John's epistles are written with the most relevant words of encouragement and warning for Christ’s church today. He writes for one purpose - to expose what is truth from what is error. He writes using the word "know" 42 times because the message was for readers to know the truth of four main themes that he spirals through the letter. He knew that there was nothing more important than the truth - it IS the radiant theme of the Word of Life. Many were professing Christ but did not possess Christ. Many were being self-deceived 'thinking' they were Christians, and they were not.

So, John writes from a loving fatherly polemical heart, addressing what the true Christians were to live certain of, while exposing to the pretenders the heresy they were believing and promoting. We see this in our world today-especially in the post-modern emerging evangelical world. An easy believe-ism that has taken the irresistible grace of God to mean nothing more than an emotional experience, a walk down an aisle, filling out a card, and being baptized. Surely all of those works validate genuine new birth? But John says, "No." And he explains the truth of what the Word of Life says and does in the life of someone who has truly experienced the regenerating grace of God.

We will look at John’s key themes such as:

**Certainty of Genuine Salvation** – Are you certain that the words of Matthew 7:20-23 will not be said to you? And if so, on what basis? What distinguishing marks will a person possess and portray when they are truly regenerated by Almighty God and are living as a child of God? What distinguishing marks will a person possess and portray when they are faking it or are self-deceived into thinking they have experienced sincere salvation, yet never have experienced real life in Christ. And can we actually know anything for ‘certain’ … isn’t it being more humble to admit that we don’t know for certain, only God knows? Certainty of salvation is one of the issues John addresses in his epistle more than once.

**Certainty of Living an Obedient Life** – What is *obedient*? What does that look like today in our evangelical circles? Do we even know with certainty anymore what exactly ‘obedience’ is? Do we have a hatred of sin? And should we? Is confession a regular part of our walk with a holy God? Or isn’t just confessing that I’m a sinner the moment I ask the Lord to save me, enough? Does He really expect me to ask forgiveness of sins regularly when He’s provided grace? Does our life show the effectiveness that comes in obeying the Father’s will? And are we really, with absolute certainty, to even know His will? Obedience is another key issue John repeats.

**Certainty of Joy** – There is a special joy reserved only for those who live with the unwavering assurance of having been transformed by God. This miracle of transformation creates a joy in a believer’s life that perseveres in the face of persecution.

**Certainty of Love** – For someone who professes to be a Christian, yet hates, (rejects, does no forgive, abandons, holds grudges, slanders, accuses), a brother or sister in Christ is not a child of God, they ‘abide in death and are murderers.’ 1 John 3:14,15. It is a mark of a true born again believer when they demonstrate forgiving and merciful love in truth toward their faith family. To do anything less is a mark of never having experienced new birth, according to the Word of Life we find in 1 John.

These themes spiral in John’s epistle with an enlarging and deepening lens that helps us all to follow the exhortation of Paul – “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” 2 Corinthians 13:5

After reading these certainties, what comes to your mind?