

LIFE CONCEPTS



STEPPING

FROM

UNCERTAINTY

TO

CONFIDENCE

LEADER'S GUIDE



BIG IDEA

Every believer has a genuine need for assurance. Yet many people experience different degrees of uncertainty. The new believer is particularly vulnerable to this struggle. This Life Concept seeks to give the new believer confidence in what God's Word says about Jesus and eternal life.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF THE TEMPLATE

The goal of your interaction is to effectively and relationally communicate key biblical concepts, and so each interaction contains the following elements: Comparing Our Stories; Considering Our Struggles; Exploring the Solution; Examining the Sketch; and Taking Steps.

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I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Almost everyone who begins a new relationship with Jesus Christ experiences struggles. The first struggle usually deals with the issue of assurance. You want to help the new believer move from uncertainty toward a real sense of confidence in their relationship with Christ.

Share your struggle with uncertainty in two minutes or less. You should share about your struggles, but stop short of how they were solved. You can discuss that later. For now, you only want your friend to identify with the need.

If your experience seems inappropriate to share for this concept (i.e., you've never had significant struggles with uncertainty), ask some of your Christian friends about their struggle with assurance after receiving Christ. It's just as appropriate to begin by saying, "Let me share with you my friend's story."

Ask what kind of questions the person has had since becoming a Christian. Go over the common questions listed on the first page.

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

The central issue behind all of these questions is uncertainty.

How would you define uncertainty? The dictionary definition is "the lack of sure knowledge; the condition of being in doubt."

Discuss the illustration about a newly married couple.

WHAT IMPACT WOULD DOUBTS LIKE THESE HAVE ON A MARRIAGE? WHY? They would begin to undermine it and create a wall blocking communication. They could produce feelings like tension, worry or frustration. Basically, the couple would probably lose all joy or excitement about the marriage and wonder if they had made the right decision to marry one another.

HOW COULD SIMILAR DOUBTS HAVE AN IMPACT ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST? WHY?

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

Together read the whole passage aloud.

WHAT IS TESTIMONY? The key word in this section is testimony. Have the new believer circle testimony each time it is used in this passage (six times in 5:9-11). We normally think of testimony being given in a courtroom. In that context and in general, testimony is the verbal witness of someone verifying the truth of something.

WHAT MAKES TESTIMONY TRUSTWORTHY? The character and knowledge of the witness. It involves both their integrity and their knowledge of the issue. We believe people when they give reliable testimony. Since God is more trustworthy and knowledgeable than people, we must believe God's testimony even more.

WHAT HAS GOD MADE TESTIMONY ABOUT? About the Son, Jesus.

SINCE GOD HAS GIVEN US HIS TESTIMONY, WHAT TWO OPTIONS EXIST? We can believe Him or not believe Him.

WHAT IS TRUE IF WE BELIEVE GOD? The one who believes in the Son has God's testimony in his heart.

WHAT IS TRUE IF WE DON'T BELIEVE GOD? We make God out to be a liar – one who has told us something that we don't believe is true.

GOD'S TESTIMONY SAYS TWO THINGS ARE TRUE. WHAT ARE THEY? First, God has given us eternal life as a gift that we must receive in order to experience. Eternal life is not something we can earn; that would be a wage, not a gift. The second thing God says is true is that eternal life is found in the Son.

CONSIDER USING THIS ILLUSTRATION: If I put a letter inside an envelope, wherever the envelope goes, the letter goes with it. Right? Suppose I put the envelope in my book bag. Where's the letter now? In the book bag. When the envelope is not in my book bag, can the letter be there? Not as long as it is in the envelope. The same thing is true with eternal life. It's found in one place – or to be consistent with the analogy, one envelope – in Christ. Wherever Jesus Christ is, eternal life is there. Where He is not, eternal life is not. That's the point of verse 5:12.

WHAT TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE ARE THERE? Those who have the Son and, thus, have the life, and those who don't have the Son or the life.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE THE SON AND NOT HAVE THE LIFE? No. The life is in the Son.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO NOT HAVE THE SON AND STILL HAVE THE LIFE? No.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO THINK YOU HAVE THE LIFE BUT DON'T? Yes, it's possible. In fact, there are many people who think they have eternal life. But unless they have the Son, they are fooling themselves.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE THE LIFE BUT NOT BE SURE? Yes. That is exactly why John is writing this letter.

TO WHOM IS JOHN WRITING THESE THINGS? To those who believe in the name of the Son of God.

WHY DOES HE WRITE THEM? So they would know they have eternal life.

DOES JOHN BELIEVE WE CAN KNOW WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE? Yes, by believing in the Son and, thus, having both the Son and the life.

4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

Use the sketch to illustrate these concepts and relate it to your own life. Then apply it to the new believer's life.

The Two Lines: Life and Death

THE ISSUE: HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE THE SON?

A. READ JOHN 3:16. *WHAT TWO POSSIBLE DESTINIES ARE DESCRIBED IN THIS VERSE?* To perish or to have eternal life. The ends of these two lines represent the two destinies.

WHICH DESTINY DOES GOD DESIRE FOR US? WHY? Eternal life. Because He loves us. Circle the words "Eternal Life."

B. READ ROMANS 6:23. *WHAT HAVE WE EARNED? HOW?* Because of our sins, we've earned death.

Put an "X" on the lower line and label it with your name. Referring back to your story, explain that before you received Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you were on the line of eternal death.

WHAT DOES GOD DESIRE TO GIVE US? HOW? According to this verse, God wants to give us eternal life as a gift through His Son.

C. READ ROMANS 5:8. God's love for us didn't quit even though we were sinners. In fact, He expressed it in the most powerful way.

WHAT COMPELLED GOD TO GIVE HIS SON TO DIE FOR US? Because of His love. The key is in understanding why Jesus had to die.

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE? He died to pay the wages, or penalty, for our sins so that we could be forgiven and have new life.

D. READ JOHN 5:24. *ACCORDING TO THIS VERSE, WHAT IS MY PART IN SALVATION?* To hear the message and believe.

Share the rest of your story explaining how you received Christ. Draw an arrow from the lower line, through the cross, up to the line of eternal life. Place an "X" to represent yourself on the upper line. Share briefly again about your uncertainties and how you now have confidence you have eternal life because you know Christ is in your life.

After reading the paragraph, look back at 1 John 5:11-13.

ACCORDING TO THIS SKETCH, WHERE IS THE PERSON WHO HAS CHRIST? On the eternal life line.

WHERE IS THE PERSON WHO DOES NOT HAVE CHRIST? On the death line.

WHERE WOULD YOU PUT YOURSELF ON THE SKETCH AND WHY? If the person chooses the life line, ask, "When would you say you crossed from death to life?" For the person who chooses the death line, ask, "What must be true of you to be here on the life line?" You must have Christ in your life. Before moving on, ask, "Is this true of you?"

ON A SCALE OF 0-100%, HOW SURE ARE YOU THAT YOU NOW HAVE ETERNAL LIFE?

5. TAKING STEPS

After reading the two descriptions of people to whom John wrote, find out which scenario best fits your friend's situation. If the person's uncertainties center on Jesus, suggest reading the Gospel of John to examine the evidence for Jesus as the Son of God. If the person's questions center on themselves, make another suggestion. If your friend is confident about believing in Christ, suggest reading the whole letter of 1 John. The keyword in 1 John is "know." Have them circle it each time it appears in the passage.

NEXT CONCEPT

The next concept deals with our failures in living the Christian life. Though we intend to do what's right, we often blow it, many times and in many ways but God wants us to experience His love and forgiveness. The second Life Concept shows us how. Set up a time to get together again and look at this second concept.