

How can we have faith? John 20:19-end,  
also Acts 4:32-35.

John said – “that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and by believing you may have life in his name.” A new life John means.

A person once wrote: ***‘My life has changed radically and for the better. I’m a new person now — a Christian.’***

What does that mean, ‘a Christian?’ Does it mean a ‘nice person?’ ‘Oh, they’re a Christian person.’ The simple truth is that you could be a very nice atheist – but you wouldn’t want people calling you a Christian!

What about if you are born in a country that is supposedly a Christian country, does that make you a Christian? No! Being born in a Christian country doesn't make you a Christian any more than being born in a McDonald's would make you a Big Mac burger.

Well I believe in God, does that make me a Christian? Well, again, many people in this world believe in God – people of other faiths – yet they would not want to be called Christian.

A Christian is a *Christ*-ian – a follower of Christ; someone who has a relationship with God through Jesus. How that relationship happens varies enormously. Some will know the exact date. I know the exact date – September 27<sup>th</sup> 1993. Before that date, I was not a Christian; I became a Christian on that day, and I have been a Christian since then.

Some would say, ‘Do you know, I can never remember a time that I wasn’t a Christian.’

Others would say, 'Well, I think there was a time when I wasn't a Christian, and I think I am a Christian now, but I couldn't tell you exactly how it happened. It was a bit of a process.'

It doesn't matter which of those categories you're in; what matters is that you know that you are a Christian now.

C.S. Lewis used this analogy: he said it's a bit like if you're on a train from Paris to Berlin. Some people will be awake at the moment the train crosses the border, and they'll know the exact moment it happened. Other people won't. It doesn't matter; what matters is that you know that you're in Berlin now.

What matters is that you know that you're at the right destination. And what matters is that you know that you're a Christian now —and you can know that.

We heard from John 20. At the start of his Gospel he says, **Yet to all who received him, to those who received Jesus, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**—a Christian is a child of God, the image of the closest possible relationship with God.

The point is this: if you're in that relationship, you know you're in that relationship.

God wants us to be sure. In 1 John 5, St John says: **"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."**

Jesus said to Thomas: Blessed are those who have not seen who believe. How can we know we have eternal life?

Our confidence is based on three things – like the three legs of a tripod and each are essential. And each of these represent the members of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Word of the Father,  
the Work of Jesus the Son,  
and the Witness of the Holy Spirit.

**The Word of the Father – the Word of God – HOLD up a Bible.**

The WORD of God – our confidence is based not on feelings but on a book.

If you asked me how I know I am a Christian I would point you to this book – the Bible

Our feelings can blow hot and cold – they are changeable and in fact can even deceive us. We need to rely instead upon God’s promises revealed in his Word.

John 20 told us: “Jesus did many miraculous signs... which are not recorded. But these are written that you may believe...” The revelations in Scripture are what we stand upon....and John gives that promise: you may believe that Jesus is the Christ and that by believing you may life in his name.” ***We stand upon Scripture and its promises.***

**Here are three.**

Revelation 3:20 – “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.”

Words which speak of God desiring an ongoing relationship with individuals. When we become a Christian, we begin a new deeper relationship with God through Jesus.

Holman Hunt, the painter, illustrated this verse with this painting.



It's called *The Light of The World*. Jesus is standing at the door of someone's house. And the house represents your life, my life.

And this particular person has never opened their life to Christ, and that's shown by the fact that this door is overgrown with weeds and thorns and thistles that have grown up around it.

And Jesus is saying: **"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door—I invite me in—I will come in and eat with them and they with me."**

When Holman Hunt painted this picture, someone said to him, 'You've made a mistake. There's no handle on the door.' And Holman Hunt replied, 'That's not a mistake. There is a handle, but the handle is on the inside.'

He says, **"If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will come in."** He doesn't say, 'I might come in'—it's a promise: **"I will come in."**

When someone believes in Jesus, they invite Jesus to come in. We can be sure he comes in, whatever we felt. It's not dependent on feelings; it's a promise: **"If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in."** That was my own experience. I prayed a prayer with a friend repenting of my sins, believing in him, and inviting Jesus to come into my life. I remember later as I went to bed, I didn't feel anything... but already the next day, things began to change in my life – he can come in.

**Matthew 28.** Matthew includes one description of the disciples meeting the resurrected Jesus. In Galilee, Jesus tells them "And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age."

Jesus' words to followers that he will never leave them nor forsake them. So once he is in, he doesn't leave. No matter how bad things look or how bad they feel, Jesus promises to those who believe in him that he will never leave them.

**John 10:28** – Jesus says “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life. “ **John 20** : “by believing you may have life.”

We have just celebrated Easter. The implications of the Resurrection are staggering, because Jesus rising from the dead, him standing in that room of locked doors on that first Easter, assures us first of all about the past. It means we really can know that we're forgiven. How can we know it. The answer is because he rose from the dead. God raised him from the dead.

And so the Resurrection was not kind of the reversal of a defeat that had taken place on the Cross; it was the manifestation of a victory. It's the evidence that it really worked, that we really can be forgiven; the past can be wiped clean.

Then it assures us about the present: that we really can have a relationship with Jesus. Jesus is not dead; he's alive. And therefore you can know him, I can know him.

It assures us about the future: because If Jesus was buried—dead, buried and rose again, that means that one day, when you and I die and are buried, we too can be raised to new life.

This life is not the end. History is not kind of meaningless or cyclical. It's moving towards a glorious climax. One day Jesus will return, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Then those who put their faith in Christ will go to be with him forever, in a place where there's no crying or pain or temptation or sin or

suffering or separation from loved ones. We'll be given glorious, painless resurrection bodies. We will be transformed into the likeness of Christ. There is life beyond the grave.

**The WORK of Jesus.**

How am I a Christian? because of an event – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus was crucified – the 11 disciples were shown his hands and side – the disciples could all see the nail marks, they could even put their hands in his side if they wanted.

On the cross, he took our sins upon himself. He was the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

**Isaiah 53** we heard on Good Friday. All we, like sheep, have gone astray—this represented us, this represented the things that we've done wrong.

All we like sheep have gone astray, we've turned, every one, to our own way — black book.

and I said let this hand represent Jesus Christ, who never did anything wrong.

And what the verse says is: on the cross the Lord has laid on him—on Jesus—the iniquity of us all.

Now Paul says. **2 Cor 5:21** – God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus lived a sinless life; he never did anything wrong. He was righteous in God's eyes. There was nothing between him and God. He had a perfect relationship with God the Father.

What this verse says is that God made him, on the cross—this says: God made him who had no sin to be sin for us. On the cross Jesus took our sin—he made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Isn't it amazing: an exchange took place which means it's possible for us, because of what Jesus did, to be in a right relationship—that's what 'righteousness' means—a right relationship with God and, as a result, right relationships with other people.

So how can we receive this free gift? Repentance and faith. Repentance – admitting we have done wrong, been living a life independent of God, doing what we want, repentance is going one way and turning round. Faith. Trusting in something or someone. As John says 'believe in Jesus'

Jean-Francois Gravelet (1824–1897), better known as Blondin, was a famous tightrope walker and acrobat. He decided that he was going to make crossings of a tightrope 335 metres in length, suspended 50 metres above the Niagara Falls.

One time a royal party came over from England to watch it, and it included the Duke of Newcastle. And on this particular occasion what Blondin did was, having walked across and back, he then took a wheelbarrow and he wheeled that across and back. And there was a huge crowd there cheering him.

And Blondin went up to the party, the royal party, and he said, 'Look, do you believe that I could put somebody in the wheelbarrow and wheel them across?' And they all said yes. The Duke of Newcastle said yes, and he turned to the Duke of Newcastle and he said, 'Hop in!'



The crowd fell silent, but the Duke of Newcastle would not accept Blondin's challenge.  
'Is there anyone else here who believes I could do it?' asked Blondin.

Silence from the crowd. Seconds stretched into minutes and still no one answered Blondin's question. No one was willing to volunteer. Eventually, an old woman stepped out of the crowd and climbed into the wheelbarrow. To the delight of the crowd Blondin wheeled her all the way across and all the way back again.

The old woman was Blondin's mother.  
She was the only person willing to put her life in his hands. Faith.

### **THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.**

So that is the second leg – the Work of Jesus –  
now the third and final leg of the tripod – the Witness of the Spirit.

If you asked me how I know I am a Christian, I can point to this Book – the Bible, to the event which took place in History – the cross and resurrection – and I can also point to experience.

Jesus said – he would come into our lives if we open the door. It is not actually Jesus who comes in – it is his Spirit, the Holy Spirit who comes in. Jesus taught about the Spirit, and when he has commissioned them in that upper room, we read 'he breathed on them and said 'receive the Holy Spirit' – not only the gift of salvation given to his disciples, but also the gift of the Spirit was to be given to them.

What does he, the Spirit, do?

We will hear more about the work of the Spirit between now and Pentecost.

One to mention:

He transforms us from inside. Galatians 5:22-23 talks about what the Spirit builds into us : “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.” These surely are things we would all love to have more of in our lives...

Of course like fruit takes time to develop. What it does mean, is that when someone becomes a Christian, over time you see change in their character as well as other changes.

He changes our relationships with God, ourselves and others. There can be: A new love for God? A desire to read the Bible, to study and understand it? A sense of being forgiven? A new concern for others. Enjoyment of worshipping God. A desire to meet with other Christians. Forgiveness of, or restored relationships with siblings or friends. Paul said: “we are being transformed into his likeness”. We can read of God’s plans, desires, how we are to live in his world as a member of his kingdom. There are choices we make. Yet. The Spirit is also at work within us. Changing us, transforming us, growing that fruit.

Acts 9 shows a dramatic turnaround in Saul – Paul – repent means change the way you are going. He repented and believed and not only his mind but his actions and everything began to change. Acts 4 shares beautiful tangible effects of people trusting in Jesus – a sacrificial generous spirit to other believers, regardless of class, age, gender, background, occupation, race.

## CONCLUSION

That's how we know that we're in a relationship with God: we know it because of the promises of God—he will come in. We know it because of the death of Jesus for us, what he did for us. And we know it because the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is not arrogant to be sure we have eternal life – that was John's aim when writing his gospel.

If you aren't sure, if you have ever really believed in Jesus here is a prayer I am going to pray – a way to start the Christian life and to receive all the benefits which Christ died to make possible. Jesus is alive, he's here. You can pray this in your heart, echo it in your heart. Just say

*Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that you love me so much.  
Thank you that you stand at the door of my life and you knock.  
And today, I want to invite you in. I turn away from all the bad stuff  
in my life,  
all the things that I know are not right. I'm sorry for them and I ask  
your forgiveness.  
Thank you that you died for me on the cross so that I could be  
totally forgiven,  
the slate could be wiped clean and that I can make a new start.  
And today I put my trust in you.  
I ask you to come in and to fill me with your Holy Spirit,  
to help me to lead the kind of life that deep down I long to lead.  
Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.*