

The Test of True Belief

Leader's Guide

2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?”

Purpose of the test:

To help people examine their own lives in order that they might have Biblical basis upon which to have assurance of their salvation.

How to lead the test:

1. The test should be used in a group setting if the leader is:
 - a. Familiar with the test.
 - b. Ready to share the truth in love.
 - c. Willing to answer questions and follow-up individuals.

Important Reminders for the test:

1. Make prayer a priority as you lead the study.
2. Be sensitive to the needs of individuals within the group and take time to meet those needs outside the group.
3. Take time to be sure that each person understands and has their questions answered before moving on in the study.
4. Remember that the material is only a tool to get into God's Word. The material is secondary. What is primary is the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God, as well as working through your life as the leader to teach and exhibit God's truth to each person.
5. To challenge a person's salvation is a serious thing. It is clear from God's word that it is necessary, but it must be done with a compassionate, not condemning, spirit. A good perspective passage for the leader to keep in mind is Mark 10:42-45.

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Lesson 1:
Who should take the test?

1. Read 1 Samuel 16:7.
 - a. Man looks at the _____. Why?
_____.
 - b. God looks at the _____. Why?
 - c. What is represented by the narrow road and small gate (vs. 14)?

2. Read Jeremiah 17:9-10.
 - a. What does it mean when the verse says, “the heart is deceitful”?
 - b. God knows our heart, but can *we* always know and understand our own heart? Explain.

3. Read 2 Corinthians 13:5.
 - a. What did Paul tell the people to do? Why?
 - b. What does it mean to “test” or “examine” ourselves?

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- c. Who has the right to judge your life? Why?
 1. God?
 2. Others?
 3. Yourself?

4. Read Hebrews 4:12.
 - a. How can we test the intention of our hearts and thus know the truth about them?

Summary:

It is important that every person who claims to be a Christian personally examine their own life in light of God's word.

Question to ponder:

Will everyone who claims to be a Christian pass the test?

Lesson 2:
Is everyone a Christian who claims to be?

1. Read Matthew 7:13-14
 - a. From the passage, what choice must every person make?

 - b. What is represented by the broad road and wide gate (vs. 13)?

 - c. What is represented by the narrow road and small gate (vs. 14)?

2. Read Matthew 7:15-20
 - a. How can you tell the difference between a true and false prophet?

 - b. What is meant by “fruit”?

 - c. Is it possible to bear bad fruit and be a good tree?

3. Read Matthew 7:21-23
 - a. What distinguished those who say they believe (i.e. the ones who say, “Lord, Lord” and yet do not enter God’s kingdom) and those who truly believe?

 - b. What parallel does this have for us today?

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4. Read Matthew 7:24-27
 - a. On what should we build our “house” i.e., life (vs. 24)?

 - b. Where can we find the proper foundation (“the rock”) for our lives?

 - c. How can we build our life on Jesus (vs. 24a)?

 - d. What happens to those who do not build their life on Christ (vs. 27)?

5. Answer true or false:
 - _____ If a person says he is a Christian, he must be a Christian.
 - _____ If a person does miraculous things, preaches, and/or belongs to a church, then these must be sure signs that he is a Christian.
 - _____ At the judgment seat of Christ there will be only a few people who think they are Christians but are really not Christians.
 - _____ These “Lord, Lord” people are not Christians now, but at one time they did indeed know Christ.

6. If a person is truly a follower of Christ, what must be evident in his life?

Conclusion:

Obviously from what Christ said, there are “many” who think they are Christians, but in reality they are not.

Question:

So, what is the test of true belief?

<p>Lesson 3: What is the test of true belief?</p>
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- Read 1 John 5:13
Why was the book of 1st John written?

- It is essential to understand that “these things” that were written in 1st John were written to say that a person can have assurance of their salvation. Read the following verses to discover what a Christian looks like.

	<u>Christian</u>	<u>non-Christian</u>
1 st John 1:6-7		
1 st John 2:3-5		
1 st John 2:6		
1 st John 2:9-10		
1 st John 4:20-21		

- List characteristics of the true Christian and the one who just claims to be a Christian according to the following:

	<u>Christian</u>	<u>non-Christian</u>
Titus 1:16		
2 nd Timothy 2:19		
Hebrews 12:14		

Christian

non-Christian

Galatians 5:19-21

Galatians 5:22-23 _____

2nd Corinthians 5:15 _____

2nd Corinthians 5:17 _____

4. What observations and conclusions can you make from the lists in questions 2 and 3?

5. Obviously from what Christ said, there are “many” who think they are Christians, but in reality are not. So what is the test of true belief?

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6. Summarize in your own words 1st John 3:7-10.

Conclusion:

The test of true belief is the “practice of righteousness.” This means that a person who truly is a Christian has a trend of life that is obedient to God’s word.

Question:

So, how does a person truly become a Christian?

So, what is the trend of my life?

Important!

This is a subjective test; therefore, it means a judgment call must be made. It is very important to remember that no one can judge you. It is equally important and crucial that you judge or examine yourself according to God’s word. In short, this is a “take home test” that only you can grade.

Lesson 4:
How does a person truly believe?

1. Read Mark 1:14-15
Jesus began His ministry by preaching the gospel of God. His message was _____ and _____ in the gospel.

2. According to 1st Corinthians 15:3-4, what is the gospel?
 - a. According to Romans 3:23, who has sinned?

 - b. In Romans 5:8 how has God paid the penalty for our sins?

3. What is the proper response to the gospel?
 - a. Believe= Trusting in Christ as your Savior
 1. Read James 2:19
Is intellectually acknowledging that Christ died for the sins of the world enough?
Explain.

 2. Read 1st Timothy 4:10 and 2nd Timothy 1:12
How did Paul acknowledge Christ?

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3. Read Luke 24:45-47; Matthew 26-28
Biblical belief involves a trust or reliance upon the fact that the payment and debt for your sin has been bought by the blood and death of Christ on the cross and His bodily resurrection.

b. Repentance= Turning from self and then to Christ as your Lord

1. *Turning from...*

What do the following verses say we should turn from?

Ezekiel 18:31-32

2nd Chronicles 7:14

1st Peter 3:10-12

2. *Turning to...*

What do the following verses say we should turn to?

Isaiah 45:22

Isaiah 55:7

Acts 3:19

- a. James 2:17 says, “In the same way, _____, by itself, if not accompanied by _____, is _____.
- b. What does Matthew 3:7-8 tell us is the result of repentance?

4. The Result of True Belief

- a. Read Luke 15:11-24

How does this illustrate true belief?

- b. What observation can you make about true belief from 2nd Corinthians 5:14-17?

1. What was the controlling factor in Paul’s life (vs. 14)?

2. Describe in your own words what verse 15 says.

3. What is the internal change that takes place when a person truly believes (vs. 17)?

- c. Read Romans 10:9-11

A person who truly believes will never be _____!

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Conclusion: (Choose one)

- _____ The result of true belief is a person who never sins.
- _____ The result of true belief is assurance of salvation and the freedom to live your life any way you want.
- _____ The result of true belief is a person who is trying to live godly in order to make sure God will truly accept him as His child.
- _____ The result of true belief is a person who has repented (i.e., turned from self to Christ) and believed (i.e., trusted in Christ as his Savior). The result of which is a changed life and a person who is not perfect, but desires to become more like Christ every day.

**WHAT
DOES IT
MEAN TO BELIEVE?**

Oswald J. Smith

Uniform with this by the same Author:

Only One Way

The Victorious Life

What Does it Mean to Believe?

The Catholic Bible has the Answer

The Man in the Well

What Does It Mean To Believe?

THERE was a time in my life when I did not know whether I was saved or whether I was lost. I remember working for the Massey-Harris Company in Toronto, and carrying messages from one department to another. As I walked along the underground corridors of that great firm I was not interested in the message I was carrying. I was asking myself just one question: "Am I saved or am I lost? If I am lost, Lord, let me know it in order that I may get saved, and if I am saved let me know it in order that I may rejoice in Thy Salvation."

You see, I had come into contact with a group of people who taught salvation by feeling and experience instead of faith. Night after night I would go forward in their tent, kneel in the straw, where they would gather around me and all pray together, pleading with God to save me. So alarmed was I that I was afraid to go home and go to bed for fear I would fall asleep and wake up in perdition. My one cry day and night was, "Am I bound for Heaven or for Hell?" I was still only 16 years of age.

One night I decided to attend Chalmer's Presbyterian Church, and as I sat on the east side of the gallery I bowed my head and prayed that the minister would that night preach on saving faith and thus solve my problem. At last Dr. MacPherson stepped into the pulpit and the service commenced. And that night he did preach on faith. I listened with both ears and watched with both eyes, but at the close of the service, with hundreds of others, I got up and went out into the darkness of the night, still not knowing whether I was saved or whether I was lost.

Why? Was it because Dr. MacPherson had not preached the Gospel? Most assuredly not. He did preach the Gospel. Again and again he cried out: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved." What then was the matter? Let me tell you. Never once in the course of his address did he stop to tell us what he meant by the word "believe", and that was my trouble. I knew that I had to believe, but I had always believed. There never had been a time when I did not believe. From the days of my earliest childhood I believed as much as I believe today, and yet I did not know whether I was a Christian or not.

You see, there were no atheists in our community, no agnostics or skeptics. I had never heard of an infidel. Everybody believed. Some were drunkards, others swore and cursed; many were given to lying and stealing. They did not even profess to be Christians, but they all believed. I did not know one who even questioned the authenticity of the Word of God.

Are there not millions in a similar situation? I have found them everywhere I have gone. In ancient Russia, let alone Spain, Italy and many other countries of Europe, as well as in America, there are literally millions who believe and yet who are not saved. And if millions who believe in Christ are not Christians then what does it mean to believe?

Finally one day I came across that little booklet that was used so often by Queen Mary in her personal work, Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment, by Geo. Cutting, and as a result my doubts vanished. I was assured of my salvation, and from that day to this I have never had a doubt of any kind.

THREE STEPS

There are three steps in saving faith. They are like the three rungs of a ladder. The first two will not save, but the third will. However, you cannot take the third until you have taken the first two.

Hear

The first step I designate by the simple word "hear". "How shall they believe except they hear?" A knowledge of God's salvation is necessary before it is possible to believe. That is why we send missionaries to China, to India and to Africa. The heathen must first hear before they can believe. But I am sure that I need not dwell on this first step now. I am quite certain that everyone here present has again and again heard the message of God's salvation. Therefore you have already taken the first step. You have heard.

Believe

I designate the second step by using the simple word "believe". Now what is the meaning of "believe"? It simply means "giving intellectual assent to a truth". The Dictionary says, "to consent with the mind". When therefore you have

given "intellectual assent to a truth" you have believed. You have taken the second step. But you are not saved.

When the King James translators were translating the Bible some three hundred and fifty years ago, they came across a certain Hebrew word in the Old Testament Scriptures, and they began searching for an English word with which to translate it. Finally they chose the word "trust", and that is why you have the word "trust" occurring so frequently in the Old Testament Scriptures. It is found a hundred and fifty-two times.

In due time they came to the New Testament, and presently they encountered the same word, but this time in the Greek, and again they searched for an English word with which to translate it. But for some unknown reason they decided to choose an entirely different word, for they chose the word "believe". Had they been consistent, had they used the Old Testament word for their translation, this message would not have been necessary. But they used, as I have stated, the word "believe", and that is why you have the word "believe" occurring so frequently in the New Testament Scriptures, especially in the Gospel of John and the epistles of Paul. That has caused all the confusion and misunderstanding.

You see, the word "believe" has to do with the head, the intellect. It is a mental process. But you can believe all you want to believe about Jesus Christ and still not be saved. You can believe everything that I believe about the Bible, and yet perish eternally. That is the faith of the demons. The Word of God declares that the demons also believe and tremble. They were among the first to acclaim Jesus as the Son of God, but they did not submit to Him. They believe as much or more than you do about Christ. They do not for a moment doubt His Deity, but their faith is purely intellectual. It does not change their lives, and their doom is certain, therefore they tremble.

I came across a certain denomination one day and I was anxious to discover, if I could, the basis upon which they received men and women as members of their churches. I learned that they asked them just one question, one question consisting of two parts, namely, "Do you believe God loves you and that Jesus Christ His Son died for you?" If they could answer that question in the affirmative they were accepted.

But who doesn't believe in the love of God? Everyone who believes the Bible does. And who doesn't believe that Jesus

Christ died for mankind? The Bible says He did, and if you believe the Bible you believe He died for you. That doesn't make you a Christian. That doesn't change your life. That is purely intellectual. Thousands believe in the love of God and the death of Christ who are not Christians. The second step will save no one and yet that is where multitudes stop. They take the second step but not the third. Hence they are not yet saved.

What are the usual questions that are asked of one who wishes to join the Church? These: "Do you believe in the Virgin Birth, the Deity, Resurrection and Second Coming of Christ? Do you believe Christ died for your sins?" Such questions are doctrinal and can be answered intellectually by anyone. What are the questions I ask? These: "Have you been born again? Are you saved? Have you received Jesus Christ?" Such questions are experimental. If they can be answered in the affirmative I do not worry about the others.

Trust

The third step and the only step that saves I designate by the simple word "trust". And now I must turn to "The New English Bible". At long last the translation of the Authorized Version has been corrected. After 350 years the word "believe" has been eliminated. After preaching this sermon for 40 years I now have The New English Bible to back me.

When the Philippian jailer asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer in The New English Bible is, "Put your trust in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). Again and again instead of "believe" it is "Put your faith in" or "Put your trust in the Lord Jesus." That has nothing whatever to do with the intellect; that has to do with the will, and it demands a decision. Multitudes there are who "believe" who have never "trusted".

In the O.T. the way of salvation is stated thus: "Put your trust in the Lord" (Psalm 4:5). In the N.T. it is "Believe on the Lord." The O.T. has the correct translation. When you "put your trust in the Lord" you are saved.

Now what is the meaning of the word "trust"?

First, it excludes effort. Did you ever have anyone try to teach you to float? Do you remember how you stood beside your instructor in the water, and how he said to you, "The

water can sustain your weight. All you have to do is to trust the water. Now throw yourself back and float." And do you remember how you threw yourself back on the water and how you floated—to the bottom?

Then do you recall how you stood again by your instructor and how he said to you, "Now why did you tighten your muscles? Why did you hold your breath? Couldn't you trust the water? Why, it carries whole navies. It can easily bear you up." And once again you threw yourself back on the water, but there was a slight catching of the breath, a tightening of the muscles and once again you floated—to the bottom.

Then again you stood beside your instructor. Again he urged you to trust, and this time without any effort of your own, as you threw yourself back on the water, to your pleasure and delight, you found yourself floating. I wish someone would float tonight on God's great salvation. Put aside your effort. Stop struggling. Don't try to help yourself either by works or religion. Just float. Trust, I say, excludes effort. As long as you are putting forth effort you are not trusting.

Implies Committal

Second, trust implies committal. I think the best illustration is that of the marriage ceremony. Here is a young man who is keeping company with a young woman. For some considerable time they go together. At least they should. At last he asks the all-important question and she says, "Yes". Now they are engaged.

Now this young man makes a great many promises and the young woman believes he means what he says. After a while her girl friends come along and they ask her some questions. "We understand," they say, "that this young man of yours has promised you a home." "Yes, he has," replies the young woman. "And he has promised you clothes and food. Now tell us, do you have the home?" "Oh no," she exclaims, "I do not. I am still living with my parents." "What about the food?" they continue. "Does he supply your food?" "Why no, of course not," she responds, "except when we go to the restaurant, and then sometimes I pay the bill." "What about clothes? Has he given you any clothes?" "No, he has not," the young woman answers; "my parents still buy my clothes." "And yet you believe the young man," they exclaim. "Yes, I do," she

answers. "I believe every word. I have no doubt of any kind." You see, she had taken the second step; she had believed.

There comes a never-to-be-forgotten day when the young man stands at the front of the church facing the minister, first on one foot, then on the other. Never in his life has he stood so long before. It seems an age. At last to the strains of the wedding march the young woman on the arm of her father comes slowly, oh, so slowly, down the aisle. Every eye is fastened on her. There is plenty of time for everyone to admire her wedding gown.

At last she reaches the front and stands beside the man of her choice. The minister asks one or two very important questions: "Wilt thou?" And she "wilts". And then something happens that has never happened before, and I want you to mark, if you will, very carefully, my phraseology. For the first time in her life she gives herself over, she hands herself to, she commits herself to, she trusts the young man. Taking his arm, she now leaves the church in his protection. Never again will she have to work. He is now responsible for her and it is up to him to look after her. Her worries are over. He must provide for her.

A little later her girl-friends approach her again. "Well," they ask, "has he given you a home?" "Oh yes," she exclaims, "we are now living together in our own home." "What about the food?" "Yes, he pays the grocery bills and the butcher bills. He provides the food." "And what about clothes?" "Yes, he is buying my clothes—not as many as I want, but all that I need. Indeed he is looking after everything."

But just when did she get everything? Was it when she took the second step, when she believed, or was it when she took the third step and trusted? It was not until she trusted. She had believed but she got nothing. When she trusted she got everything. So it is with salvation. You can believe as much as you want to believe and get nothing. But the very moment you give yourself up to Jesus Christ, the moment you hand yourself over to Him, the moment you commit yourself to Him, the moment you put your trust in Him, you are saved, but not until then.

Have you ever done it? You see, it implies committal. It is something you must do. Just as that young woman had to walk down the aisle and definitely give herself up to the young man of her choice for the rest of her life, so you must give yourself up to the Lord Jesus Christ for time and eternity, if you are to be saved. The second step will not save.

The third is absolutely necessary. You must trust Jesus Christ. Will you then do what the young woman did? Will you too come down the aisle? Will you hand yourself over to the Heavenly Bridegroom as she did to the earthly? Will you own allegiance to Him? If you will, you will be His for evermore, and He will be responsible for you.

Here is a struggling swimmer who is drowning. He goes down for the first time struggling furiously, while a man stands on the bank with folded arms, who never makes a motion to dive in and rescue the drowning man. Now he is going down for the second time. Still he struggles. But still the man makes no effort to save him. Now he is going down for the third and last time. But he does not struggle. His arms fall limp at his sides cries out "Help!" And in a moment the man on the bank unfolds his arms, dives in and easily rescues the drowning man.

Why didn't he do it before? Because the man thought he could save himself. He had to wait until the man was ready to give up. But the moment the man was willing to trust his rescuer he was saved. As the rescuer approached him all he had to do was to commit himself to the one who had come to save him, and the moment he gave himself up to his rescuer and trusted him, that moment he was saved. When you, my friend, are willing to give yourself up to your Rescuer, the resurrected, living Christ, you too will be saved. What you believe about Him will not save you; you must put your trust in Him.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Is that what I say when I am dealing with a lost soul? Of course not. If I were to say that I would have an argument on my hands at once. I would be asked the meaning of the word "believe". No, I do not use the King James Version. I use the Old Testament word, or The New English translation, and I say to the seeker: "Put your trust in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

Requires Action

In the third place trust requires action. Let me show you what I mean.

The date is June 30th, 1858. It is a glorious morning. The mighty cataract of Niagara thunders on the rocks at the foot of the Falls. An eleven hundred foot tightrope has been stretched from bank to bank, on which Charles Blondin, the world's greatest tightrope walker, is to cross. Special trains from Toronto and Buffalo have been run to bring the crowds.

Balancing his 40-pound pole he steps on the rope and starts across, while the voices of the throngs are hushed, until, as he triumphantly places his foot on the farther bank, a great cheer rises even above the noise of the cataract itself.

Turning to the sea of faces, he now makes a thrilling proposal. He offers to recross the cataract with a man on his back.

But who is to be the man? Excitedly the people talk among themselves.

"Do you believe I am able to carry you across?" at length asks the ropewalker, turning to a likely looking individual.

"I certainly do," at once responds the one addressed.

"Will you let me?" inquires the waiting hero.

"Will I let you? Well, hardly. You don't think I am going to risk my life like that, do you?" And he turns away.

"And what about you?" he asks Henry Colcord, his manager. Do you believe I can carry you across?"

"I believe. In fact, I have no doubt about it at all," answers Colcord.

"Will you trust me?" "I will!"

Breathlessly the people watch. The 38-foot pole is balanced; they start; and the great rope tightens beneath their weight. Step after step, slow but sure, without hesitation, they move along. What confidence! The centre is reached. They are above the rushing, boiling, foam-covered water, the ugly rocks beneath, poised, as it were, in mid-air.

Now they are nearing the Canadian side. A great hush falls on the excited crowds. The people hold their breath. The strain is terrific. Suddenly there is a pause. Some gambler had cut the guy line and the rope is swaying fearfully. Blondin tells Colcord to dismount, which he does, standing with one foot on the rope and his hands on Blondin's shoulders.

"Harry," says Blondin, "you are no longer Colcord; you are now Blondin. Be part of me. If I sway, sway with me. Do not try to balance or we will both be dead."

Colcord climbs back. The rope sways wildly and Blondin begins running. How he keeps his balance no one knows, but he does, and at last they are over; the final step is taken, and they stand once more on terra-firma, while the spectators go wild with excitement. The tension is broken; the nerve-racking experience ended.

Bridging the gulf between time and eternity is the great rope of salvation. Never yet has it broken. And Jesus Christ alone is able to cross it. You may have heard all about it, and, like the first man, you may even believe that Jesus can carry you across. But not until you take the final step and commit yourself to Him will you ever get over, must also trust.

Are you among the thousands who believe, But who have never trusted Christ the Lord? Who know about Him, and defend Him, too, And yet who do not take Him at His Word?

Oh, friend, receive, receive this Savior true, Take Jesus now, oh make Him yours today; You may believe, but you must trust Him, too, For He Himself is God's appointed Way.

Oh my friend, tell me, have you trusted? Or do you merely believe in your head, and have you failed to take the last important step? If so, will you not by a definite act of your will "put your trust in the Lord Jesus?" If you will, "you will be saved." Will you do it? Do it and do it—NOW.

MY DECISION

Realizing that I am a sinner, and believing that Jesus Christ the Son of God died and rose for me, I now receive Him as my personal Savior, and turning from all else, I put my trust in Him alone.

Name

Date.....