we know it's true? That's what we'll consider today as we look at 1 John 5:6–12.

In this passage, we'll see that there are certain events or people who testify to the truth of the gospel, the good news concerning Jesus. We'll see that Christianity is based on an objective, publicly-revealed, historical truth. But that truth must be believed. Until it is believed, people do not gain the benefits of Christianity. Until we trust the truth about Jesus, we won't have him and the eternal life that he gives us. We certainly won't have a relationship with God.

Let's now read these seven verses. Again, this is 1 John 5:6–12:

<sup>6</sup>This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup>For there are three that testify: <sup>8</sup>the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. <sup>9</sup>If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

concerning his Son. <sup>10</sup> Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. <sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

John's message is about Jesus, who "came by water and blood." What does this mean? First, let's deal with Jesus' coming. This seems to suggest that Jesus existed before he was born. From the rest of John's writings, including his Gospel, we know that Jesus is God (John 1:1, 18; 8:24; 20:28; 1 John 5:20). He has always existed as the Son of God, but at one point in history he came from heaven to earth, was conceived in a virgin's womb and was born. John 3:31 says, "He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all." Even here, John hints at Jesus' divine identity.

The reference to Jesus' blood is more straightforward: Jesus died on the cross as the propitiation for our sins. That means that his death wiped away the sins of everyone who believes in him, and God is now propitious, or favorable, to those people. In other words, Jesus' death atones for the sins of his people. At the beginning of this letter, John says that "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Jesus came to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21), and the way he does that is by dying. On the cross, Jesus takes on the wrath of God against our sins, which is righteous and just, because our sins corrupt God's good creation. Jesus poured out his blood, his very life, so that we could have life.<sup>2</sup>

The reference to water is more debated. It is probably a reference either to Jesus' own baptism or to his ministry of baptizing, which he did through his disciples (John 3:22–23; 4:1–2). Baptism is a symbol of our being cleansed of sin, and Jesus' blood on the cross, his life given for us, is what actually achieves that cleansing. If it's Jesus' baptism that John has in mind, what is significant is it marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. When Jesus was baptized, it wasn't so that he could be washed of his sin, because he didn't have any. But he was baptized "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15), to identify with sinners who would be saved by his perfect life and atoning death. Also, at Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus and God

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<sup>2</sup> See also Matt. 26:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20; and Heb. 13:12 for other references to what Jesus' blood accomplished for his people.

the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:16–17). If Jesus’ baptizing ministry is in view, then it has to do with his washing sinners of their sin and, ultimately, baptizing them with the Holy Spirit, whom he poured on Christians at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

It’s clear that whatever John had in mind by mentioning “water,” his opponents only believed this and didn’t believe that Jesus died, or that he accomplished anything through his death. That’s why John writes, “not by the water only but by the water and the blood.” The false teachers who left the churches to whom John wrote didn’t believe that Jesus “came in the flesh,” that he actually was a man (1 John 4:2). They therefore didn’t believe that Jesus died on the cross to atone for sin. Perhaps they didn’t think this was necessary (cf. 1 John 1:8, 10). Perhaps they only believed that Jesus gave the Holy Spirit. Whatever it was that they believed, John says that the water and the blood are both a necessary part of the story of Jesus, and these testify to the truth about him.

The Holy Spirit also testifies, “because the Spirit is the truth.” The Holy Spirit, the third Person of God, is “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Perhaps John has in mind the fact that Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on the believers in Jerusalem at the day of Pentecost. After all, Jesus’ baptism and his death were public events, witnesses by many. And so was the day of Pentecost, when the church became the temple of God. Or perhaps John means that the Holy Spirit authored Scripture, which testifies to the truth about Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Or John could mean that the Holy Spirit indwells Christians, leading them into the truth about Jesus and testifying about him. On the night before Jesus died, he told his disciples, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:16–17). Jesus said, “when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the father, he will bear witness about me” (John 15:26).

I tend to think that John has in mind something objective about the Spirit, either his being poured out on believers *en masse* in Acts 2 or the testimony of the Spirit that we find in the pages of Scripture. Whatever the details, the point seems to be that we have Jesus’ public ministry, his

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<sup>3</sup> See 2 Pet. 1:21 for the Holy Spirit’s role in writing Scripture. See also, among many other verses, Matt. 22:43–44; Acts 1:16; 4:25; Heb. 3:7.

public death, and the public witness of the Holy Spirit. These are objective witnesses to Jesus; they are not subjective, personal religious experiences. These three testify to Jesus and they agree. We see that in verses 7 and 8: “For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”

Now, before I move on to verse 9, I want to briefly address something. If any of you have the King James Version of the New King James Version, you’ll see that there are fewer words in the English Standard Version, or any other modern translation. The KJV says, in verses 7 and 8: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” No Greek manuscript written prior to the tenth century, roughly 800-plus years after John wrote this letter, has the additional words. Only one Greek manuscript from the tenth century has these words, and five manuscripts from the sixteenth century have these words. They are not quoted by any of the early Christian theologians known as the Church Fathers. It seems they were added in a Latin theological treatise in the fourth century and then appeared in some Latin manuscripts thereafter. They were probably added to provide a prooftext for the Trinity.<sup>4</sup>

One thing that some non-Christians, and even many Christians, don’t realize is that we have thousands of manuscripts of the New Testament. We have over 5,700 manuscripts of the New Testament (either in part or the whole) in the original Greek, as well as thousands more in other languages such as Latin. Because there are so many manuscripts, written in different times and places, scholars are able to reconstruct the original text of the New Testament with great confidence. I should add that we don’t have the original documents, but that’s true for all ancient documents, whether they are histories or dramas. But the sheer number and quality of manuscripts of the New Testament far outweigh the manuscript evidence for any other ancient text. This means that we can trust that modern Bible translations give us a very accurate sense of what John or Paul or other writers originally wrote. That fact alone doesn’t guarantee that what they wrote is true, but it does give us confidence that we have today is very close, if not identical to, what was written over nineteen hundred years ago.

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1994), 648–649.

The fact that we have excellent testimony to Jesus should give us reason to believe. We have multiple witnesses to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Three of the Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, seem to draw on the same sources to write their biographies of Jesus. John's Gospel is quite different, and so he is considered a separate witness. Paul, another apostle, testifies to Jesus in his letters, and he is yet another witness. The fact is that we have multiple testimonies to Jesus, all written in the first century, within a lifetime of the ministry and death and resurrection of Jesus. These accounts are written by eyewitnesses, like John (see 1 John 1:1–4), or those who had access to eyewitnesses, such as Luke (see Luke 1:1–4). So, we have eyewitness testimony to all the significant events in Jesus' life, written with a lifetime of the events, and we have many copies of these testimonies.

We also have confirmation of the basic contours of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection from non-biblical sources. Non-Christian historians, such as Josephus and Tacitus, mention Jesus and the early Christians, and their testimonies, though not detailed, agree with what we find in the Bible. I don't have time to talk about this now, but if you go to the church website and find the "Sermons" section, you can find a series of messages called, "Who Is Jesus?" (You can go to <https://wbcommunity.org/jesus> directly to listen to or read these sermons.) The first sermon in the series, "How Can We Know Jesus?", describes these witnesses in more detail.

The main point is that we have multiple witnesses to Jesus. This is unlike other religions.<sup>5</sup> And John says that this testimony is ultimately God's testimony. Look at verse 9: "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that has borne concerning his Son." We often trust what other people say. Well, maybe not politicians. But we trust the testimony of historians and doctors and scientists and mechanics. How much more should we trust the testimony of God, who knows all truth and doesn't lie?

But what is the testimony of God? In John's Gospel, we find that Jesus talks about the testimony of God, as well as the witness of others. Let's look at John 5:31–40:

<sup>31</sup> If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. <sup>32</sup> There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. <sup>33</sup> You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. <sup>34</sup> Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. <sup>35</sup> He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to

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<sup>5</sup> See "The New Testament Versus the Book of Mormon and the Qur'an: Is the Bible the Word of God?", <https://wbcommunity.org/new-testament-versus-book-mormon>. See also the first sermon in this series, "The Word of Life."

rejoice for a while in his light. <sup>36</sup> But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. <sup>37</sup> And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, <sup>38</sup> and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. <sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

There is a principle in the Bible that we should not accept the testimony of only one person. We should have two or more witnesses.<sup>6</sup> This is common sense. If there's a homicide, you would want to have multiple witnesses describe the murder and identify the murderer. Jesus says that he alone doesn't bear witness about himself. First, there's John the Baptist. Then, there are the works that God the Father gave Jesus, including his miracles. And then there is the Father's own witness about Jesus. They are the Scriptures. Jesus told the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem that the Old Testament was really about him. They thought they were experts and had great knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. They thought their knowledge gave them eternal life. But Jesus says, "You may know the words of the Bible, but you don't understand what the words mean. They point to me, the one who gives eternal life." A few verses later, Jesus says, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me" (verse 46). He's referring to the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses.

A number of times in John's Gospel, we're told that Jesus spoke the words that God the Father gave him (John 3:34; 7:16; 8:18; 12:49; 14:10, 24). Christianity is very unique among all religions. It says that God became man and spoke to men. I know of no other religion quite like this. Islam says that Muhammad is God's prophet, and that he received revelation from an angel. Mormonism is quite similar. Other religions don't claim to have such revelation from God. The Greek myths featured gods who appeared in the form of human beings, but they are quite different, because they are not monotheistic and, frankly, the gods and goddesses hardly seem that different from human beings. But Christianity makes such a large claim that you must pay attention to it: it says that God spoke in the person of Jesus, the God-man. We should therefore take Jesus seriously. Even if people don't believe, they shouldn't write off this claim. They should, at the very least, investigate the claims of Christianity. They should examine the

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<sup>6</sup> Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28.

evidence. We often trust human beings with very important things, quite literally with our lives. Why not examine the claim that God told us things that will determine our eternal destiny?

One thing before we move on: it's common for some people to pit faith, or believing, against facts. Some people will say things like, "You have faith, but I have evidence." Or, "You're a person of faith, but I'm a person of science." Here's a typical statement from Richard Dawkins, an atheist, "Faith is an evil precisely because it requires no justification and brooks no argument."<sup>7</sup> Dawkins thinks faith requires no evidence and cannot withstand scrutiny. But this isn't biblical faith. Faith is trusting God even though we don't know everything, but it's not trusting God because we don't know anything. Biblical faith isn't blind faith. I suppose when we have faith, there is always a leap of faith—we trust on limited knowledge, when we don't know everything, including the future. But Christianity is not opposed to evidence. I firmly believe that when all evidence is interpreted rightly, it supports the hypothesis that God exists, that he sent his Son, who died on the cross for sins and rose from the grave, and that this God can be known.

Whether or not we believe this message means everything. There is so much riding on the line that we ought to carefully examine the truth claims of Christianity. Let's look again at verses 10–12 of 1 John 5:

<sup>10</sup> Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. <sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Whoever believes this testimony regarding Jesus has Jesus himself, and because Jesus has eternal life, the one who believes in Jesus has eternal life, too. But the one who rejects this testimony is calling God a liar. This person doesn't have Jesus—that is, they don't have a relationship with him—and therefore they don't have eternal life. The only way to have eternal life, life that is abundant and never ends, is to know Jesus. That means believing this message about Jesus. There is no other way to live forever, to know God and be in his good graces, to be on the right side of the history, to have ultimate joy and peace.

We might ask, at this point, why does it matter that we believe in Jesus? And why doesn't everyone believe? After all, if the evidence is so good, why doesn't everyone believe it? Let me

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 308.



take up the question of belief first. Why does it matter? Because, to believe in Jesus is to understand reality, and this understanding is life-changing. To believe in Jesus is to believe in God, the very reason why we exist. Believing in Jesus should change our lives and realign to us truth.

Ironically, this idea about the importance of belief is captured by a prominent atheist, Sam Harris. He says this about faith:

Belief is a lever that, once pulled, moves almost everything else in a person's life. . . . Your beliefs define your vision of the world; they dictate your behavior; they determine your emotional responses to other human beings. If you doubt this, consider how your experience would suddenly change if you came to believe one of the following propositions:

1. You have only two weeks to live.
2. You've just won a lottery prize of one hundred million dollars.
3. Aliens have implanted a receiver in your skull and are manipulating your thoughts.

These are mere words—until you believe them. Once believed, they become part of the very apparatus of your mind, determining your desires, fears, expectations, and subsequent behavior.<sup>8</sup>

Belief, according to John, gives you eternal life. It gives you an eternal perspective on life, one that says that this life isn't all there is. This age isn't the only age; the age to come is eternity, in which God dwells with his people in Paradise. To believe is to understand this reality and live in light of it.

If God promises that everyone who comes to Jesus will have that eternal life, why doesn't everyone believe? I suppose there are a number of reasons, but according to the apostle Paul, there are two main reasons. One is that everyone knows that there is a God, but our natural inclination is to suppress that truth. This is what Paul writes in Romans 1:18–25:

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they

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<sup>8</sup> Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2005), 12.

became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Because we are born into a world that is corrupted by sin, by human rebellion against God, our natural tendency is to suppress the truth. We do that because we're unrighteous. Though we all know, just from living in God's world, that there is a God who created the universe, a God who is eternal and powerful, we deny this. Therefore, our thinking becomes futile, our hearts are foolish and darkened. We think we're wise, but we're not. Instead of worshiping the Creator and having dominion over the creation, we worship the creation and end up being dominated by it. We exchange the truth for a lie and God gives us over to sins.

Because this is our natural state, we don't understand the things of God. We know there's a God, but we deny that truth. And because of that truth suppression, because we choose to believe a lie about life, we can't comprehend the spiritual things of God. That's something that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2. He writes this, beginning in the middle of verse 10:

For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. <sup>13</sup> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

<sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. <sup>16</sup> "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:10b-16).

Paul says that the Holy Spirit knows the depths of God, because he is God. And he reveals the things of God to Christians. Paul, like John, swore that he testified to the things of God, "words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit." And Paul says that people who don't have the Holy Spirit cannot accept or understand the things of God. But the person who has the Spirit can accept and understand the things of God. In fact, the Christian has access to the mind of Christ.

And here's what that means: the unbeliever can understand the conceptual content of the gospel. He can understand that the Christian claim is that Jesus is the Son of God, sent to be a man to live the perfect life that we don't live and to die to bear the punishment that we deserve for our sins. A skeptic can review the evidence for the historicity of Jesus. A non-Christian can read the Bible and understand the basic story. But, apart from the Holy Spirit, he won't believe the message is true. To him, it's just words. He won't understand his need for this message. He won't understand that this is a true story of God, the world, and everything in it. After all, the Jewish religious leaders that didn't believe in Jesus knew the Hebrew Bible, but they didn't understand its meaning, that it was really all about Jesus.

Without believing in Jesus, the non-believer will never understand the ultimate meaning of life, and the purpose of life. Earlier I quoted Richard Dawkins, the prominent atheist and evolutionary biologist. He said that faith was "an evil." But elsewhere, he says that because there is no God, there is no meaning in life and no good and no evil. These are his exact words:

In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.<sup>9</sup>

If there is no evil and no good, if that's reality, then calling something "an evil" is blind faith. It's irrational. I think that shows that when someone doesn't know God, there will be, somewhere in his or her worldview, irrationality. There will be contradictions. Knowing God is the key to having a unified, harmonious view of reality, one in which all the pieces of life fit together and make sense.

The believer, according to John, "has the testimony in himself." He has the Holy Spirit. Anyone can review the evidence for Christianity, but we need the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit to confirm it's true, to open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts to the truth and to receive it and believe it.

Mormons talk about a "burning in the bosom" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 9:8), a feeling that confirms that the *Book of Mormon* is true. However, there is no external evidence that

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Dawkins, "God's Utility Function," *Scientific American* 273 (Nov. 1995): 85.

corroborates the story of Mormonism. There is no archaeological evidence that supports Mormonism's story of what happened two thousand years ago in North America.

Christianity is different. Christianity does have evidence to support its claims. Christianity doesn't say that the Holy Spirit produces a certain feeling within you. You may or may not feel something in particular. But if the Holy Spirit starts to work in your life, as you investigate Christianity, whether that's reading the Bible or a book about Christianity, or listening to this sermon, you start to believe the message. You start to think, "This could be true." You may start to feel your need for Jesus, the need for forgiveness, for salvation. You realize that apart from a Savior who takes away your sin and gives you his righteousness, you couldn't possibly stand in the presence of a holy God. If the Holy Spirit is at work in you, you start to believe this message and to trust Jesus himself.

If you're listening and don't know what to make of the gospel and all the claims of Christianity, I would love to talk to you. I can answer questions, even ones that are hard. I would love to help you with doubts, to give you more evidence. And if you're not sure if you believe, I would encourage you to cry out to God. Be like the man in Mark 9:24 who says, "I believe; help my unbelief!" God honors those requests.

And if you are a Christian, do you realize you already have eternal life? John says that God already "gave us eternal life" and "whoever has the Son has life." You already have that! You already have a relationship with God. You know the truth. You can interpret all of life accurately. You know the meaning of life. You know where history is going. You have hope, joy, peace, and love. You have faith. Let us live as if we truly have eternal life. That doesn't mean life will be easy, but it means that we entrust our lives to God. We don't know everything, but he does, and we trust him on the basis of what we know to be true.