



What does it mean to “believe in” Jesus?

The appointed Gospel readings for worship on the Sundays in early August were from John chapter 6 - a conversation Jesus had with people who wanted to follow Him after He had fed 5000+ people on just five loaves of bread and two fish. The question above is one I asked after hearing Jesus say - several times in that chapter - that “believing in Him” was the key to being raised from the grave on the day He returns and living forever with Him.

It just seemed to make sense that if “believing in Jesus” is what enables us to receive the gift of eternal life He purchased for us by His death and resurrection, we *REALLY* need to know what it means to “believe in Him” (and what it *doesn't* mean).

In the book of James (chapter 2, verse 19) we are told, point-blank, that simply knowing .in your head that Jesus is the one true God is not the same as “believing in” Jesus.

It's like I “know in my head” that George Washington was the one-and-only first president of our country. But that certainly isn't the same as saying I “believe in” George Washington.

“Believing *IN*” someone is a ‘trust’ or ‘reliance’ thing. If you “believe in” Jesus that means you put your trust in Him. You rely on Him. So naturally follows that in order to “believe in” Jesus you have to start with “believing” Jesus. In other words, you can't “believe in” Jesus and not believe what He tells you. If you “believe in” Jesus, you start by believing that what He tells you is the truth. You trust that what He says is right. Every time. You rely on fact that the way He says to do things is THE best way - always.

So, it naturally follows that if “believing in” Jesus starts with simply “believing” what He says, the very first thing we need to know is *What did Jesus actually say?* If you are going to believe what He says, you really need to know what He has said (and what He hasn't said).

As the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:14, “*How can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard?*”

Knowing what Jesus actually said isn't as easy as it would seem. I've heard many people make comments like this: “I don't believe Jesus would....” and then they finish that sentence with a thought that actually contradicts something Jesus said. Or they may say, “I believe Jesus would....” and the rest of the sentence attributes some action to Jesus that He has said He would never do. But it's easy to just take the person's word for it instead of checking out what Jesus really did say. The result is that we end up believing something about Jesus that is simply wrong.

Our task is to be like the Christians from a town named Berea. The apostle Luke lifts them up as an example in Acts 17:11 where he writes, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness *and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*”

This month we kick off another Christian Growth Year with brand new Sunday School and Bible classes all designed to help us learn what Jesus really did say and do, so we don't go off and believe the wrong things about Him.

Our Men's, Women's and Sunday studies will kick off with the same 4-session study entitled, “*Journey from Unbelief to Faith.*” In these classes we will see first-hand some of the things in our society that Satan uses in an

attempt to keep people from “believing in” the one true God. And just as importantly, we will see how the Holy Spirit worked in their lives to overcome those obstacles and bring them to “believe in” Jesus. Because it is ultimately by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word that any of us comes to “believe in” Jesus and then grow in that faith.

Please join us for one of these studies.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net