

Welcome to *Three Cord Ministries* teaching page on

It Takes More Than Believing *in* God

There is a difference between believing *in* God and believing God. So much so, that Jesus asked one his closest disciples three times if he loved Him. Peter's answers may have been an indication that he believed *in* Jesus (as the Son of God) but perhaps wasn't so sure that he believed His words - 100% of the time.

Why was Peter so upset when Christ asked him three times if he "loved" him? Was he saying to Christ "don't you believe me?" Surely you must believe *in* me as your faithful follower - so why don't you believe me when I say 'I love you'?"

In order to love someone as Christ was asking - 'agape love' requires 'agape belief' - unconditional and without question.

Even reciting the 'Apostle's Creed'...

"We believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord ... We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting."

... does not necessarily mean that we believe the truth that God the Father IS our father, that Jesus IS our Lord and Saviour and that the Holy Spirit IS our comforter and friend.

In our heads we may but is that truth deep in our hearts?

1. Why it is easier to believe *in* someone but harder to believe them?

Have you ever heard someone say "I have every faith in so-and-so that they will do, say, give or be what they say"?

One can have great 'faith' in something - even as mundane as 'faith' [or trust] that the car approaching a red light, will indeed stop. Or even 'faith' in the light itself that it will change.

We all know that no matter how much 'faith' we have in someone or something, at some point they will either fail us or not live up to our 'faith' level in them.

Our dad disappointed us one time by not taking us out to a sports event or didn't show up when he said he would.

We have experienced that time when mom wasn't there when we skinned our knee or needed

some 'motherly' advice. Does that mean we had no faith in mom or dad? Or does it mean that we knew in our heads that even though people make promises, they sometimes fail to come through?

We might have said something like "But dad, you said you would be there. You promised me. [and I **believed you!**]"

What we were saying was ... 'Dad, I **believed in you** [as my father and protector] that you would honor your promise to me [as your child] and I **believed you** [took you at your word] when you said you would be there.'

The world and our life's experiences have taught us, sometimes quite painfully, that no one or nothing can be believed or trusted all the time.

After years and years of having our beliefs challenged and our trusts violated, we can harden our hearts against people like our earthly mothers and fathers. In the same way, we can harden our hearts against our Heavenly Father. We can say we believe in Him, but we don't always believe Him [and His promises].

2. What does God have to say about believing Him and believing *in* Him?

The Bible makes a distinction between believing in someone and believing [what] someone [says]. The first example of this distinction is clearly shown in Genesis 15:6 where it says

"Abram **believed** the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness." (NIV)

Abram knew all too well who the Lord was - God his creator (Elohim) and God his master (Adoni) and had seen that God had done many miraculous things. Abram I suspect though had some difficulty in believing God's promise about the number of his descendants (as numerous as the stars) because he was an old man and his wife was 'beyond her years' of childbearing.

I believe that Abram HAD first to verbalize to God "**I believe what you say** as much as I believe **Who You are**".

It was the believing what God said would come true (as impossible as it seemed to his flesh) that caused him to be credited as righteous.

Two other examples of believing God compared to believing in God are shown in Isaiah 43:10 and Jonah 3:5.

"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and **believe** me and understand that I am he. (NIV)

And then in Jonah 3:5 'The Ninevites **believed** God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.' (NIV)

Now what does God say in His Word about believing in Him?

John 1:12 states "Yet to all who receive Him, to those who **believed in** his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (NIV)

Again in John 2:23 "Now while in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and **believed in** His name." (NIV)

And lastly in John 3:15 "... that everyone who **believes in** Him may have eternal life." (NIV)

3. There seems to be a difference.

There seems to be a difference in these 'more general' statements of our Lord, compared to the specific words given to individuals like Abram, the Ninevites and Isaiah. That is not to say that these general statements are always in reference to groups 'believing in' someone or something and specific statements are always for individuals.

But it does seem that these *rhema-type-belief* words are to reveal something to an individual's heart in terms of believing a specific truth and the *logos-type-belief* words are addressed more to the head-knowledge of a general truth about who God is.

Jesus probably knew the difference when he used both in His teaching on being one with the Father in John 14:10-11. He said in 14:10 "Don't you **believe** [the fact, the truth] that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?" (NIV with added parenthesis)

And in the next verse; "**Believe me** when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."(NIV with added parenthesis)

The last use of the words **believe on** really reinforces that one must believe in their heart as well as believe the evidence in their heads. This is so ideally summed up in Romans 10:10 when Christ said "For it is with your heart that you **believe** and are justified, and it is with your mouth [tongue] that you confess [believe in, hold the truth, speak out of your knowledge] and are saved." (NIV with added parenthesis)

Jesus is in reality saying - head knowledge on its own is not enough nor is heart knowledge on its own enough.

I need to believe (know-that-I-know in my heart) everything that God says in His Word about Himself, His Son and His Spirit is true (and is the only truth) AND understand in my mind and acknowledge publicly the validity of the historical facts about Jesus to be true. Then I will be truly saved.

Yes, it is by His grace alone, as His free gift to us, that we are saved - not by our works so none of us can boast in ourselves - yet we must really understand that **believing in God** is not enough - we must **believe God** that this salvation and eternal life that He gives us is ultimately the one and only TRUTH.

There is no other, there is no "turning in Him" - He is indeed a *man* who cannot lie.

BELIEVE HIM and BELIEVE IN HIM and be saved.