



How do we know if an offer from a company is trustworthy or fraudulent? Sometimes you can ask a friend. Sometimes you can check Snoops. Sometimes you learn by personal experience. Have you ever been suckered by one of these companies?

Fifteen years ago I got a phone call from a company telling me about some new golf clubs. A friend of mine had given them my name and number. He had already signed up to be part of the research study on these new golf clubs. The pitch went like this:

A new golf company needed testimonials from real golfers. We try out their clubs; we send them written input and evaluation. At the end of the trial, the golf clubs are ours to keep, for free! A \$1500 value. I wanted some new clubs. My friend was doing it too. The offer sounded spectacular but it also had some verification.

What do you think? Was it legit or fraudulent? You just want it to be legit, don't you?

To start my trial I simply had to give them my credit card number. It wouldn't be charged but held as a deposit in case I damaged or lost the clubs. This seemed a bit dangerous but I knew there was fraud protection on my American Express. But they didn't take that card and I was emotionally bought in at this point. They had their hooks in me! So I gave them the only Visa number I had: my debit card number that accessed my bank checking account.

Within an hour, my friend called me to warn me off. He'd discovered that the company was fraudulent. A \$1500 withdrawal had been taken from my checking account. The golf clubs never came.

How do we know if an offer trustworthy? This is the subject of our scripture today, 1 John 5:6–12. First, a spectacular, mind-blowing offer is made. Secondly, this offer is backed up by three sources of verification.

Turn to 1 John 5. We're going to look at these verses in reverse order, starting with verse 11—the spectacular offer.

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life.

This is an audacious claim. Death is the inescapable reality every person faces. It's an unwelcome reality that greets us all. World religions are structured to grant favor after death.

But it's not just humanity that experiences death. Everything in our universe dies. Stars die. Animals die. Plants die. Rivers die.

Black holes eventually disappear. Everything we know is moving down the path of deconstruction that eventually leads to death or non-existence. It is a reality that surrounds us like a fish surrounded by water. It's just as remarkable for a fish to imagine an existence without water as it is for us to imagine an existence without death.

But that is exactly what God offers in 1 John 5:11. God has given us eternal life. He's changed the equation. He's changed the rules. This is either the biggest hoax of recorded history or it's the most amazing revelation of all time!

The Bible offers proof after proof that this is the most amazing revelation of all time. And one of the intended purposes of the scriptures is to show us how eternal life is received, and how we can have confidence that this offer is trustworthy.

Eternal Life is "in Jesus Christ"

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (v. 11).

Look at how it says in verse 11 that eternal life is "in his Son." He possesses eternal life. In his essence he is life.

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind (v. 4).

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (v. 12).

Then it tells us in verse 12 that Jesus gives this life, this eternal life, to whoever "has" the Son. This means "has fellowship" with the Son. It is describing a connection that is so intimate and close that it is inseparable. *"But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit"* (1 Cor. 6:17). *"...the two will become one flesh"* (1 Cor. 6:16).

The New Testament tells us that a person enters into this relationship, this fellowship, with Jesus through faith and belief. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).

So the progression of thought is this:

- » God has given eternal life
- » Jesus possesses the eternal life in his being
- » People experience eternal life through being "in fellowship" with Jesus

While death is the inescapable reality every person and thing in the universe faces, Jesus offers a remedy. There's also a warning here in verse 12: *"Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."* The Scriptures are saying that there is one way, an exclusive way, to experience eternal life—belief and faith in Jesus Christ. No matter how well intentioned or sincere people might be in their beliefs, if they are not believing in Jesus Christ, they will not have eternal life.

To support this audacious claim and this exclusive claim from verses 11-12, verses 6-10 provide three verifications from expert witnesses.

» three witnesses that will validate that Jesus Christ was the Son of God

» that Jesus Christ defeated death

» that Jesus Christ has the authority to offer eternal life and that Jesus Christ is the only way

The three verifications are Water, Blood and the Spirit.

This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son (verses 6–10).

These verses are saying multiple times and in multiple ways that Jesus Christ is verified by expert testimony: water, blood and the Spirit.

Water

Verse 6 says Jesus came by water. This is referring to the water baptism of Jesus and the subsequent beginning of his ministry. The water baptism of Jesus was like the gunshot at the beginning of a race. From that moment until his ascension to heaven he performed miracle healings (lepers healed, blind given sight); performed miracles (water to wine, waves obeyed him, a tree withered, demons left a man and entered a herd of pigs); taught to crowds ranging from thousands to a few.

To say in these verses that Jesus "came by water" and that "water testifies" was like a shorthand way of saying Jesus did all these amazing things during his ministry. The Christians and Gnostics in Asia Minor all agreed on this.

Blood

Verse 6 goes on to say he did not come by water only, but by water and blood. Three times John connects the water and the blood as verifications. The blood is referring to Jesus' blood that was shed at his crucifixion on the cross. Remember, the Gnostics had left the Christian church and they who were confusing the early Christians by teaching that the Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism, empowered him to do miracles, but left him before the crucifixion. Verses 6-10 are directly refuting their mistaken teachings.

The truth, verified by experts, is this—without the blood of Jesus that was shed and his atoning death, no one would have eternal life. *"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life"* (Lev. 17:11). *"God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith"* (Rom. 3:25).

To say in these verses that Jesus "came by blood" and that "blood testifies" was like a shorthand way of saying, Jesus had to give his life and shed his blood in order to offer eternal life to all who would believe.

The Spirit

Verse 6 ends with this sentence, *"And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth."* Then in verse 8 it says the Spirit, water and blood agree. Now the gauntlet is dropped. The Spirit is testifying too. The eternal Spirit of God is entering the discussion.

» The Spirit who moved across the waters of the deep during creation.

» The Spirit who inspired the authors and prophets of the Old Testament.

» The Spirit who descended upon Jesus at his baptism.

» The Spirit who exists eternally in the Trinity.

His opinion is not to be trifled with. He speaks the truth and only the truth, eternally.

The Spirit is like the voice of a parent who ends the squabbling of kids. The kids throw various opinions around, but when this person speaks, everyone is quieted. Enough. The Spirit is the heavy voice that ends all the squabbling.

Each of these verifications on their own are powerful with exhaustive evidence, but they aren't working alone. In verses 7–8 it says, *"For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement."* It's like John is playing poker and lays down an ace high royal flush. You can't beat that

hand; it always wins. They thoroughly and perfectly align and support the claim that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

We understand this process of expert verification. TV shows like *Storage Wars*, *American Pickers*, *Antiques Roadshow* and *Pawn Stars* are reality shows based upon finding and authenticating expensive items. In order to verify the trustworthiness of an item, an expert is called in. You never know what you'll find. Highly valuable items must be verified with an expert. Likewise, highly valuable offers, like the offer of eternal life, must be verified with experts. The water, blood and Spirit are the three expert witnesses who **all** agree that Jesus Christ was legit and his offer was valid.

Verse 9 is a great point of logic that connects with anyone who's a cynic in its plea—we accept human testimony. This is a common activity. We trust expert witnesses, expert academics, eyewitnesses, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.

Don't treat God's witness lightly. God is no ordinary witness. He will accommodate the questions of humanity. He will reveal long-suffering as humanity rebels against him. But he is the holy God of the universe and his testimony is greater. And no one should light-heartedly disagree with God's testimony. The language here is weighty as it continues in verses 10–12.

Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony (that Jesus is the Son of God). Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And the testimony is this: God has given us eternal life and this life is in his

Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

These verses prompt us to consider how prepared we are for death. Do we have the confidence of eternal life that Jesus offers? Or are you unsure of what will happen to you after death? You could pay a Phoenix-based company \$200,000 to freeze your body using Cryonics. They will freeze your body until medical advances allow you to be revived and treated. But you have to die first. And you will eventually die.

Steve Jobs saw death like the global system upgrading to something new and better. "No one wants to die ... death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new."

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 7:2: *"It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart."*

God is calling to each of us, offering his love and eternal life. Embrace it! Then after we embrace it, imagine if all of us shared it with one person this holiday season.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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