



Session

3



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# LEADER GUIDE

**THIS IS  
MY  
STORY**

**3**

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GUIDE**



# THIS IS MY STORY

## Leader Guide

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Georgia Baptist Student Groups and Faith Development

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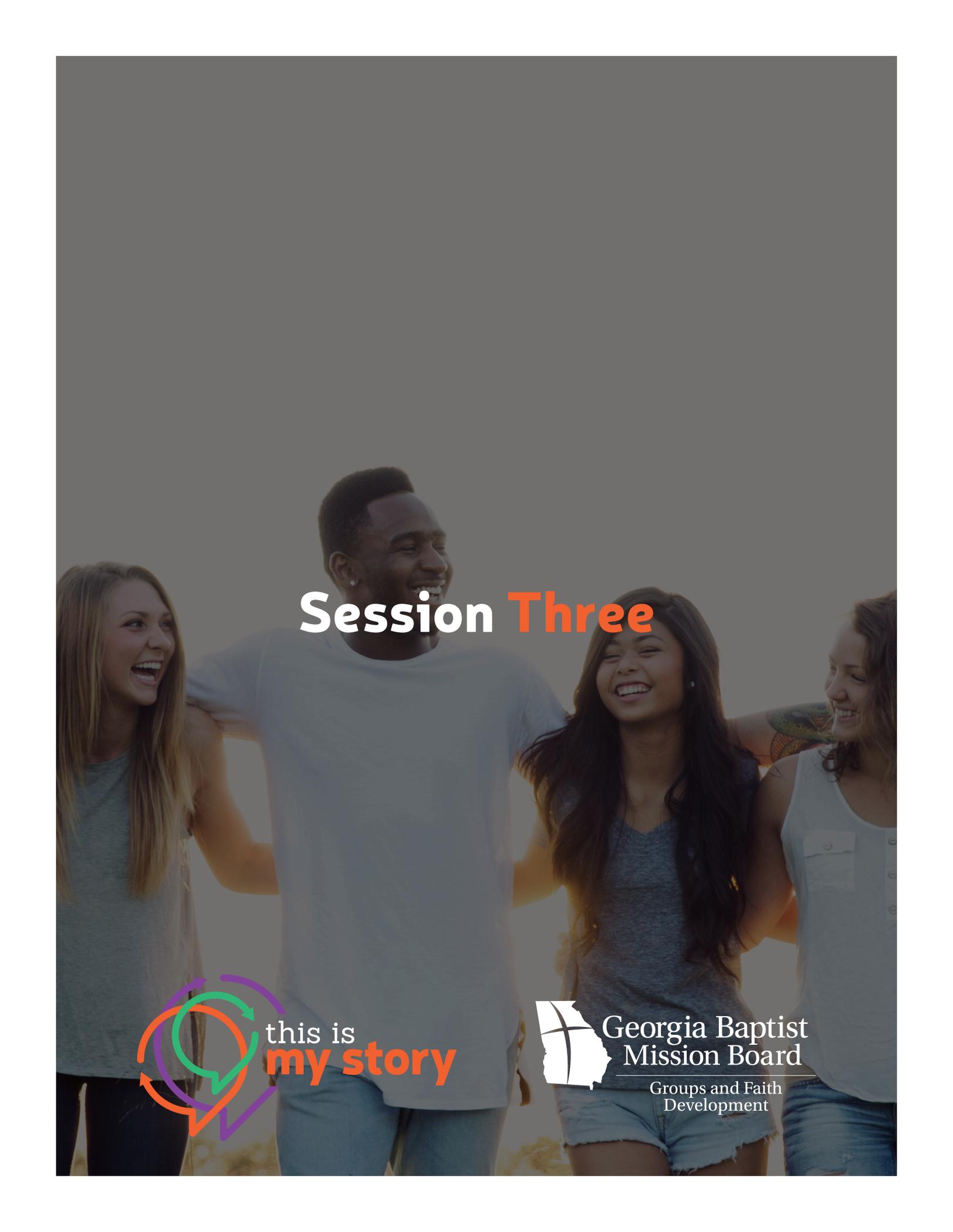
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# Session

## Session 3 – Confirming Your Story

**Note to Leaders:** Throughout this Leader Guide you will find illustrations for each of the main points in the sessions. These are only suggestions. Feel free to use whichever illustrations you think will be helpful. Add in your own illustrations as you see fit. The best illustrations are those from your own personal experience. It's also a good idea to begin each session with a story, illustration, or activity to grab the attention of your students as you launch into the lesson.

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# Session **Three**



Georgia Baptist  
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Development

# Session Three

## Confirming Your Story

**About this Session:** You will teach your students three evidences of an authentic faith. These evidences from the book of First John will give some students reassurance about the reality of their faith. For others, they will recognize they don't have a personal story of salvation of their own and will be encouraged to explore faith in Christ.

### **LOOK AT THE BOOK**

Many evangelists have used the following phrase to get the point across to students who have "played church" but haven't truly come to know Christ: "Eternity is too long to be wrong." They are exactly right. The Bible says that it's wise to examine ourselves and determine whether we have come to know Christ or not. In **2 Corinthians 13:5**, Paul wrote, "*Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!*" Let me ask you, on a scale of 1-100, how sure are you that you will go to heaven when you die? If your number is less than 100, this study is for you. And if you *are* sure, then this study is for you also! Thankfully, God put a book in the Bible to help us identify whether our faith in Jesus is authentic or not. That book (or letter actually) is First John.

John's goal was not only to give assurance that eternal life is found in Christ, but he also wrote with another goal in mind. He wanted to give assurance that Christ (and therefore eternal life) is found in us. In this short letter, he says at least nine times that we can know that we are safe in Christ. In **1 John 5:13** he wrote, "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.*" The "things" he was referring to are the contents of his entire letter. All throughout this letter, he uses the words "We know." In each case, John says we know we are saved (or have the Son) because of the changes in our lives. Our assurance should not be based on what we think or feel but the fruit that we bear. As we scan through the book, we'll find three main ways we can know that we have come to know Christ in a personal way. The evidences are not about the *perfection* we have achieved but rather the *direction* our lives are headed.

First, John writes that,

#### 1. **WE WILL KNOW BECAUSE WE OBEY.**

John does not argue that we must obey God perfectly because no Christian has ever done so after their conversion. But he does make the case that our lives will decrease in disobedience and increase in obedience. Look at these verses.

**1 John 2:3** – "*And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.*"

**1 John 2:5** – "*Whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him.*"

**1 John 3:10** – "*By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God.*"

There is one verse, **1 John 3:9**, that I would like to clear up that may be confusing if you are reading through John's letter. In this verse, he writes, "*No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.*" John is saying that believers cannot go on habitually sinning. He says that it can't be their rule of life. This is because believers have been given a new nature and along with it, new desires. Sin in the life of the believer

should be the exception and not the rule. Sin is present but it's not prominent. It will not characterize the believer's life.

**Illustration: Running the Coach's Plays.** Roger Staubach, who led the Dallas Cowboys to the Super Bowl victory in 1971, admitted that his position as a quarterback who didn't call his own signals was a source of trial for him. Coach Landry sent in every play. He told Roger when to pass, when to run, and only in emergency situations could he change the play. Even though Roger considered Coach Landry to have a "genius mind" when it came to football strategy, pride said that he should be able to run his own team. Roger had a decision to make. Would he allow pride to rule his life and ignore his coach, making himself the star? Or would he listen to the coach and do what he wanted? Staubach later said, "I faced up to the issue of obedience." He learned to carry out the plays as they were called by his head coach and he enjoyed a hall of fame career. Learning obedience will be the heart of every believer.

Second, John writes,

## 2. **WE WILL KNOW BECAUSE WE LOVE.**

Not only will we want to obey our Lord, but an authentic faith will also change the way we view and treat others. Our faith in God will fuel our love towards others. Look with me at these verses.

**1 John 3:10** – *"By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother."*

**1 John 3:14** – *"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death."*

**1 John 3:18** – *"Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."*

Why does faith in Christ have this effect on the way we love others? Because when our hearts have faith in God, we rest on His promises to meet all our needs and deficiencies. When our hearts trust in what Jesus can do for us, this will inevitably drive out guilt, fear, and greed from our lives. Think about it. Will you feel free to love others, especially strangers, if you feel like a failure, are scared of what others will think, or are only interested in what it will profit you? The Apostle Paul used this phrase in Galatians 5:6, *"faith working through love."* How do we know we have an authentic faith in our hearts? It will begin to work itself out through our love for others. We will think less about how others can benefit us and more about how our lives can benefit others.

**Illustration: Riding Lawn Mower of Love.** On November 12, 1996, Alvin Straight died of a heart ailment, but his legacy of love will be remembered for generations to come. During the summer of 1994, Alvin was age seventy-four and unable to drive because of his poor eyesight. His brother, Henry, had suffered a stroke and Alvin desperately wanted to see him. As Alvin sized up his options, he decided his only mode of transportation was his riding lawn mower. So, he set off in early July from his home in Iowa. He attached a trailer to his lawn mower to carry gasoline, clothes, food, and camping gear. In mid-August he reached his brother's house in Blue River, Wisconsin. This seventy-four-year-old man traveled 240 miles on a lawn mower to show love to his brother. This is the kind of selfless love that believers will begin to demonstrate toward others.

Third, John writes,

## 3. **WE WILL KNOW BECAUSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN US.**

At the time of conversion, every believer gets the gift of the Holy Spirit who comes to live in them. This is a reality that every believer should know. In **1 Corinthians 6:19**, Paul asked, *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?"* John says the presence of the Spirit in our lives is one of the assurances that we have come to know Christ. Look at these verses.

**1 John 3:24** – “Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”

**1 John 4:13** – “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”

One of the ways we can detect the Spirit’s presence in our lives is in how we relate to sin. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to make us super sensitive to sin. He does this not to keep us *from joy* but to keep us *in joy*! It’s impossible for a Christian to have the same attitude toward sin after salvation as he or she had before being saved. If someone can willfully and knowingly sin and feel no conviction about it, and even feel good about it afterwards, then that person is likely not a Christian. That means you probably don’t have the Spirit of God, the life of God growing in you. Evidence of being a Christian is not an absence of sin but a new attitude toward sin.

**Illustration: The Pull of the Kite String.** The story is told about a little boy who was flying a kite. It was a windy day, and the kite kept going higher and higher. Finally, it got so high that it was out of sight. A man passed by and saw the little boy holding onto the string. The man could not see the kite, and he asked the boy, “How do you even know you have a kite up there?” The boy replied, “Because I can feel it.” Although we cannot see the Holy Spirit, we should be able to sense His work in our lives as He changes our attitudes and desires while giving us strength for obeying.

John want us to look beyond our feelings and good intentions to the fruit of our lives. In **Matthew 7:17-18, 20**, Jesus talked about the lack of spiritual fruit in the lives of those who were pretending to be Christians. He said, “*Every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit...You will recognize them by their fruits.*” Now, I want to make sure you understand what I’m saying and what John is saying. These three evidences are not the causes of our salvation, but the result of it. If we are saved, we will begin to grow in obedience and love, and we will experience the Holy Spirit more fully. Recognizing those things in our lives gives us great assurance that the Gospel has taken root in our hearts. In **1 John 3:18-20**, we see that our own love and obedience will grow over time and this is how we “*know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him.*”

## TALKBACK QUESTIONS

**Breaking the Ice:** What or who are you a fan of? What evidences can you point to in your life that prove you are a fan?

1. Do you think it's possible for a Christian to never experience a change of direction in their lives? Why or why not?

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2. If you asked those who are around you the most, especially those with whom you live, to tell what evidence they see in your life that you are a Christian, what would they likely say?

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3. Why do you think God wants us to be sure of our salvation? Do you think it's possible to be sure in our minds that we are a Christian but wrong? What have you learned from this study?

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**Prayer:** Ask God to reveal to you the presence or absence of spiritual fruit in your life. Ask Him to set your mind at peace if you are a child of His but also to disturb your heart if you have not come to a place of genuine faith in His Son.

