

**Counseling Assurance: Helping the Doubting Counselee**  
International Association of Biblical Counseling Annual Conference  
August 2015

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**Have you ever had a counselee who doubted his or her salvation?**

**I. What are reasons why some people doubt?**

- They cannot remember a specific point (time or date) when they received Christ.
- They question the procedure they went through to obtain salvation (including, “Did I know what I was doing?”).
- They have an area in their life where there is a continual struggle with sin.
- They have a misunderstanding of what the Bible says about salvation and the finished work of Christ.
- They look to their feelings to settle the issue of salvation.

**II. Is it wrong to doubt? Should you flee from doubting?**

Trick Question:

The question here really is: Is there ever a time when you should carefully consider whether or not you are saved? Yes

- If you do not obey God (1 John 2:3-5; 3:4-10; John 14:15, 21-25; 15:10, 14).
- If you do not live like a believer (James 2:17-20).

- If you hate your brother (1 John 4:20 – 5:3).
  
- If you do not desire to honor God (1 John 3:1-3; Romans 8:14).

**III. What are some potential false assurances of salvation?**

- You are a good, moral person.
  
- You know the Bible.
  
- You attend church and even “tithe.”
  
- You are in ministry on some level.
  
- You feel guilty over sin (conviction).
  
- You feel saved.
  
- You remember a special time or occasion in your life.

**IV. What are some assurances of salvation? (Romans 5:1-11)**

- You have peace with God.
  
- You stand in grace.

- You rejoice in the hope of God's glory.
- You have the love of God.
- You have certainty of deliverance.
- You rejoice in God.

## **V. Three Tests for Salvation**

- Test of History  
Have you ever called on God to save you?
- Test of Experience  
Have you demonstrated growth in Christ?
- Test of Theology
  - The Word of God declares you saved.
  - The act of God provides for your salvation (as well as His character).
  - The work of Christ secures your salvation.
  - The work of the Spirit guarantees your salvation.
  - The promise of the joy of relationship with God.

NOTE: In counseling, typically it is best to start with the "test of theology," then history and experience.

## **VI. How do you have victory over doubting your salvation?**

- Define “victory” correctly.
  
- Control your thoughts – fight the necessary battle. The issue is to live in reality of the scriptural truth rather than how you feel.
  
- Memorize appropriate Scripture.
  
- Do a study on the character of God (especially His faithfulness).
  
- Embrace the battle of sanctification.
  
- Remember the tests of salvation.

## **VII. Special Notes to Counselors**

- For Your Thinking:
  - Counseling a doubting individual usually is a process and not an event.
  
  - You want to make sure that the CE is regularly reading, memorizing, and applying the Word (Col 3:16)?
  
  - When a CE is “*stuck*” in a pattern of thinking or doubting regarding salvation, make sure the CE is taking time to actively serve God and others instead of primarily focusing on self. Are there any responsibilities that the CE is neglecting because of doubt?

- Use Philippians 4:8 to help your CE think about what is true. The purpose of thinking right is not to change the CE’s feelings; rather, it is to think right for God’s glory – to live in the reality of truth.
  
- Ask good questions to discern if the CE is typically more influenced by his/her feelings or thinking?
  
- Make sure the CE understands progressive sanctification and what the Bible says about the heart, sin, and living out the Gospel in daily life.
  
- Make sure the CE realizes that God’s grace can never be earned or forfeited by works. Grace is grace and is available as part of the love of Christ, not because a person earns it.
  
- Possible Homework for your counselees:
  - Review the three tests of salvation, consider them carefully, and be ready to discuss your relationship with Christ.
  
  - Keep a doubting journal. Ask great journalistic questions, such as, “When doubting, what was happening? Where was I? ...” Goal: Was CE aware of his/her own heart?
  
  - Have the CE memorize Scriptures about God’s grace, the person and work of Christ, eternal life, forgiveness of sins, the character of God, justification, regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit in believers, etc. (examples include Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-7; John 3:16).
  
  - Have your CE read books and articles on the Gospel, grace and Christ.

- Have your CE consider if there is any unconfessed sin in his/her life.
- Encourage your CE to pray prayers consistent with Ephesians 3:14-21, where the CE is desiring to see how much God loves him/her as a child of God.
- Make a card, review a certain number of times each day, and memorize the following:

What does God expect of me? To bring Him glory (1 Cor 10:31).

How do I bring Him glory? I bring Him glory by being like Christ (Rom 8:28-29).

God knows I'm not perfect but He does expect me to be growing (2 Pet 3:18).