

## “Have Jesus?”

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The number of Americans who don't affiliate with a particular religion has grown to 56 million in recent years, making the faith group researchers call “*nones*” the second-largest in total numbers behind evangelicals. Christianity is still the dominant faith by far in the U.S., 7 in 10 Americans identify with the tradition. But the number of Christians have declined, with “*no religion*” having grown.

Between 2007 and 2014, when Pew conducted two major surveys of religious life, Americans who described themselves as atheist, agnostic or of no particular faith grew from 16% to 23%, while Christians dropped from 78% to just under 71% of the population. The study shows growing signs of secularism. If this is really true, it raises the question, “Where's Jesus?”

If God and faith aren't important to us, what is? We often define ourselves by our **possessions**. It's important to us that we have everything we want, be it a house, car, or education. It's important that our **occupation** identifies us as one of the best. And all this revolves around the importance of **security** found in the **money** we have and the money we earn.

So just like the disciples on the Mount of Olives on that Ascension evening, our focus is on the physical things around us in life, not on the spiritual! Open to 1 John 5. As Jesus ascends into heaven, once again He tells His disciples to not fear because He'll be with them. Jesus also says He'll be with us and support and care for us as we live each and every day.

Verses 11-13, “*And this is the testimony, that God gave 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. 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.*”

As His time on earth came to a close, what did He promise and what does His promise to us? **He promises us forgiveness**. As we turn to Him confessing our guilt and sins to Him, He'll forgive our sins and remove them from us as far as the East is from the West.

**He promises certainty**. In Jesus Christ, we have the certainty of all His blessings. We all crave certainty. We want to have assurances in life that it's all going to fit together and be the best for us. He tells us, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*” He's never going to leave us out there all by ourselves. When the things of this world bombard you and you don't know the way, Jesus promises He'll guide and lead you.

**He promises love**. He showed that on the cross and empty tomb. He showed His love for you as He gave up His life for yours! “*Greater love has no man than this, than to give up His life for His friends. You are My friends.*” Besides fulfilling the prophecies from the Old Testament, Jesus also fulfilled the words of His Father from John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world that He sent His Only Son.*” It's Jesus' promise to love us that made Him willing to suffer and die for us!

**He promises eternal life**. Look again at verse 13, “*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.*”

How certain can we be with our salvation? This verse (along with many others) is rock solid in its assurance that if we “*have the Son*” then we have eternal life. What a guarantee! We often try to acquire so much in life, but all of these possessions are temporary and fleeting. Would we count Jesus as a prized possession?

What does it mean to have Jesus? Jesus calls us to live all in for Him each and every day!

A father and his daughter went shopping for his wife and her mother. It was hard. They didn’t know what she’d want. But they thought they’d found the perfect gift: a nightgown. They thought it was something you’d use every day. The one they found was very special. It had a tag on it that said “One Size Fits All”. When the wife and mother opened the gift that tag was right. It fits all! It would’ve fit the husband, the wife, and the daughter all at the same time!

Here’s the point: if there’s ever been a gift that’s given that’s so large, and so great, that one size truly fits all, it’s the gift of eternal life; the gift of forgiveness of sins; the gift of salvation that comes through Jesus Christ your Lord.

As you want to have Jesus as your singular focus, what does Jesus ask of you? **Faith and Trust.** Galatians 3:11, “*The righteous shall live by faith.*” Proverbs 3:5, “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.*”

**Love.** Matthew 22:37, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*”

**Hope.** Open to Romans 5. In a world seemingly gone out of control, making us feel we can’t do anything or show Jesus to others, Jesus asks us to hope, not blindly, but in Him. Verses 3-5, “*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*”

**Witness.** Jesus has called you to witness. As Jesus was getting ready to ascend back into heaven, listen to what He told the disciples in Acts 1:8, “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*”

You need to witness not to just those with whom you’re comfortable but everyone! Listen to this remark from Kevin Max, “*The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians: who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, walk out the door, and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.*”

You and I’ve been given more than a second chance at life! With Resurrection hearts, we’ve been given eternal life! Let’s celebrate the wonder of this new life by always giving Jesus the proper place in our hearts as our Lord. Let’s keep living with the Good News of Jesus Christ, pumping forgiveness and new life into our hearts until the rest of our bodies catch up with our hearts. Have Jesus first and always!