

Are you a believer?

There was this Christian lady who had to do a lot of traveling for her business so she did a lot of flying. But flying made her nervous so she always took her Bible along with her to read and it helped relax her. One time she was sitting next to a man. When he saw her pull out her Bible he gave a little chuckle and went back to what he was doing.

After a while he turned to her and asked, "You don't really believe all that stuff in there do you?"

The lady replied, "Of course I do. It is the Bible."

He said, "Well, what about that guy that was swallowed by that whale?"

She replied, "Oh, Jonah. Yes, I believe that, it is in the Bible."

He asked, "Well, how do you suppose he survived all that time inside the whale?"

The lady said, "Well, I don't really know. I guess when I get to heaven I will ask him."

"What if he isn't in heaven?" the man asked sarcastically.

"Then you can ask him," replied the lady.

Do you really believe that stuff? is a question that is often asked of Christians by non-believers.

At the heart of our faith is the word believe. It is a major emphasis of John in his gospel.

be·lieve

1. To accept as true or real: Do *you believe the news stories?*

2. To credit with veracity: I *believe you.*

3. To expect or suppose; think: I *believe they will arrive shortly.*

1. To have firm faith, especially religious faith.

2. To have faith, confidence, or trust: I *believe in your ability to solve the problem.*

3. To have confidence in the truth or value of something: We *believe in free speech.*

4. To have an opinion; think: *They have already left, I believe.*

be·lief

1. The mental act, condition, or habit of placing trust or confidence in another: My *belief in you* is as *strong* as *ever.*

2. Mental acceptance of and conviction in the truth, actuality, or validity of something: *His explanation of what happened defies belief.*

3. Something believed or accepted as true, especially a particular tenet or a body of tenets accepted by a group of persons.

The verb "*pisteuo*" = "to believe, to trust" occurs seven times in 3:1-21. Five of those are present tense (vv. 12, 15, 16, 18, 18); once is future (v. 12), and once is perfect (v. 18), which implies a past action that continues into the present.

In Greek, the present tense denotes continual action, e.g., "keep on believing," "continue to believe." Believing is not like a hoop that one jumps through and gets to the other side; but more like entering a long journey through a tunnel.

1. Believing is related to one's relationship to what has been said (see 3:12).

Jesus said, "You're a respected teacher of Israel and you don't know these basics? Listen carefully. I'm speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing second hand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don't believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can't see, the things of God?"

We can either believe that the words are true or not believe them -- in essence calling the speaker a liar.

Believing results in

- having eternal life (vv. 15, 16)
- not perishing (v. 16)
- not being judged (v. 18)

Not believing results in

- being judged (v. 18)
- judgment (vv. 17-18)

Believing is linked to what God has said in His Word and in His Son.

We have some amazing statements made in the Bible. For example *All things are possible with God*.

We read it but do we believe it. You see there is no middle ground. You either believe it or not and that is a huge challenge for us.

We say that we believe the Bible but do we really believe.

Eleanor Schmidt, in *Reader's Digest* : My doctor had recommended surgery and referred me to a specialist. Arriving early for my appointment, I found the door unlocked and the young surgeon, deeply engrossed in reading, behind the receptionist's desk. When he didn't hear me come in, I cleared my throat. Startled, he closed the book, which I recognized as a Bible. "Does reading the Bible help you before or after an operation?" I asked. My fears were dispelled by his soft, one-word answer: "During."

. 2. Believing is related to who has said it.

Belief in Jesus and how that can benefit a person is outlined in the most quoted and famous Bible passage John 3:16.

The message puts it this way:

"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

Belief is in the person and what he has said and done.

Recently the Federal liberal party had a spill motion. The outcome was that some had lost their belief in Tony Abbot. He had led them well in opposition and won government but a number of gaffes and "captain's choices" eroded their confidence in his ability to lead the party. They had lost their belief in Him.

Belief is locked into a person and their ability to produce what they have promised.

Belief for us is locked into a person, Jesus. The more that we know Him, trust Him and trust what He says, the more we believe. We lose our belief when the person whom we believe in has not measured up to the claims or promises that they have made.

For many Christians, it is the silence of God, the prayers that seemingly go answered, the disappointments that contribute to a loss of belief.

The difficulty we face is that we can't do without Jesus for he is the only One who can turn

things around. But we often come from a low base and we have more unbelief than belief and so it becomes hard to put our future in His hands.

But if we don't, we are up the creek without a parable. The Liberal party may change their leader because of their lack of belief in Tony Abbot but we can't change our Saviour and leader because there is no alternative.

1. Believing is related to what we believe what God can achieve.

We studied the story of the healing of Jairus' daughter on Wednesday night. Jairus comes to Jesus because his daughter is very sick to the point of death. He asks Jesus to come and lay His hands upon her so that she can be made well and live.

Jesus is delayed by the crowd and a woman who has had a flow of blood for 12 years and spent all her money trying to get well.

By the time that Jesus has finished with her, news came that Jairus' daughter is now dead. Jesus turns to Jairus and says, *Do not fear. Only believe!*

Remember that Jairus has heard about Jesus' healing power and that is why he has come to Jesus for help. But and there is always a but! No one has yet been raised from the dead. Nothing like this has ever happened before.

What is Jairus going to do? He knows that Jesus can heal but he has no evidence that Jesus can bring people back to life from the dead!

All he has is the word of Jesus: *Do not fear. Only believe!* What would you do if you were in Jairus' shoes? Fear or believe. You had no previous experience to go on except the word of Jesus. Would you believe?

What you want for your life and for this church will depend upon what you believe that God can do through you and despite you.

Belief in what God can do is the key that opens up God's providence and power. Belief in what God has said he will do, will open up His providence and power.

The one thing that always blocks God is lack of belief or unbelief.

On August 30, 2005 Coast Guard Lieutenant Iain McConnell was ordered to fly his H46 helicopter to New Orleans and to keep that machine flying around the clock for what would turn out to be a heroic rescue effort. None of his crew were prepared for what they were about to see. They were ahead of every news crew in the nation. The entire city of New Orleans was under water. On their first three missions that day they saved 89 people, three dogs and two cats.

Lt. McConnell had a fourth mission that day. On the fourth mission, despite twelve different flights to New Orleans, he and his crew were able to save no one. None! They all refused to board the helicopter. Instead they told the Coast Guard to bring them food and water. Yet they were warned that this was extremely dangerous. The waters were not going to go away soon. Sadly, many of those people perished because of their refusal to be rescued.

We need to become Big believers in Jesus. This is the only way forward for us and our church. We need to increase our belief and minimise our unbelief to nothing.

We need believe that nothing is impossible for God. When we come to that place, God can do amazing things for us and for people who come to join us: miracles, healings, salvation.

What we read about in the Bible will become our experience today if we believe. Amen.

Walking Free: We continue to have 20-25 ministries. We have people coming with challenging

issues to resolve. It is not easy for them nor is it easy to discern what to do and what to pray. But God is faithful and gives us insight that unlocks the issues for Him to heal.

We have 30 people registered for the seminar *How to deal with the Devil*. We can assume that there will be a few more who will just show up. We see that there is a real need for teaching Christians about Walking in the Way of Jesus.

I, with Rev Eric March, am writing a New Beginnings course for people wanting a new beginning in their life. It has been a struggle to discern the content of what God wants us to share. We keep praying and seeking God for this.

We are looking to continue and develop our ministry at Toowoomba. There are some challenges and we need God's direction and help for this.

We have invitations to go to India for the first anniversary of the church in October and an invitation to go to Kenya to teach and preach for Pastor Isaac and his people. We are seeking God about this as it must be according to His will and timing. If it is not, then it will not work.