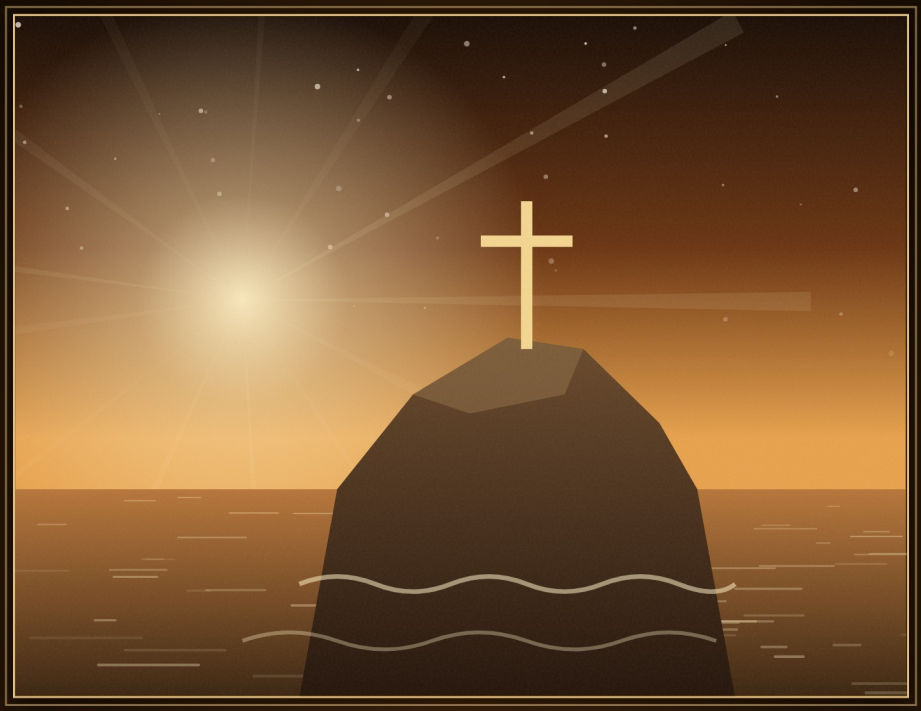
A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

Knowing Where I Stand with God

Starting Out with Christ · Book 7



Assurance, identity, and the hope of heaven

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Introduction

Many people hope they will go to heaven, but few are sure. Some think it would be proud to say they know. Others are afraid that one bad day could undo everything. I want to look at what the Bible actually says, because God does not leave His children guessing about where they stand.

I believed in God as a boy and was baptized on October 19, 1995, but I went through seasons when my bad choices left me wondering where I stood with Him. Measuring myself by my own performance only left me discouraged. Going back to what Scripture actually says settled it. I wrote this book so you can know where you stand with God based on His Word, not your feelings.

Assurance does not rest on how good I have been. It rests on who Jesus is and what He has done. When I keep my eyes on Him, I can know that I belong to God, and I can learn to see myself the way He sees me.

1 Receiving Christ for who He is

John 1:12 (SLB) says, "as many as received Him, to them He gave authority to become children of God." Receiving Christ is more than raising a hand or joining a church. It means receiving Him for who He really is.

John's Gospel opens by saying "the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then John adds, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1,

14, SLB). Jesus is not just a good teacher or one prophet among many. He is God the Son who became a man.

Receiving Christ also means receiving Him for what He did. First Timothy 1:15 (SLB) says "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He did not come only to set an example. He came to die in our place and pay for our sins. Today He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He is the "one mediator of God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5, SLB). No priest, pastor, or saint stands in that place. Only Jesus does.

My family attended church when I was a boy, but it was a neighbor, Pastor Jimmy Carter, who showed me from the Bible who Jesus really is. Jesus was not just a figure to admire. He was the Savior who died for my sin. Once I trusted Him, my faith became my own. Knowing where you stand with God starts with receiving Jesus on His terms (John 1:12).

2 God wants me to know

> *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life, and so that you may believe in the name of the Son of God.*
>
> **1 John 5:13 (SLB)**

First John 5:13 (SLB) tells us why John wrote his letter. He wanted believers to know, not merely hope, that they have eternal life. Just before that, he wrote "that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has life" (1 John 5:11-12, SLB).

That is why assurance is not pride. If I were trusting my own good works, it would be foolish to say I was sure of heaven. But I am trusting Jesus and His promise. Jesus said, "the one coming to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37, SLB).

People who depend on their church, their good deeds, or their religious rituals often live with doubt, because they can never be sure they have done enough. The answer is to stop looking at myself and look at Christ. My feelings change from day to day. His Word does not.

3 Who I am in Christ

When I trust Christ, God gives me a new identity. The world will hand me plenty of labels, some fair and some not. Some come from my achievements and some come from my failures. None of them get the final word about who I am. God does.

Scripture tells me I am accepted. I am God's child (John 1:12, SLB). I have been justified (Romans 5:1, SLB). I have been bought with a price, and I belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, SLB). I am a member of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:27, SLB).

> ***There is*** *therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to* ***the*** *flesh but according to* ***the*** *Spirit.*
> **Romans 8:1 (SLB)**

Scripture also tells me I am secure. Romans 8:1 (SLB) says there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote that "to those who love God all

things work together for good" (Romans 8:28, SLB). Nothing in all creation can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39, SLB). And I can be confident that He who began a good work in me will complete it (Philippians 1:6, SLB).

After May 29, 2020, shame tried to tell me that my past defined me. Even after years of preaching and leading Bible studies, I had to relearn what Scripture says about who I am. In Christ I am not defined by my worst choices (2 Corinthians 5:17). Some people may not have forgiven me, and I have had to give that to God instead of dwelling on what they think. Living free starts when you believe what God says about you instead of your past.

4 Heaven is a real place

Jesus told His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2, SLB). Heaven is not a vague idea or a cloud where we float forever. It is a real place prepared by a real Savior. After His resurrection, Jesus had a real body. His disciples touched Him and watched Him eat (Luke 24:39-43, SLB).

Salvation is not something I receive after I die. It is received here and now, while I am alive. Jesus said, "the one believing in Me has eternal life" (John 6:47, SLB). When the criminal on the cross next to Jesus put his faith in Him, Jesus told him, "today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43, SLB).

Believers will stand before Christ and give an account of how they lived, and rewards will differ (2 Corinthians 5:10, SLB). But the question of where I

will spend eternity is settled when I trust Christ. That truth does not make me careless. It makes me grateful, and gratitude makes me want to live for Him.

I was born in Germany while my father served in the Air Force, and I grew up in Victorville, California. This world was never meant to be our final home. Heaven is not a symbol. It is a real place Jesus is preparing for His people (John 14:2-3). Knowing our true home is real changes how we hold onto things here.

5 Living from assurance

Some believers worry that they can lose their salvation. Others argue that once saved means always saved. Sincere Christians have studied this question for centuries and landed in different places. What I can say plainly is that Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and follow Him, and no one will snatch them out of His hand (John 10:27-28, SLB).

The best evidence that I belong to Christ is not a past moment I can point to. It is a present trust in Him that shows up in how I live. John wrote, "by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3, SLB). Obedience does not earn my place in God's family. It shows that I am already in it.

If you are not sure where you stand with God, do not wait. Turn to Jesus with a repentant heart and trust Him to save you now. Then find a Bible-teaching church, be baptized, and start reading God's Word

every day. The First Letter of John and the Gospel of John are good places to begin.

My wife stayed with me through my lowest season, when I had made choices that hurt my marriage and the people closest to me. She did not give up on me. When you know you are secure in Christ, you can live with that same steadiness and grace toward others.

Knowing Where I Stand with God

✦ ✦ ✦

Can I really know I am going to heaven? This book looks at what the Bible says about assurance, who Jesus is, the new identity God gives His children, the reality of heaven, and how to live from that security instead of fear.

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life, and so that you may believe in the name of the Son of God.

1 John 5:13 (SLB)

Book 7 of 11 in the collection Starting Out with Christ

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