

**BELIEVE IN JESUS**  
**The Commands of Christ – Week 2**  
**John 14:1**  
**By Andy Manning**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. According to a 2021 Lifeway Research study, 80% of American believe that Jesus is the Son of God.
2. If that statistic is true then there's almost no reason to talk about the need to believe in Jesus, because just about everyone already does. But what if what it means to believe in Jesus is not what people think it means? What if many of the people who think they believe in Jesus don't actually believe in Jesus, but they don't know it? Let me make this personal. If you thought you believed in Jesus but your idea of "belief" is not what the Bible means by "belief," would you want to know it? Today we're going to learn exactly what the Bible means by the word "believe," and then you will be able to say with confidence and accuracy whether or not you believe in Jesus.
3. This is week two of our sermon series on the commands of Christ.
4. Right before Jesus ascended, He told His followers to make disciples of all the nations, and to teach them to obey His commands (Mt 28:19-20). This is the church's primary mission – to teach people to obey Christ's commands. This is what it means to be a Christian – to obey Christ's commands.
5. What are Christ's commands? There are a few dozen in the New Testament, and eventually we cover all of them. But in this series we are looking at six. Last week we looked at Christ's very first command – repent. This week we will look at the command to believe in Him.

**II. THE COMMAND**

1. **John 14:1** "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me."
2. I want to focus today on the command at the end of this verse, "Believe also in me."
3. The Greek verb is *pisteuo*; the noun is *pistis*. It means to believe, to have faith in, to trust.
4. What's something you believe in? You may believe in exercise. You may believe in youth sports. You may believe in home schooling. You may believe in the founding documents of our nation. You may believe in a certain diet, such as intermittent fasting, or the carnivore diet. You may believe in a product like the iPhone, or a brand like Yeti, or a service like AT&T. You may believe in a certain cause like animal rescue, or saving the environment. You may believe in a certain politician like Donald Trump.
5. Jesus commands us, "Believe also in me."
6. Jesus didn't just command us to believe in God, but to believe in Him. Not just to believe in the Bible, but to believe in Him. Not just to believe in angels, demons, the

afterlife, and prayer, but to believe in Him. Not just to believe in the supernatural, but to believe in Him. Not just to believe in the church, but to believe in Him.

### III. THE CAUSE

1. Why does Jesus command us to believe in Him?
2. We are in need of rescue, and Jesus is the only one who can save us.
3. We are all sinners, and we deserve the wrath of God, which is eternal separation from God in hell. But despite our sin God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins, and then He rose again. And now, God offers forgiveness and eternal life to anyone who will believe in Jesus.
4. **John 3:14-15** “14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”
5. John is referring to an interesting story in the Old Testament. God sent Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt into the Promised Land. While they were on the way, they had to pass through the wilderness, which was not fun. The people began to complain and speak against God and Moses. Then God punished them by sending poisonous snakes, and they bit them so that many people were dying. The people asked Moses to pray for them to take the snakes away. God told Moses to make a bronze snake and mount it on a pole, and when anyone who is bitten looks at it, they will recover.
6. Here’s the question: Why did the people have to look at the bronze snake? Because they had been bitten by a deadly snake, and the only way to be saved was to look at the bronze snake.
7. Why do we need to believe in Jesus? Because we have all been bitten by the deadly snake of sin, and we are in danger of eternal death. And the only way to be saved is to look to Jesus and believe in Him. If we will believe in Jesus, God will forgive us and give us eternal life.
8. Since we are talking about matters of eternal significance, the command to believe just might be the most important of all Christ’s commands. One of the most important questions we can ask in life is What does it mean to believe in Jesus?

### IV. THE CONFUSION

1. But there is a problem with the command to believe. There is some confusion about what it means. What is saving faith?
2. There are three views of saving faith:
  - i. Roman Catholics believe that faith plus works equals salvation (faith + works = salvation). They believe that faith is important; it is essential for salvation; it is the foundation, the root, the initiation of salvation, but it is not enough. One must also do penance, or works of satisfaction, to get to heaven.
  - ii. Antinomians (against law) believe that faith equals salvation minus works (faith = salvation – works). In other words, salvation requires no repentance; it doesn’t necessarily lead to obedience or a changed life; it just requires

belief in the facts of the gospel. You might call this “easy-believism,” or “cheap grace.” “As long as I believe the right thing, I can live any way I want.” In his book *The Gospel According to Jesus* (185-186), **John MacArthur** complains about the easy-believism that is so popular in American pulpits today. “Sinners today hear not only that Christ will receive them as they are, but also that He will let them stay that way!”

- iii. Protestants (classic Protestants) believe that faith equals salvation plus works (faith = salvation + works). Protestants believe in salvation by faith alone. However, true faith is more than simply mental assent. It’s more than just believing that something is true. And true faith always produces life-change. It leads to life-change.
  1. **Croft Pentz** wrote, “We are not saved by faith and works, but by faith that works.”
  2. We are saved by faith alone, but not by faith that is alone. Faith is not lonely. It includes repentance, committing yourself to Christ, and leads to fruit like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

3. So, what is saving faith?

## V. THE CLARIFICATION

1. The Protestant Reformers taught that genuine saving faith has three elements. I’ll give you the Latin words, and then I’ll tell you what they mean.
  - i. Notitia:
    1. This is the intellectual element.
    2. It means information or knowledge.
    3. The first element of faith is knowing and understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ. It involves knowing the content, the data of the gospel.
    4. If I were to ask you, “Do you believe in Malt Licky?” what would you say? “What is Malt Licky?” You cannot believe in something if you don’t know what it is.
    5. What do you have to know about Jesus to be saved? What is the content of the gospel? I like to explain with four C-words:
      - a. Creation: God created us to have a love relationship with Him.
      - b. Corruption: We have sinned against God, so our relationship with God is broken, our punishment is eternal hell, and we can’t do anything to save ourselves.
      - c. Crucifixion: God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place for our sins, and then He rose again.
      - d. Conversion: God offers forgiveness and eternal life to anyone who believes in Jesus.
    6. Saving faith is believing in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31), and that means you have to know who Jesus is. It’s important to know that Jesus is

not only the Savior, the King. He didn't just come to save us, but to be the leader of our lives.

7. So the first step in saving faith is knowledge.

ii. Assensus:

1. This is the emotional element.
2. It means assent, or agreement.
3. The second element of saving faith is agreeing that the gospel is true. It is the conviction that the content of the gospel is true. It is believing that what the Bible says about Jesus is true. It is believing that you are a sinner who deserves God's wrath. It is believing that Jesus is God's Son, and he really did come to earth and die on the cross and pay for our sins. It is believing that Jesus is both Savior and Lord, Savior and King. It is believing that Jesus has the power to save you from sin if you will believe in Him.
4. Do you know who Superman is? Of course you do; you're an American. So you have the first element of faith – notitia. Do you believe that Superman is real? Hopefully not. That's the second element of faith – assensus.
5. True saving faith includes knowing who Jesus is, knowing the gospel, and agreeing with the gospel's truthfulness.
6. However, these two are not enough to be saving faith. For example, the demons have the first two elements of faith, and they tremble. The devil has notitia. He has knowledge. He has a PhD in systematic theology. He knows the facts of the gospel. And the devil has assensus. He believes that the gospel is true. But he doesn't have saving faith because he doesn't have the third element.

iii. Fiducia:

1. This is the volitional element.
2. It means personal trust and surrender to Christ.
3. This is where calling on the name of the Lord comes into play.
4. **Romans 10:13** "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
5. Saving faith includes knowing the gospel, and believing that Jesus can save, but it moves to the third element which is personally asking Jesus to save you.
6. But notice that I said that fiducia is personal trust and surrender to Christ. True faith includes repentance. Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin of conversion. Faith is trusting in Christ alone for salvation, and repentance is the decision to forsake sin and obey Christ. Faith is calling on Jesus to be your Savior; repentance is calling on Jesus to be your King. Faith is asking Jesus to save you from the

consequences of sin; repentance is asking Jesus to save you from a life of sin. Faith and repentance go together. Saving faith is penitent faith.

7. Let me try to give you some examples of this.
8. Saving faith is like marriage. To get married you first need knowledge of the other person, and knowledge of what the marriage commitment means. Second, you need to agree that marriage is a good thing, and you want to get married, and you want to marry that specific woman because you love her and think she will make a great wife. But that's still not saving faith. Third, you need to put that ring on your finger and say "I do." Saving faith involves knowledge of Jesus, believing that Jesus is the real deal, and then personally trusting in Him by calling on Him to save you and committing your life to Him.
9. Saving faith can also be illustrated with a chair. To have faith in a chair you first need to understand what a chair is. It is a piece of furniture to sit on. Second, you need to agree that the chair is strong enough to hold you up, and that it would be beneficial and desirable to sit in it. But that's still not saving faith. Third, to have faith in the chair you need to sit in it. That's saving faith. It's not just knowing about Jesus. It's not just believing that Jesus is real and good. It is relying and depending on Jesus.

## **VI. THE CHECK-UP**

1. The Bible says that it's possible to be deceived about faith. It is possible to think that you have saving faith, to think that you believe in Jesus, but you don't (Mt 7:21-23).
2. Therefore, the Bible says to examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith; to test yourself (2 Cor 13:5).
3. Today I want to help you to test the genuineness of your faith by asking you two questions. These two questions will not only help you to test your faith, but they will help you to better understand the nature of saving faith.
4. **Question 1: Why should God let you into heaven?**
  - i. If your answer to that question is that God should let you into heaven because you are a good person, or because you are very religious, or because you are trying hard to please God, or anything to do with your performance, then you don't have saving faith. Saving faith is trusting in Christ alone for salvation.
  - ii. Saving faith includes forsaking self-righteousness. It means believing that you are a sinner in need of a Savior. It is believing that if God gave you what you deserved, it would be hell. It is believing that you cannot do anything to save yourself; you cannot add anything to your salvation.

- iii. To believe in Jesus is to stop believing in yourself. It is to stop trusting in yourself. Stop relying on yourself. Stop believing in yourself.
  - iv. The ***Thematic Reference Bible*** defines faith as "A constant outlook of trust toward God, whereby human beings abandon all reliance on their own efforts and put their full confidence in him, his word, and his promises."
  - v. If you think you are a good person, you don't have saving faith. If you think you deserve heaven and not hell, you don't have saving faith.
  - vi. You might think, "But I'm not that bad. I'm not perfect, but surely, I don't deserve hell. Surely, I'm good enough for God to let me into heaven." To that let me say this. Imagine if you committed first degree murder, and the punishment is death. But you stood before the judge and asked him for mercy. "Judge, I know I committed murder, but only once. Other than that, I'm a really good person. I have done far more good things than bad things." Would the judge reconsider and let you into heaven? Of course not. I doesn't matter how many good things you've done, if you commit murder the penalty is death. When it comes to God, it doesn't matter if you're not a terrible person, it doesn't matter if you've done far more good than bad, the punishment for sin is hell. And until you realize that, you won't stop believing in yourself, and you won't start believing in Jesus.
  - vii. Jesus coined a term for this attitude. Poor in spirit.
  - viii. **Matthew 5:3** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."
  - ix. To be poor in spirit is to recognize your spiritual poverty. It is to recognize that you are a sinner; you don't deserve salvation; you can't earn salvation; you need a Savior; and all you can do is call on Jesus to save you.
  - x. The right answer to the question, "Why should God let you into heaven?" is that Jesus paid for your sins on the cross, and you trust in Him.
- 5. Question 2: Is there any sin in your life that you refuse to give up for Christ?**
- i. If the answer to that question is yes, then you don't have genuine saving faith, because true faith involves the surrender of your life to Christ. It involves repentance – the decision to forsake all sin and obey Christ. It involves accepting Christ as Savior and King.
  - ii. Saving faith involves forsaking not only self-righteousness, but self-rule. It is handing Jesus the steering wheel of your life.
  - iii. Repentance from sin is not the same as victory over sin. It is not the same as conquering sin. It is the decision, the resolve to turn away from anything that Christ calls sin and do whatever He tells you to do.
6. So how do you know if your faith is genuine? Ask yourself:
- i. Why should God let you into heaven?
  - ii. Is there any sin in your life that you refuse to give up for Christ?

7. Someone has come up with a good acronym of faith. **F-A-I-T-H** -- Forsaking all I trust Him. Faith involves forsaking both self-righteousness, and self-rule.

## **VII.**

### **CONCLUSION**

1. Charles Blondin was a world-famous tight-rope walker. In 1860 he crossed Niagara Falls while many people watched. The rope was 1,000 feet long, 160 feet above the raging waters. The people were amazed and cheered him on. Then he asked the crowd, "Do you believe I could cross over with someone on my back?" The crowd cheered and said yes. Then he approached one man asked him to get on his back and go with him, but the man refused! It's one thing to say you believe in Jesus; it's another thing to actually believe in Him; to trust Him with your life, and with your eternity; with all your decisions. But that's what Jesus meant when he said, "Believe also in me." That's true saving faith.
2. Where do you stand when it comes to faith? Is your faith genuine? Have you put your faith in Jesus? Have you called on Him to be your Savior and King?