

Title: The Essence of Belief**[Slide 1]****Text: John 5:31-47****Believing****True or False?**

What does it take for you to truly believe something or someone?

We live in a world where we are constantly bombarded with all sorts of claims: politicians promising us the moon, commercials assuring us that if we buy this product we will finally find true happiness, people who may or not be worthy of our trust.

So how do you know? Who do you believe?

Multiple factors:

Faith is sometimes characterized as a "leap in the dark." "Don't try to figure things out? Don't *think!* Just *believe!*"

But believing is a much more complex process than just throwing reason to the winds and putting our trust in something or someone. In fact, we believe in a whole lot of things that we can neither see nor explain. Take gravity, for example. You can't see it and you probably have little or no idea how or why it works. But you have spent a lifetime believing in it and obeying its law.

Your belief in gravity actually involves multiple factors:

- Your parents gave you your first lessons in the reality of gravity – warning you not to fall or climb too high.
- You saw that it works, from the time you were dropping peas from the tray of your high chair.
- You can feel its effects in your own body.
- You can read about its various properties in a book on physics

All of those factors play into your belief in gravity. So much so, that you have become fully convinced that gravity will never take a day off.

Believing:

When Jesus spoke of believing in Him, He was not telling people to throw all of their questions and doubts to the winds. He was inviting them to consider all the factors, and then dare to put their full trust in Him as Lord and God.

Every day we face the challenge of whether to believe that Jesus is in the situation we are facing. Is He for real? Does He really care? How can I know what He is saying to me? Believing is the oxygen of Eternal Life.

So how can we be sure that Jesus is there for us?

The Four Witnesses

John the Baptist:

When Jesus made the claim that He was doing the Father's work on the Sabbath, His opponents asked for proof that He was truly God's Son. In reply, Jesus gave them 4 kinds of evidence: 4 witnesses to the reality of Who He is.

The first witness Jesus calls to the stand is John the Baptist, someone who knew Jesus and could vouch for Him:

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John 5:33-35 NIV

"You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light."

John the Baptist was the premier prophetic figure of his time. Huge crowds had gone out into the desert to hear him preach and to be baptized in preparation for the coming Kingdom of God.

It was John the Baptist who said of Jesus:

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John 1:29 NIV

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Jesus' Works:

The second witness Jesus calls to the stand are the very miracles that He performed in the power of the Father:

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John 5:36 NIV

"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me."

You may remember that when John the Baptist was unsure about Jesus and His ministry, Jesus told John's disciples to go back to John and report what they had heard and seen: the blind receiving their sight, the lame walking, lepers cured, and the dead raised to life!

The proof of Jesus' identity was "in the pudding." His works could only have been done through the approval and authority of the Father. Like Father/like Son.

The Father's testimony:

But Jesus doesn't stop there. The third witness He calls to the stand is none other than the Father Himself:

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John 5:37-38 NIV

"And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent."

When God revealed Himself to Israel at Mt. Sinai, He did so *only to Moses*. Moses climbed the mountain and met with God, hearing His words and seeing His glory. Through that relationship, the Father's words came to live inside Moses. Israel, on the other hand, was down at the bottom of the mountain, making a golden calf to worship as a representation of God.

Now, once again, God is present, offering that same relationship through Jesus the Son. When you put your trust in Jesus as God's Son, the Father's

word “dwells in you,” and you *know* Who Jesus truly is; God is bearing witness through His Spirit in your heart and mind.

The Scriptures:

The final witness Jesus calls to the stand are the Scriptures that God gave to Israel:

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John 5:39-40 NIV

“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”

The Jewish leaders that opposed Jesus prided themselves on their devotion to the Scriptures. They believed that by studying the Torah they would gain eternal life with God. But Jesus argues that the Scriptures were given to point them to a personal relationship with the Father through the Son:

“These are the very Scriptures that testify about me...”

And it is only in that relationship of trust and obedience that they will ever discover the eternal life they are seeking.

The Essence of Belief

More than mental calculus:

The tragic thing is that despite these 4 witnesses: John the Baptist, Jesus’ miracles, the inner voice of the Father, and the Scriptures, Jesus’ opponents *refused* to believe. It wasn’t for lack of evidence! So what was the reason?

Jesus hits the nail on the head when He says to them:

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John 5:44 NIV

“How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?”

Their loyalty was to a system they had created which gave *them* glory and recognition. It made them feel important and powerful. They were in control.

They were “accepting glory from one another,” rather than seeking the glory that comes from God alone. They were building their own golden calf as a substitute to God and His Presence.

Moses, their greatest hero, had promised that one day God would send a prophet like himself:

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Deuteronomy 18:15 NIV

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

But Jesus says to them that they have refused to believe Moses and what he wrote. No wonder, then, that they will not put their faith in Jesus!

The Essence of Belief:

Believing is the oxygen of Eternal Life.

True belief in Jesus requires more than mental calculus. In the end, we can talk ourselves into anything. True belief requires being willing to lay aside our own self-centered motives and entrust ourselves to Him alone.

Ultimately, it all comes down to what we *want* most: our desires or the glory of God.

The same is true when we seek to know God’s will for our lives. God will speak to us in the same ways that Jesus presented as witnesses to Himself:

- Other people
- Things that God does for us
- The inner voice of the Holy Spirit
- The Scripture

When these four things line up, you can be pretty sure you are understanding what God is saying to you! But the real test will be what you choose to do with what God is saying: will you believe?

