

TRAINING OBJECTIVE #1 – ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

[Excerpt from Personal Disciple-Making by Christopher Adsit pg 125-144]

OBJECTIVE

The disciple is sure that if he has honestly asked Christ to enter his life:

- a. Christ has indeed come into his life;
- b. He has been reborn as a whole new creation;
- c. All his sins—past, present, and future—have been forgiven;
- d. A new relationship has been established between him and God;
- e. He will never again be separated from God.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THIS OBJECTIVE

It is clear from Scripture that God would have us *know* we are saved. There is no need to doubt, and with the question resolved once and for all in the new convert's mind, he can go about the business of growing up in Christ and becoming an effective ambassador of God.

Time for Bible study—you get to do some digging for yourself!

John 3:16-18

John 5:24

John 6:37

John 6:51

John 10:27-29

John 11:25, 26

John 17:1-3

Acts 10:43

Acts 16:31

Romans 8:1-3

Romans 8:31-39

Romans 10:13

Ephesians 1:4-7

Ephesians 1:13, 14

Colossians 1:12-14

Colossians 2:13, 14

Hebrews 7:24, 25

Hebrews 13:5

I Peter 1:1-9

I Peter 1:23

I John 2:12

I John 4:15-17

I John 5:11-13

Revelation 3:20

Each of the passages at the bottom of the preceding page deals with the salvation Jesus Christ has bought for us; each gives us insight into why or how we can *know* we are saved. In your notebook, jot down a brief summary for each verse or passage. It will make a memorable study and it will be easier to locate passages you want to refer to later.

APPLICABLE DEFINITIONS

Assurance of Salvation: The conviction that, though he was previously lost and separated from God, he is now redeemed by Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and saved for all eternity. He may or may not have had a dramatic experience upon conversion, and he may or may not feel any different, but he has the settled confidence that Christ *has* entered his life, has saved him, has re-created him, and will never leave him or forsake him.

PEP TALK FOR THE DISCIPLEMAKER

You've just led someone to Christ! This is absolutely *the* most fantastic event that will ever occur in that person's life! A soul has just been redeemed from the hand of the enemy! Snatched from the jaws of death! He has been translated instantly from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God! Reborn! Handed the most precious gift in the universe: eternal life! Adopted by the Almighty God of the universe and named as a co-heir with Jesus Christ . . .

And yet, as the newly born Christian lifts his expectant eyes from the “sinners prayer,” I’ve seen soul-winners respond to this unbelievably triumphant event with, “Well, Joe, uh, great. You’re a Christian now. Uh, that wasn’t so bad, was it? Now, let’s finish reading through this tract here . . .”

Does the term “anticlimactic” apply? It’s not like the guy just signed his name to an insurance policy. He just stepped into eternity! Show a little spunk! A little excitement! Rejoice with the person! Give him at least some sense of the magnitude of the decision he just made! If he understands right from the outset that what he did in asking Christ into his life was a lot more than just joining a social club, when the doubts and adversities come (and they *will* come), he’ll be much more likely to endure them, rather than to say, “Who needs to go through all this hassle for the sake of one insignificant decision?”

Now about those doubts and adversities. Up to this point, your disciple has been enjoying the relative calm of Satan’s harbor. There has been no need for him to experience the rough seas and shipwrecks that the devil can whip up when he wants to. That’s not to say that non-Christians don’t experience difficulties; they do. And they endure them without the benefit of the indwelling God of the universe, which is a pretty hopeless circumstance. But now, on top of the normal, everyday bummers and disasters of life, this new Christian has just engaged the prince of darkness as his sworn enemy.

The brand new Christian is in a terribly vulnerable state. Satan’s main objective at this point is to convince him that “praying that prayer” was insignificant. If Satan can do this, he has killed the seed before it has sprouted. He will have successfully inoculated the new Christian against catching the “real disease.” The next time this guy is approached with the gospel he’ll say, “Oh, I tried that once and it didn’t work. It’s OK for you, but it’s just not for me . . .”

You may ask, “Was that person saved?” No one but God can say for sure. Many scenarios exist:

- He may have “prayed the prayer,” but not with sincerity, in which case he never was saved.
- He may have prayed the prayer and truly believed, but then rejected the lifestyle and ministry God had in store for him—in which case he himself is saved, but he will amass a lifetime’s worth of wood, hay and stubble that will burn to a crisp at the judgment seat of Christ (I Corinthians 3:11-15)
- It could be that he was saved, has rejected God’s lifestyle and ministry, will go through a period of great defeat and adversity but will later come to his senses, finishing out his life in victory and fruitfulness (cf. the prodigal son: Luke 15:11-32).

But that’s not a question you need to ask regarding the new “babe in Christ” sitting across from you. Your job is to do whatever you can to prevent *any* of the above from happening!

Throughout this second section on follow-up, as I mentioned in the last chapter, my plan is to give you more ideas and material than you are ever likely to use. Your job will be to become familiar with each chapter and pick the tools you feel you’ll be able to use with ease and skill. If you don’t care to use the format given here, no problem! My goal is to stimulate your thinking so you can formulate your own unique presentation.

What are most brand new Christians expecting? Just about the only input most of them have had regarding the spiritual or supernatural has come out of Hollywood, so they’re looking for “The Force” to turn them into Jedi Knights. They expect God to take on the form of George

Burns and walk up to them and introduce Himself Earthquakes! Signs and wonders in the heavens! The Hallelujah Chorus in full stereophonic Dolby sound! Angels ricocheting off the walls!

Instead, they pray a prayer . . . and . . . nothing. Now, some *do* experience a great sense of relief, or joyfulness, or a deep satisfaction that what they did was “right.” One fellow who received Christ with me said, “It feels like a big hole in my chest just got filled up!” I know of many conversion experiences that are pretty dramatic; in most cases, however, there is no physical or emotional experience at all.

Now Satan steps in: “It didn’t ‘take’ with you, my friend. And it never will, because it’s a sham. Where’s the change? How are you any different now from before you prayed that silly prayer?”

Because of this, the first thing you need to do is *defuse the “experience bomb.”* The new Christian simply needs to know he does not have to sense any dramatic changes immediately upon conversion. It may burst his bubble of spiritual misconceptions, but his feet will thereby gain solid ground. Assure him that change has indeed taken place, but it’s not the type one can necessarily feel.

Next, he needs to *grasp the truth of what just happened.* If you can get across to him the five concepts listed in the objective, he’ll have enough to deflect the fiery darts of Satan.

The assurance-of-salvation objective is so important that you should make it your goal to cover it as thoroughly as you can immediately after the new Christian’s conversion. Don’t put it off till the next meeting—there may not be one! If you simply don’t have time, then be sure to make plans to get together again as soon as possible, even that same day. If you have met “like two ships passing in the night” (Like on an airplane, while vacationing, or during a volcanic eruption), be absolutely sure to get his address and sit down *that very night* and write him a long letter on the subject of assurance.

Let me emphasize something I barely touched on above. A person isn’t saved by “praying a prayer.” The “sinner’s prayer” isn’t some kind of a magical incantation that, when uttered, automatically ushers one into the kingdom of God. It’s meant to be a true expression of an attitude of the heart. You may have just taken a person through a phenomenal presentation of the gospel, and he may have said some words about Christ coming into his life, but if the words didn’t come from his heart, that’s all they were: *words*. Ephesians 2:8, 9 says that we are saved by grace through *faith*. Romans 10:10 tells us it is with the *heart* that you believe and are justified. If you want to do an interesting little study sometime, compare John 8:31 and 8:44. Jesus described “the Jews who had believed Him” (verse 31) as belonging to “your father the devil” (verse 44). And James 2:19 says, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” It’s one thing to “believe” in Jesus, but it’s quite another thing to have “faith” in Jesus. Belief is merely intellectual assent. Faith involves volition and commitment. Faith saves; belief doesn’t.

The person who “prayed,” then, may or may not have actually become a Christian. What can you do to determine which was true in his case? Nothing at all. Only God knows what’s truly in a person’s heart. Then how should you proceed? Take the new Christian at his word! Assume that he meant it from his heart, and relate to him as a bona fide, brand new Christian from then on. If he did merely mumble some words that weren’t really from his heart, it’s because he

wasn't ready to commit his life to Christ yet—there was still something in his way. But there is a very good chance that, as you treat him like a Christian and go over the follow-up material, that barrier might be removed and sometime during the process he'll take a genuine step of faith.

BROACHING THE SUBJECT

Immediately upon the completion of his prayer (or as soon as you hear from him that he has asked Christ into his life), you might say something like, "Joe, I want to be the first to welcome you to God's Forever Family! What you just did, if you really meant it, will be the most significant and far reaching decision of your life! You're about ten seconds down the road of an adventure that's going to last *billions* of years! You may not feel any different right now, but I'd like to take a couple of minutes to give you just a small inkling of the incredible things that the Bible says just happened in your life."

Or, after expressing your excitement about his decision, you may ask him, "What thoughts are going through your mind right now?" or, "What do you feel like right now?"

If he says, "I just saw heaven rolling back like a scroll!" or something to that effect, rejoice with him! But he'll need to know soon that he can't base his faith on an emotional experience.

If he says, "I really don't feel any different," you can share with him that it's OK—even expected—not to feel different, that the Christian life is not based on emotions or feelings, but on the facts that are laid down in the Bible.

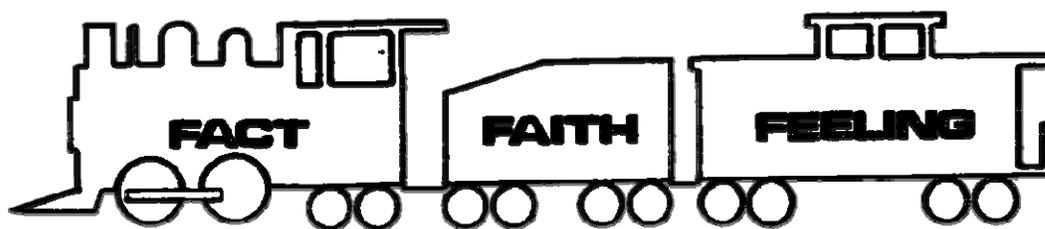
SUGGESTIONS FOR GROWTH

Some new Christians are going to need extensive input on this subject, while others will do fine on an abbreviated version. It depends on their backgrounds and on how much excess philosophical baggage they've got on board. It will be up to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to determine how deeply you'll need to dive into this important area.

1. Defuse the "experience bomb."

In Campus Crusade for Christ's evangelistic tract (available from Here's Life Publishers) "Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?" there is an excellent illustration to this end. On page 12 they show a train engine labeled "Fact" pulling a coal car labeled "Faith" and a caboose labeled "Feeling." Either use the tract and read him the text that's written there, or draw and explain your own diagram.

Here's how they draw it in the book:



Explain that the engine, "Fact," represents what we know to be true on the basis of the Word of God.

The coal car, "Faith," represents our beliefs, our confidence in certain truths, which leads to our opinions and actions. When we say we have faith in something, we are saying we believe it to be absolutely true, and we are willing to take action based on that belief. If I say I have faith that a certain chair will hold me up, I won't hesitate to sit down on it.

The caboose, "Feelings," represents our subjective, emotional sensitivities and impressions. The train will run with or without the caboose, but it goes nowhere without the engine. Also, the train moves only if you shovel coal from the coal car into the engine. In the same way, our Christian lives will move only if we place our *faith* in the *facts* of God's Word.

Now, as the engineer, you could hop up into the caboose and start hollering, "OK! Let's get this train moving! Start shoveling that coal back into here! Fire up this caboose and we'll get rolling! C'mon, everybody, SHOVEL!" Just as the caboose has no ability to power a train, so your feelings have no ability to empower or direct your life as a Christian. It doesn't matter how much faith you put in your feelings, they won't get you anywhere. The facts will. Jesus said in John 8:32, "Then you shall know the *truth*, and the truth will set you free." David said in Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path," not my hunches, intuition, or feelings.

2. Help him to understand the truth of what just happened.

As mentioned in the stated training objective for "Assurance of Salvation," there are five key points that the new Christian needs to grasp:

A. Christ has indeed come into his life.

Revelation 3:20 says: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Ask the new Christian, "What do you think the 'door' in this verse represents?" (The door of his life—his heart; his will.) "Did you open that door? What does it say He'll do if you open the door?" (Come in.) "So where would you say Jesus is right now?" (Inside of me!)

I know some people are hesitant to use Revelation 3:20 to prove that Christ will come into the lives of those who ask Him to—they feel it is being used out of context. It's true that the verse is contained in a message the Lord sent specifically to the church of Laodicea, and that its most strict interpretation should be considered in that context, but the idea that is communicated can be found throughout Scripture. It's just that it is most eloquently and simply expressed here. We know that God is taking the initiative with the unbeliever; He's knocking on the unbeliever's "door" (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; 1 Peter 3:18). We know that the unbeliever must hear (John 5:24; Romans 10:17) and respond (John 3:16; Acts 16:30,31) and when he does, Christ will come into his life (John 1:12; 14:16, 17, 23; Colossians 1:27). You might prefer to share all of those verses, or simply share Revelation 3:20 with him and explain about the context later.

B. He has been reborn as a whole new creation.

Share 2 Corinthians 5:17 with your disciple: “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” Ask him what he thinks the verse is talking about when it says he has become a “new creature.” After he’s taken a good stab at it, take him over to John 3 and have him read verses 1-8 about the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Explain to him that every person living today has been born into the physical realm—but that one birth wasn’t enough. Since God exists in the spiritual realm, it is necessary that we be born into that realm as well in order to have fellowship with Him. That occurred when we invited Christ into our life. We didn’t have much choice about our first birth, but we have total control of our decision about our second birth.

You might want to talk about the three-dimensional man. We were all born into this world as two-dimensional, with a body and a mind. We were physical and mental, but when we asked the Spirit of Christ to enter our life, we gained a third dimension, the spiritual. Until that time, it had been impossible for us to relate with God or to experience His presence, because He existed on a plane we had no access to. When we were born into the spiritual realm, we then received the supernatural equipment that makes relating with God possible.

One of the primary ramifications of this fact, and one that we must help the new Christian grasp, is that, since he is now a spiritual being, there is power available to him in the form of the indwelling Spirit of God, which wasn’t there before. He is now different down to the very core of his being. Help him to understand that these differences may not be apparent immediately, but as he matures in Christ, they will become more and more evident. Here are a few other verses you might want to consider sharing with him on this subject:

Psalm 51:10	2 Corinthians 3:18	Galatians 6:15
Ezekiel 36:26,27	2 Corinthians 4:6,7	Ephesians 2:4-6, 10
Acts 1:8	Galatians 2:20	2 Timothy 1:7

C. All his sins—past, present, and future—have been forgiven.

Look up each of the passages at the top of the following page and jot a summary of it in your notebook. Share one or two of them that really speak to you on this subject. Don’t overwhelm the poor guy with seven or eight verses, just make your point and move on.

Psalm 32:5	Jeremiah 33:8	Colossians 2:13, 14
Psalm 103:3	Matthew 26:28	Hebrews 8:12
Psalm 103:12	Acts 10:43	Hebrews 10:16, 17
Isaiah 1:18	Acts 26:17, 18	I John 1:9
Isaiah 38:17	Ephesians 1:6, 7	I John 2:12
Isaiah 43:25	Ephesians 4:32	Revelation 1:5

You (and he) may be wondering about the “future” part of the objective: His sins, past, present and *future*, have been forgiven. This question is resolved with simple logic: It’s not logical that God would forgive only the sins we have committed up to the point of conversion, and then impute all subsequent sins to our account. None of us would make it, if that were the case. His forgiveness is timeless (Hebrews 10:12). He sees the entire scope of our sin with one look, and lays *all* of our iniquities on Christ (Isaiah 53:6; I Peter 3:18). If He hadn’t died for all sin—past, present and future—He could never “bring us to God.” (There is

probably no need to go into all of this with the new convert. I share it mainly for your benefit, and just in case he asks.)

D. A new relationship has been established between him and God.

This objective really covers two bases:

- He needs to know that he really was lost before conversion.
- He needs to know that the reasons behind his lostness are gone now, and things are totally different between him and God.

He probably has a pretty good grasp of the first point, or he would not have felt a need to be saved. But it's good to feel him out on that subject as you talk—he may see his commitment to Jesus Christ as a nice idea, but not essential for salvation.

The second point will probably be a new concept for him. He needs to understand that, far from being an enemy of God and utterly separated from Him, he is now looked upon by God with incredible favor. The Lord has loved him all along, but now, at long last, He can express that love directly! He now sees the new Christian as a friend, an heir, a genuine, legitimate son! Check these verses and share one or two with the new convert:

John 1:12	2 Corinthians 5:17
Romans 5:6-8	Ephesians 2:1-7
Romans 8:15-17	

E. He will never again be separated from God.

This is where I am going to get into trouble with those of you who do not believe in the eternal security of the believer. I know that there are a few verses in the Bible that, if you look at them a certain way, seem to indicate that it is possible for one to lose his salvation. But as I have studied the Word, it seems that the overwhelming weight of proof is in favor of eternal security—that once you are saved, you are saved for good. Jesus told us that He would give those who believed in Him *eternal* life (Matthew 19:29; John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 10:28; 17:2, 3; etc.). The only word that Jesus ever used to describe the kind of life that He would impart to those who belonged to Him was *aionios*, which means “indeterminate as to duration, eternal, everlasting, forever.”² Some try to say it refers not to the quantity (or duration) of life God gives, but to the quality. In fact, it refers to *both*. J. Guhrt asserts in *Brown's Dictionary of New Testament Theology*:

The word *eternal* here indicates a definite quality: It is a different life from the old existence typified by hate, lack of love, sin, pain and death. Eternal life does not therefore just begin in the future, it is already the possession of those who have entered upon fellowship with Christ. Thus John 3:15 speaks of having eternal life in the present. But there is also a temporal sense, so that eternal (*aionios*) indicates the quantity of this life: Because it belongs to Christ, who himself is the Life, it has no end.

Further, we know that *aionios* must refer to “never-ending” life for four reasons. First, because of how it is contrasted in 2 Corinthians 4:18 with *proskairos*, which means “for a season.”

Second, because of how it is used to describe things we know for sure are everlasting in time, such as God (Romans 16:26), His power (I Timothy 6:16), His glory (I Peter 5:10), the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14), etc. Third, because of the many other Greek words that Jesus could have used if He had meant anything other than “endless”. Finally, because Jesus used *ainios* in Matthew 25:46 to describe both the punishment of the wicked and the life of the righteous. If eternal life is not endless, then neither is eternal punishment—a revelation which ought to life Satan’s spirits considerably.

One more shot. Let’s assume, for a moment, that one *can* lose his salvation. Old Joe Jones (fictitious name) became a Christian on June 10, 1978, at which time he received “eternal life.” But then came that fateful day, October 12, 1985, when Joe did whatever it is that one does to lose his salvation, and he lost his. A few months later, Joe died. About a millennia after that comes the Great White Throne Judgment, and Joe stands before God.

The books are opened, and God says, “Joe Jones, I see that you had everlasting life at one time, but it only lasted for 7 years, 4 months and 2 days. Tough luck, friend. If only you’d died a little sooner, you would have had eternal life eternally.”

Is it possible to say that a person had eternal life for only 7 years, 4 months and 2 days? No. Whatever else you might say about his life, you couldn’t say it was ever eternal, or he’d still have it. The most you could say is that it was “temporarily eternal,” which is not eternal at all.

Jesus said that He would never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), that He would never drive away those who come to Him (John 6:37), and that nothing is able to snatch His sheep away (John 10:27, 28). In those three verses Jesus says we can’t run away. He won’t throw us away, and we can’t be taken away. We He mistaken in old Joe Jones’ case?

If, after all that, you still think it’s possible for a person to lose salvation, you need not proceed any further with this objective. It will seem silly to you! Your theology doesn’t allow for “assurance of salvation,” so move on to the next training objective. But for the rest of you, look up these three verses and jot down a summary next to them in your notebook:

Hebrews 13:5b John 6:37 John 10:27, 28

Share these verses with the new Christian and follow them with the statement I made above: “That means that Jesus has said we can’t run away, He won’t throw us away, and we can’t be taken away. Once you’re in, you’re IN!”

Additional illustrations to share with your disciple:

1. *The persistent request.* There once was a young boy who made the decision to ask Christ into his heart, but wasn’t sure that He had really come in. So every evening around the dinner table as the family would pray together, the boy would once again ask Jesus to come into his life. After a week of this, his father got an idea. Later that evening . . . “Johnny? Would you come into the living room, please?”

Johnny came bounding in. “Sure, Dad, what’s up?”

But his dad called out again, “Johnny! I’m talking to you! Please come in to the living room!”

"Dad, I'm right here in front of you!"

"Johnny! I really need you in here—NOW!"

"I AM here, Dad!"

"Jooooohnnyyy!"

"What's wrong with you, Dad? I've been standing right in front of you since the first time you called me!"

"I know you have been, son. Seemed a little crazy for me to keep calling you to come in here, didn't it?"

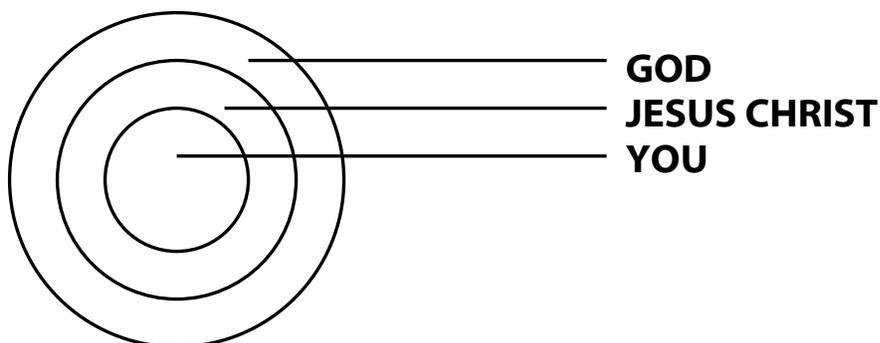
"Sure did!"

"Well, let e ask you something, Son. How do you think Jesus feels about you when you keep asking Him to come into your life?"

2. *The father-son relationship.* You will always be the son (or daughter) of your father. Even if it were legally possible for your earthly father to declare that you were no longer his child, or if it were possible for you to have your father's name deleted from all of your birth records, the undeniable, bottom-line fact of the matter is that he IS your father, genes, chromosomes, Roman nose, cleft chin, and all. He was the one who gave you life, and nothing will ever change that. It's an unalterable fact of history.

It's the same way with your heavenly Father. When you were born again, the life that you were given came from God (John 1:12, 13; 3:3-6). In John's first epistle, he calls Christians "born of God" (I John 3:9; 4:7; 5:4, 18), meaning that they were given life uniquely from God—He "bore" them. We're not merely adopted sons, though some biblical writers use that concept to demonstrate certain aspects of our son-ship. In the spiritual realm we are literal sons and daughters of God, because He gave birth to us. That, too, is an unalterable fact of history. Second Timothy 2:13 says, "If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself."

3. *Noah and the ark.* When Noah and his family entered the ark, it was God who saw to it that the door was securely shut and sealed behind them (Genesis 7:16). It's the same way with us. Once we have entered Christ, God shuts the door behind us and seals it with His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14).
4. *Double protection.* You are safe and surrounded by Jesus Christ ("in Christ" – 2 Corinthians 5:17), and He, in turn, is surrounded by God (Colossians 3:1-3). That means that anything that gets to you must first make its way through both the Father and the Son (John 10:28-30).



5. *The Certificate of Debt*. Read Colossians 2:13, 14:

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Stories have come to us down through the ages that in Jesus' day, when a criminal was tried and convicted, he was put in prison and a "Certificate of Debt" was posted outside his cell, listing all of his crimes against particular people and/or against society. Often, when capital punishment by crucifixion was ordered, this Certificate of Debt was nailed on the condemned man's cross, so that all who passed by would know what he was being executed for.

Each of us has been tried and found guilty before God. This verse tells us that, upon salvation, God took away the Certificate of Debt that had been nailed to the wall outside our prison doors. Since there is no longer any certificate around describing our crimes, we are no longer compelled to remain in custody—we're free to go. But as we travel to Golgotha and take a close look at Jesus and the cross that is killing Him, we see our certificates fluttering in the wind, nailed just above His bloody head.

EVALUATION

Following are some questions to ask the new convert, after you've had some input, in order to determine if he does indeed have assurance of his salvation. Don't ask all of them, just one or two that you feel are best.

1. If you were to die tonight and stand before God, and He were to say, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" what would you say?
2. If someone were to ask you, "How can I be sure I'm a Christian?" what would you say?
3. What are some things you can do to make yourself worthy of God's love? (Trick question. "Nothing" is the right answer.)
4. Do you really think that you're good enough for God to save you? (Another trick question, "No" is the right answer. We'll never be good enough to deserve salvation. We are saved only on the basis of God's grace.)
5. Draw a line with 0% at one end and 100% at the other and ask him to put an X on the line where he would indicate how certain he is that if he were to die tonight, he would go to heaven.

If you determine that he still isn't sure of his salvation, try to learn what is hindering that conviction and help him over that specific barrier. Following are a few common reasons people lack this assurance:

1. They misunderstand the basis of salvation: grace, undeserved merit. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins and God forgave us. There is nothing we can do to earn it or to lose it.
2. They never actually have received Christ personally (or are not sure).
3. They are looking for an emotional experience.
4. They rely on day-to-day feelings.
5. They lack the knowledge that it is God who keeps us.