



What does it mean to believe?

Pastor Jon Duncan

Kick Start:

How did God speak to you through this message?

Main Point:

Believing in Jesus isn't just knowing some facts about Him—it's coming to Him and trusting Him personally for salvation. We can't obtain salvation through a creed or ritual, a church or temple, a pastor or priest, or any other human means. True belief involves believing in Him to the point of submitting to His lordship.

Introduction:

Have you ever had a conversation with someone who said to you, "I believe in Jesus, I know I am going to heaven, but I just don't believe everything that was written about him", or "I just don't believe everything he said." People use words as they want to use them with no concern with what their true or historical meaning is. The Gospel of John is all about defining truth and doctrine in concrete ways that establish what it really means to believe in Jesus. What does it really mean to believe?

Message Outline:

I. Believing is more than just seeing and hearing, it is knowing in your heart, your soul, your spirit

Evidence of true faith is by receiving. When someone believes in Jesus—the ultimate truth and source of spiritual illumination—and receives the free gift of eternal life, that person undergoes a supernatural birth, becoming born of God. Many people heard Him and watched Him do amazing things, but that never made it down the heart of conviction, and failed to recognize His divine nature and receive Him.

John 1:9-13

Talk About It:

1. How does understanding Jesus as the "true light" and Creator impact your view of His authority and role in your life?
2. In what ways might believers today experience rejection, and how can they find encouragement in Jesus' example?
3. In what ways might we, like the world, fail to recognize Jesus in our daily routines and decisions?
4. Many people think that they are Christians but are not. How did John teach against this?

II. Believing is characterized by receiving, accepting, and holding on to Christ's words

In the course of conversation with Jesus, the Samaritan woman believes that Jesus is the Messiah because He knew everything about her, even though she never met Him before. Being transformed by her encounter with Jesus, she called the people of the town to come and meet Him. Because of her witness and what the Samaritans had heard from Jesus, they also believed in Him.

John 4:39-42

Talk About It:

1. An afternoon alone with Jesus changed the Samaritan woman's life forever. What challenges keep you from spending time alone with God, and how can you overcome them?
2. How does the knowledge that God sees your thoughts and intentions, both good and bad, change the way you approach your relationship with Him?
3. How does understanding that God knows our thoughts help us in extending grace and understanding toward others?
4. How does the Samaritan woman's testimony challenge us to share our own experiences with Jesus in our family and community?

III. Believing is not a probationary test drive, armchair speculation or a passive religious gamble concerning the afterlife. It's a belief that lasts.

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples." Only those who continue with Christ as His followers will receive more understanding from Him. Those who walk away will not. True belief in Jesus endures and then impacts our life and the way we see that there's no one else to go to, no one else with the words of eternal life, but Jesus the Son of God.

John 6:64-69

Talk About It:

1. In what ways can we ensure that our belief in Jesus is genuine and not just an outward association? marked
2. How can the reality of betrayal and falling away among Jesus' followers serve as a warning for us today in our personal faith journey?
3. How do you explain the truth that faith is simple but not easy?

IV. Believing is to rely completely on His person and to trust totally what He teaches about Himself. True believers see Jesus for who He says He is.

Though she still didn't comprehend everything or know what exactly was going to happen, Martha relied completely on Jesus and confessed Him as the Messiah, the Son of God. To have Jesus is to have resurrection and life. Belief chooses to hang on to that conviction when your own world is turned upside down by grief.

John 11:23-27

Talk About It:

1. How does Martha's confession in v. 27 compare to Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16, and what does this tell us about the understanding of Jesus' identity?
2. In what ways can Martha's faith in the midst of grief inspire us to trust in and rely on Jesus during our own difficult times?
3. If a person doesn't trust God's Word to be true, how can we help them understand its truth?

Conclusion:

Out of His great love for you Jesus gave up His life, died and rose for your sins. Believing means you've come to realize your sinful state and that His sacrifice is true. Then you place confidence in it, and trust in Him and treasure His word. And *trust* always contains the idea of *risk*. You risk it all by placing your whole life in the hands of Jesus, submitting to Him. That's the kind of faith that's required to have eternal life. Eternal separation from God in hell or an eternal life with Him in heaven awaits your choice to *believe* or not.

Make It Practical:

Do you believe in Jesus?

It sounds like the same question as "Do you believe in Santa Claus?" or "Do you believe in aliens?" But the question "Do you believe in Jesus?" is asking far more than "Do you believe that Jesus Christ exists?" The true meaning of the question is "Do you believe Jesus Christ is who the Bible says He is, and are you trusting Him as your Savior?"

1. Do you believe that Jesus is God in human form (John 1:1, 14)?
2. Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins which you deserve eternal separation from God (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 6:23)?
3. Do you believe that the sacrifice of Jesus is the only adequate payment for your sins (1 John 2:2; John 14:6; Acts 4:12)?

Do you believe these things? If so, great, but believing the facts about Jesus is only part of the equation. Biblical faith/belief is far more than believing certain things to be true. Biblical saving faith is also trusting/relying on those facts.

4. Are you trusting that Jesus is your Savior? (Like having the faith to sit in the chair and rely on the chair to hold your weight off the ground).
5. Are you relying on His death as the full payment for your sin debt and that His perfect life and righteousness has been credited to you on the basis of your faith in Him (Colossians 2:14; Romans 3:21-22)? (Or are you performing works or good deeds to earn your way out of debt)?
6. Are you depending on His resurrection as the guarantee that you, too, will be raised to eternal life after death?
7. Do you trust in Jesus and believe that His teachings and promises are true and accept His invitation to follow Him and live for Him (Matthew 10:37-39; 16:24-25; Romans 12:1; Philippians 1:21).

If you are uncertain if you truly believe in Jesus but you want to, or if you feel God drawing you to faith in Jesus, the next step is simple. Believe! Trust in Jesus! Rely on Him for your salvation. Allow God to turn you from sin to forgiveness and salvation. If you would like to verbally express your new faith to God, here is a sample of what you can say:

“God, I know that I have sinned. I know that my sin separates me from you. I know that if left unforgiven, my sin will separate me from you for eternity. I believe and trust that Jesus Christ is my Savior, that He died to pay the full penalty for my sins and that He rose from the dead on the third day. I am relying on His sacrifice alone to bring me into a right relationship with you. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you for saving me. Help me to grow closer to you each and every day for the rest of my life.”

Prayer Points:

- Thank you for the gift of salvation and prompting us to receive it?
- Expel any doubts and give us confirmation of our commitment and trust in you.
- Help us to have a heart to share You and your Good News to others who don't believe in you.
- We ask for Your mercy and grace upon our friends and family that don't believe and reveal Yourself to them and their need for You so that they will come to believe.
- Pray for the needs of the group.