

DISCOVERING CHRIST

Lesson 5 — What Does It Mean to Believe in Jesus?

The Big Question: What does the Bible mean when it calls us to believe in Jesus?

Purpose of This Study

In our first four studies, we have followed a deliberate path:

Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God, Messiah, Creator, and Lord.

Why did Jesus come? He came to seek and save the lost.

Why do I need Jesus? Because all have sinned and sin separates us from God.

What does Jesus ask of me? He calls me to follow Him, surrender my life to Him, and make Him Lord.

Now we come to a word we hear constantly in Christianity: **Believe.**

The Bible says that we must believe in Jesus. But what does that actually mean?

Is believing simply accepting that Jesus existed? Is it agreeing that He is the Son of God?

Is it trusting Him? Is it obeying Him? And how does biblical faith relate to everything else Jesus asks of us?

Tonight we want to let the Bible answer those questions.

1. DISCUSSION STARTER

“Trust”

Let's Begin with a simple, everyday situation: **Suppose someone you trust recommends a restaurant, mechanic, doctor, contractor, or vacation destination to you. You have never personally used them, but you trust the person who recommended them.**

What would it mean to actually trust their recommendation?

Would saying, “I believe my friend is telling me the truth” be the same as actually following the recommendation? For example, a person might say: “I believe my friend knows a good restaurant.” But never actually go.

Transition:

We use the word **believe** in different ways.

Sometimes we mean, “I think something is true.”

Sometimes we mean, “I trust someone.”

Sometimes belief changes what we actually do.

The Bible uses the word **believe** in a very rich way when it speaks about Jesus.

In this study we're going to discover what biblical faith looks like.

2. WHY WAS THE GOSPEL WRITTEN?

John tells us exactly why he wrote his Gospel. Listen for what he wants his readers to believe and what he wants that belief to produce.

Read John 20:30–31

Discussion Questions

1. What does John say Jesus did that wasn't recorded in his book?
2. Why did John choose to record these particular signs?
3. What does John want his readers to believe?
4. Who does John say Jesus is?
5. What does John say happens through believing?
6. Why do you think John connects **believing** with **life**?

Key Observation: John isn't simply asking people to believe that Jesus existed. He wants them to believe: **Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.**

And that belief is intended to lead somewhere: **“that by believing you may have life in his name.”**

What kind of belief could lead to life? That is the question we're going to explore.

3. BELIEVING JESUS' WORD

Read John 8:30–32

Discussion Questions

1. What does verse 30 say many people did?
2. What does Jesus say to those who had believed Him?
3. What does Jesus say is evidence that someone is truly His disciple?
4. What does it mean to **“hold to my teaching”**?
5. What does Jesus say will happen when they know the truth?
6. How does this passage connect believing with continuing?

Important Observation

Jesus doesn't say: “If you believe in me once, nothing else matters.” He immediately speaks about **continuing in His teaching.**

What is the difference between making a statement of belief and continuing to follow Jesus?

Ok, after you have reflected, understand Biblical faith doesn't merely begin with Jesus; it continues with Jesus.

4. NOT ALL BELIEF IS THE SAME

Read John 12:37–43

This is a fascinating passage because John describes people who **believed**, yet something was missing.

Discussion Questions

1. What did Jesus do in the presence of the people?
2. Despite the signs, what does verse 37 say about their response?
3. According to verse 42, who else believed in Jesus?
4. If they believed, what prevented them from openly acknowledging Him?
5. What did they love more than the praise of God?
6. What does this tell us about the difference between believing something privately and being willing to act upon that belief?

Can a person believe something is true and still be unwilling to act on it?

Explain how belief and action don't always go hand in hand:

- You believe the doctor is correct but he's got this strange medicine or treatment and you are thinking of not following his counsel. Do you believe him?
- The ranger tells you an old foot bridge is safe to cross but your first step on the bridge feels like it's not very strong. Do you believe him?
- The fireman on the 10th floor tells you the fire alarm going off was set by a fire on the 11th floor and not to use the elevator. Man, walking 10 flights of stairs. Are you kidding? You don't smell any smoke. You don't see any fire? Do you believe him?

The issue isn't necessarily **belief versus unbelief**.

Sometimes the issue is: **What will I do with what I believe?**

That distinction will become very important as we continue.

5. THE FAITH OF THE JAILER

Read Acts 16:25–34

This is one of the most helpful passages for understanding the relationship between **belief and response**.

Discussion Questions

1. What happened to Paul and Silas?
2. What did the jailer ask in verse 30?
3. What did Paul and Silas tell him?
4. What did they do next?
5. What did the jailer do after hearing the word of the Lord?
6. What did he do for Paul and Silas?
7. What happened to the jailer's household?
8. What does verse 34 say about his response?

Important Question: Read verse 31 again: **“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”**

Did Paul stop the conversation after telling the jailer to believe? No? Keep going! Yes, you might as well give up! Ok, keep going!

Verse 32 says: **“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.”**

Then the jailer responds. **What did the jailer's belief lead him to do?**

His belief led him to:

- listen to the word,
- care for Paul and Silas,
- respond immediately,
- rejoice,
- and even be baptized.

Key Thought

Faith is not merely agreeing that Jesus can save me. Faith responds to Jesus because I trust Him.

6. FAITH THAT ACTUALLY DOES SOMETHING

Read James 2:14–26

Listen closely, James by inspiration tells us something very important: **What kind of faith saves?**

Discussion Questions

1. What question does James ask in verse 14?
2. Suppose someone says he has faith but does nothing. What question does James ask?

3. What example does James give concerning a brother or sister who lacks clothing and food?
4. What good is it to simply say, "Go in peace"?
5. What does James say about faith without works?
6. In verse 19, what do even demons believe?
7. Why is that significant?
8. What example does James give from Abraham?
9. What did Abraham's faith lead him to do?
10. According to verse 22, what happened to Abraham's faith through his actions?
11. How does James describe the relationship between faith and works?
12. What does verse 26 mean when it says the body without the spirit is dead?

Important Clarification

James is **not teaching that we earn salvation by accumulating good deeds. He is actually writing to folks who are already Christians.**

He is challenging the Christians whether they have **genuine faith if he or she never responds to God.**

A faith that never acts is, in James' words: **"dead."**

Illustration

You can say: Imagine that someone tells you, "I believe this chair will hold me."
They can talk about the chair. They can explain why the chair was built.
They can tell you they trust it. But they refuse to sit down.
Have they demonstrated trust in the chair?

What does genuine trust naturally lead us to do?

7. FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

Read Hebrews 11:6–8

Discussion Questions

1. What does verse 6 say is impossible without faith?
2. What must the person who comes to God believe?
3. What does verse 7 say Noah did?
4. Why did Noah act?
5. Did Noah's faith remain merely an idea?
6. What did his faith cause him to do?
7. What does verse 8 say Abraham did?
8. What did Abraham do even though he did not know exactly where he was going?
9. What does Abraham's example teach us about trusting God?

Key Thought: Hebrews 11 repeatedly follows a pattern:
God speaks → people believe → people respond.
Faith takes God seriously enough to act upon His word.

8. WHAT DOES “BELIEVE IN JESUS” MEAN?

Now let's bring the passages together.

Based on everything we've studied in this study, how would you define biblical faith?

Biblical faith means trusting Jesus so genuinely that I am willing to believe His word, rely upon Him, and respond to what He asks of me.

It includes:

BELIEF - I accept that Jesus is who He says He is.

TRUST - I place my confidence in Him rather than myself.

SURRENDER - I recognize Him as Lord.

RESPONSE - I act upon what He has told me.

CONTINUING FAITH - I continue following Him.

9. FAITH AND THE GOSPEL

Read Romans 10:9–17

Discussion Questions

1. What does verse 9 say about confessing Jesus?
 2. What does verse 10 say about the heart and the mouth?
 3. According to verse 11, what happens to the person who trusts in Him?
 4. What question does Paul ask in verse 14?
 5. Why must people hear before they can believe?
 6. According to verse 17, where does faith come from?
 7. What role does God's word play in developing faith?
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10. FAITH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY

Ask: If I truly believe Jesus is the Son of God, what questions naturally follow?

11. PERSONAL REFLECTION (This is for your own personal reflection.)

Think About It

- 1. What did you previously understand the word “believe” to mean?**
- 2. Has this study changed or expanded your understanding of biblical faith?**
- 3. What is the difference between believing that Jesus exists and trusting Jesus with your life?**
- 4. Why do you think genuine faith naturally produces action?**
- 5. If you believe Jesus is the Son of God, what would you expect that belief to change in your life?**

The Most Important Question

Do you believe Jesus is who the Bible says He is?

If the answer is yes, follow with:

If you really believe that, what do you think Jesus wants you to do next?

12. CLOSING THOUGHT

We've now moved another step in our journey.

We began by asking:

Who is Jesus?

He is the Son of God.

Why did Jesus come?

He came to seek and save the lost.

Why do I need Him?

Because I have sinned and cannot save myself.

What does Jesus ask of me?

He calls me to follow Him as Lord.

And tonight we've asked:

What does it mean to believe in Him?

We've discovered that biblical faith is more than simply agreeing that Jesus existed.

It means trusting Him.

It means taking His word seriously.

It means being willing to follow Him.

It means allowing our belief to affect what we do.

Faith begins in the heart, but genuine faith doesn't stay there.

And that brings us to our next question:

If I truly believe in Jesus, what does He want me to do about my sin?

The Bible has a word for turning away from sin and turning toward God.

That word is **repentance**.

LESSON 5 AT A GLANCE

Main Truth

Biblical faith is more than intellectual agreement; it is trusting Jesus as Lord in a way that produces a willing response and a continuing life of obedience.

Key Text

John 20:31

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Supporting Passages

- John 20:30–31
- John 8:30–32
- John 12:37–43
- Acts 16:25–34
- James 2:14–26
- Hebrews 11:6–8
- Romans 10:9–17

The Progression So Far

Lesson 1 — Who Is Jesus?

Jesus is the Son of God, Messiah, Creator and Lord.

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Lesson 2 — Why Did Jesus Come?

Jesus came to seek and save the lost.



Lesson 3 — Why Do I Need Jesus?

Everyone has sinned and needs a Savior.



Lesson 4 — What Does Jesus Ask of Me?

Jesus calls me to surrender and follow Him as Lord.



Lesson 5 — What Does It Mean to Believe?

Faith means trusting Jesus in a way that produces a response.



Lesson 6 — What Does It Mean to Repent?

If I believe Jesus and recognize my sin, what does He want me to do about it?

I especially like where this puts us for Lesson 6. We can now take **repentance out of the realm of simply defining a Greek word** and show it as the natural response of someone who has come to believe that Jesus is Lord and has recognized the seriousness of his or her sin.