

What Does It Mean to Believe?

Hebrews 11:1-6; James 2:14-26

INTRODUCTION:

This morning I want us to tackle the issue and ultimate question of what does it mean to be a believer? This is key for us to understand because our eternal destiny clutches to how this question is answered. The misunderstanding, for many, may have originated from misunderstanding the Biblical use of the word “believe” to the example of how we have seen “believers” live out their lives disconnected in their actions from what is said to be their belief system.

I personally believe the disconnect between beliefs and actions has been so exemplified in the lives of “believers” that it has become the new norm of understanding what it means to be a believer.

Let’s first address a few key vocabulary words that make a difference in helping us to understand to the issue a little better.

Integrity – integrity simply put means letting our inside become our outside. In other words, there is no disconnect in what we say we believe versus how we act because of what we believe.

Authenticity – being what something is.

Authority – the person or institution put in charge.

Accountability – being held to the standard you confess as true

Belief/Faith – it is a trust that produces actions because it deals in our reality.

Understanding The Problem

- **Cognitive Acknowledgement** – this understanding is non one of trust but rather of simple intellectual acknowledgement.

For example, I believe in black holes not really because I understand their effect on me or because I have investigated understanding them very much, but scientist who I think should know better than I acknowledge their existence so in that so will I.

- **Volitional Trust** – A volitional trust is one that produces an action rooted in evidence that affects the human will

For example, I believe, or have faith in, the love I have for my wife and that she has for me, therefore, I have taken new actions and responsibilities in my life since we said I do.

Hebrews 11:1-6

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. ²Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

³By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

⁴It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel’s offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

⁵It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—“he disappeared, because God took him.” For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. ⁶And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. ¹

James 2:14-26

¹⁴What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? ¹⁵Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, ¹⁶and you say, “Good-bye and have a good

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Heb 11:1–6). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

¹⁷ So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

¹⁸ Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.”

¹⁹ You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. ²⁰ How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless?

²¹ Don’t you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. ²³ And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” He was even called the friend of God. ²⁴ So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.

²⁵ Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. ²⁶ Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works. ²

I. Biblical Faith/Belief is Evidence Based

Biblical Faith - Scripture clearly teaches that Biblical faith is rooted in evidence.

False Faith - A false understanding of faith which is sadly the popular, yet false, understanding of faith goes something like this:

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Jas 2:14–26). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Faith is believing when there is no evidence, but one must believe anyway.

This understanding of faith actually meets the criteria of insanity, yet many Christians will define faith in just this fashion, while young folks have grave questions and push back to this understanding of faith, and rightly so.

Matthew 22:37-38

‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’³ This is the first and greatest commandment.³

John Lennox

‘Faith is not a leap into the unknown, but an evidence-based commitment’, claims the Oxford professor...“it is not a leap into the dark, but rather a leaping into the light.”

II. Biblical Faith/Belief is the Salt & Light Example

III. Biblical Faith/Belief is What Pleases God

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, Lean not on your own understanding
But in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

IV. Biblical Faith/Belief Produces Kingdom Fruit

John 15:1-5

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mt 22:37–38). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

Works does not produce Faith, but Faith produces good works.

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. ⁴

R.C. Sproul

The issue of faith is not so much whether we believe in God, but whether we believe the God we believe in.

Charles Spurgeon

Faith and works are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God trusts God; and he that trusts God obeys God. He that is without faith is without works; and he that is without works is without faith.

In God's eyes, the greatest heroes of faith are not those who achieve prosperity, success, and power in this life, but those who treat life as a temporary assignment and serve faithfully, expecting their promised reward in eternity.

– *Rick Warren, – What on Earth Am I Here For?*

CONCLUSION:

So, ask yourself are you a true believer? Is there enough evidence in the works you do to convict you of Biblical faith? Have you absorbed Jesus into your lifestyle? Do you do the works of the Lord as a love response to the free grace He has given you?

⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Eph 2:8–10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Or are your religious activities mainly word noise or works out of obligation? Have you reduced the idea of belief to mere cognition of the mind in acknowledging some truth of history, but without repentance or behavioral change? If so, you are in fact not a believer.

Corrie Ten Boom

Faith is like radar that sees through the fog-the reality of things at a distance that the human eye cannot see.

In God's eyes, the greatest heroes of faith are not those who achieve prosperity, success, and power in this life, but those who treat life as a temporary assignment and serve faithfully, expecting their promised reward in eternity.

– *Rick Warren*, – *What on Earth Am I Here For?*