

I BELIEVE!!!

How is your believeometer?

MY “THOTS ON BELIEF” (BELIEF MAXIMS):

We are called to believe, not to figure everything out

Belief is beautiful

Unbelief is ugly

Both belief and unbelief are more contagious than coronavirus

Belief leads to victory but unbelief leads to defeat

Hope is not a substitute for belief

When we believe Scripture tells us “the incredible greatness of God’s power [is] for us”

I have failed God repeatedly, but God has never failed me

Obedience is obligatory, compliance is compulsory, God gives commands not suggestions

“Believe” is a verb (present active imperative; continuous commanded action)

When I believe (in the name of the Son of God) I can be assured of eternal life

The Bible shows successes and failures because we can learn from both

THE BIBLICAL IMPORTANCE OF BELIEF:

What was the original sin in the Bible?

Expressed in the OT by God the Father:

Isaiah 43:10 – “You have been chosen to know me, **believe** in me, and understand that I alone am God.”

Expressed in the NT by God the Son at the beginning of His earthly ministry:

Mark 1:14-15 – “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and **believe** the Good News!”

Belief is how we become children of God, escape judgment, receive eternal life:

Note the importance of “**believe**” in John’s writings (used 81x in his Gospel and 7x in his epistles)

John 1:12 – “But to all who **believed** him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.”

John 3:16, 18, 36 – “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who **believes** in him will not perish but have eternal life. . . There is no judgment against anyone who **believes** in him. But anyone who does not **believe** in him has already been judged for not **believing** in God’s one and only Son. . . And anyone who **believes** in God’s Son has eternal life.”

To believe is the work God requires of us:

John 6:29 – “Jesus told them, “This is the only work God wants from you: **Believe** in the one he has sent.”
(Good works count for nothing, but true belief leads to good works)

Belief in Jesus leads to eternal (quantity and quality) life:

John 11:25-26 – “Jesus told her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who **believes** in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and **believes** in me will never ever die. Do you **believe** this, Martha?’”

Belief in Jesus makes us right with God:

Romans 3:25-26 – “For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they **believe** that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they **believe** in Jesus.”

Belief is Christ's commandment to us:

I John 3:23 – “And this is his commandment: We must **believe** in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us.”

Belief leads to overcoming:

I John 5:4-5 – “For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our **faith**. And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who **believe** that Jesus is the Son of God.”

God calls the entire church at Sardis back to belief:

Revelation 3:3 – “Go back to what you heard and **believed** at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.”

God notes the eternal importance of believing (note what unbelief is clumped in with and results in):

Revelation 21:8 – “But cowards, **unbelievers**, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

BIBLICAL FAILURES TO BELIEVE:

Thomas (Jn. 20, Jn. 14:5, Jn 11:16)

John 20: 24-29 – “One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he replied, ‘I won't **believe** it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.’ Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. ‘Peace be with you,’ he said. Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. **Believe!** ‘My Lord and my God!’ Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, ‘You **believe** because you have seen me. Blessed are those who **believe** without seeing me.’”

John 14:5 – “No, we don't know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

John 11:6 – “Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, ‘Let's go, too—and die with Jesus.’”

Israel in the desert (Ps. 78:22, Ex. 24:9-11) . . . Hugh revelation, huge accountability

Psalm 78 – “When the Lord heard them, he was furious. The fire of his wrath burned against Jacob. Yes, his anger rose against Israel, for they did not **believe** God or trust him to care for them.”

Ex. 24 – “Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel climbed up the mountain. There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a surface of brilliant blue lapis lazuli, as clear as the sky itself. And though these nobles of Israel gazed upon God, he did not destroy them. In fact, they ate a covenant meal, eating and drinking in his presence!”

Zacharias (Luke 1:20)

“But now, since you didn't **believe** what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.”

Nazareth (Mk. 6:1-6)

“Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, ‘Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?’ Then they scoffed, ‘He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.’ They were deeply offended and refused to **believe** in him.”

Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:25-26)

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘You foolish people! You find it so hard to **believe** all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures.’”

Tough nuts (Mt. 28:16-17)

“Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them **doubted!**”

A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 35:

“From all of this we begin to understand why the Scriptures have so much to say about the vital place of faith and why they brand **unbelief** as a deadly sin. Among all created beings, not one dare trust itself. God alone trusts in Himself; all other beings must trust in Him. **Unbelief** is actually perverted faith, for it puts its trust not in the living God but in dying men. The **unbeliever** denies the self-sufficient God and usurps the attributes that are not his. This dual sin dishonors God and ultimately destroys the soul of man.”

BIBLICAL SUCCESSES TO BELIEVE:

Noah (Genesis 6-9)

Abraham, the father of our faith (Genesis 15)

“And Abram **believed** the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.”

Mary (Luke 1:45)

“You are blessed because you **believed** that the Lord would do what he said.”

Roman Centurion (Mt. 8)

“Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, ‘Go back home. Because you **believed**, it has happened.’ And the young servant was healed that same hour.”

Canaanite woman (Mt. 15)

“‘Dear woman,’ Jesus said to her, ‘your **faith** is great. Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was instantly healed.”

Peter walking on water (Mt. 14)

“Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. ‘You have **so little faith**,’ Jesus said. ‘Why did you **doubt** me?’ When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then the disciples worshiped him. ‘You really are the Son of God!’ they exclaimed.”

Blind man (John 9)

John 9:35-38 – “When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, ‘Do you **believe** in the Son of Man?’ The man answered, ‘Who is he, sir? I want to **believe** in him.’ ‘You have seen him,’ Jesus said, ‘and he is speaking to you!’ ‘Yes, Lord, I **believe!**’ the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.”

ENEMY TARGETS OF BELIEF:

1. God the Creator

If there is no “Creator,” then we are not “creatures” with a spiritual, moral, and ethical obligation

Go outside! . . . The loss of awe, wonder, and beauty

John Muir – “Keep close to nature’s heart...and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean.”

Creator (He authored Genesis 1 (Alpha) and Revelation 22 (Omega))

Let scientific discovery create wonder in your heart, not doubt

“A billion years!” ???

Science will never disprove or prove the existence of God (as Robert Morris says the Bible is a spiritual book, written by a Spiritual Being, to born again spiritual beings, led by the Holy Spirit)

The hymnody of the church for centuries celebrates God as Creator and the beauty of His creation

2. Jesus Christ is Lord!

No one in human history has had the effect and impact on humanity that Jesus has had, this peasant carpenter from a miniscule Jewish town in first century Palestine.

The earliest confession/creed (most prominent proclamation) we have in the NT is “Jesus Christ is Lord!”

Mark 1:1 – “This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.”

John 1:1 – “**In the beginning** [Gen. 1:1] the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him. . .”

Jesus expressed/exhibited authority over creation

John 2:1-11 – Jesus turns water into wine

Mt. 8:23 – Jesus calms the seas

Mt. 14:13-21, Mt. 15:32-39 – Jesus multiplies food

Mt. 14:22-32 (Mk. 6, Mt. 14) – Jesus walks on water

Mt. 17:1-9 – Transfiguration

Mt. 17:27 – Fish with coin in its mouth

Mt. 21:18-22 – Jesus curses the fig tree

Luke 5:1-11 – Jesus enables the great catch of fish

John 21:1-11 – Jesus enables another great catch

Luke 24:50-53 – The ascension (transcending the law of gravity)

Jesus healed everyone and every kind of sickness

Jesus raised the dead

Jesus demonstrated authority over the devil

Jesus + nothing = everything

Jesus’ words (John 14:6) – “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.” As C.S. Lewis comments – Jesus is either Lord, lunatic, or liar. He Himself leaves us no room for good teacher, good guy, good religious figure.

3. That **truth** exists (that I can believe in anything at all; or that everything is relative)

Pilate – “Pilate said, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus responded, ‘You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the **truth**. All who love the **truth** recognize that what I say is true.’ ‘What is **truth**?’ Pilate asked.” (John 18:37-38)

Jesus – “I am the way, the **truth**, and the life.” (John 14:6)

Paul – “This is a **trustworthy** saying, and everyone should accept it: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’—and I am the worst of them all.” (I Tim. 1:15)

Peter – “Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.” (I Peter 3:15)

John – “We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us.” (I John 1:1-3)

4. Marriage works!

Marriage is God’s idea and it works! (Gen. 2:18-25)

Just as God created and designed the ecosystems to work, He created marriage to work.

When we hear the discouraging report that 50% of marriages end in divorce and that the number of divorces inside the church is the same as outside the church, we need to remember marriage has a 100% chance of working – if done His way.

5. Prayer

Why pray? . . . simply because Jesus modelled a life of prayer, taught extensively on prayer, and called us to a life of persevering prayer – and we as His disciples model our lives after His

I avoid schizophrenic prayer and complicated prayer; find what works for you, which will likely change over time in different seasons of your life, and be faithful

“Pray as you can, not as you can’t.” – Dom John Chapman

Remember my illustration when I preached on prayer and had Wes come up and play the piano, progressing through the different levels of ability

6. That God is in control

We are not deists who believe God created the universe but remains apart from it, permitting creation to administer itself through natural laws.

A.W. Tozer and God’s sovereign ocean liner.

7. The goodness of God

David . . . “I would have despaired unless I had **believed** that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” (Psalm 27:13, NASB 1995)

Hebrews 11:6 – “And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must **believe** that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.”

Jesus said, “I am the Good Shepherd,” three times in John 10.

Goodness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

8. That hearing (interacting) with God is possible

The Entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation is filled with God interacting with His creation and creatures (Even Balaam’s donkey heard from God)

9. God’s purpose for your life (that you have divine destiny)

Psalm 139:16 – “You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”

10. The Church (universal) and the 5-fold ministry

Ephesians 3:9-11 – “I [Paul] was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. God’s purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Ephesians 4:11-13 – “Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.”

11. Moral purity

II Corinthians 5:17 – “This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”

II Thessalonians 3:3 – “But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.”

I Corinthians 10:13 – “The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.”

12. Healing for the sake of evangelism

The Vineyard Association of Churches is all about signs and wonders and church growth

John Wimber’s first book was entitled “Power Evangelism”

13. Revival!

We believe in revival here at Harmony Vineyard and we always will!

OUR BELIEF PRACTICUM / CONFESSION FOR THIS WEEK:

Sunday....I believe in God the Creator (His goodness, sovereignty, truthfulness, faithfulness)

Monday....I believe Jesus Christ is Lord!

Tuesday....I believe the Holy Spirit has the desire and power to sanctify me and use me

Wednesday....I believe in the Church, our church (HVF) and the five-fold ministry

Thursday....I believe in the divine instituted, sacred covenant of marriage

Friday....I believe we (Harmony) and I can hear from God

Saturday....I believe in divine design and destiny for MY life

FINAL THOTS ON HOPE:

The wrong “takeaway” from today’s message . . .

“Let’s start gathering the stones; round up them unbelievers and throw’em out the church!”

Condemnation or discouragement

Jude 22 – “And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering.”

Context of 22-25 – “And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives. Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time!” Amen.

Sometimes we can do no better than Mark 9:24 – “I do **believe**, but help me overcome my **unbelief**.” (Jesus corrected his thinking then He corrected the situation).

Lauren Daigle – “You Say” and “I **believe**”

I **believe** God loves ME!

I John 4:16 (NASB 95) – “We have come to know and have **believed** [NIV “rely on”] the love which God has for us.”

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Great "Creator" hymns sung by the church for centuries . . .

All Creatures of Our God and King (Francis of Assisi):

Let all things their Creator bless, And worship Him in humbleness, O praise Him! Alleluia!

Creator of the Earth and Sky (St. Ambrose):

Creator of the earth and sky, Ruling the firmament on high, Clothing the day with robes of light, Blessing with gracious sleep the night.

Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies (Charles Wesley):

Dayspring from on high, be near, Daystar, in my heart appear.

Now, on Land and Sea Descending (Samuel Longfellow):

Soon as dies the sunset glory, Stars of heaven shine out above, Telling still the ancient story: Their Creator's changeless love.

Mighty God, While Angels Bless Thee:

For the grandeur of Thy nature, Grand beyond a seraph's thought; For the wonders of creation; Works will skill and kindness wrought.

All Things Bright and Beautiful:

All things bright and beautiful, All things great and small, All things wise and wonderful; Our Father made them all. Each little flower that opens, Each little bird that sings; He made their glowing colors, He made their tiny wings. . . . Cold wind in the winter, Pleasant summer sun, Ripe fruits in the garden; He made them ev'ry one. He gave us eyes to see them, And lips that we must tell How good is God our Father Who doeth all things well.

The Spacious Firmament:

Forever singing, as they shine, "the hand that made us is divine."

We Praise Thee, O God, Our Redeemer:

We praise Thee, O God, our Redeemer, Creator, In grateful devotion our tribute we bring. We lay it before Thee, we kneel and adore Thee, We bless Thy holy name, glad praises we sing.

Praise to God Immortal Praise:

All the plenty summer pours; Autumn's rich o'er flowing stores; Flocks that whiten all the plain; Yellow sheaves of ripened grain: Lord, for all these our souls shall raise Grateful vows and solemn praise.

Day Is Dying in the West:

Day is dying in the west; Heav'n is touching earth with rest; Wait and worship while the night Sets her ev'ning lamps alight Thro' all the sky. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts! Heav'n and earth are full of Thee! Heav'n and earth are praising Thee, O Lord most high!

God, That Madest Earth and Heaven:

God, that madest earth and heaven, darkness and light; who the day for toil hast given, for rest the night; may thine angel guards defend us, slumber sweet thy mercy send us; holy dreams and hopes attend us, all through the night.

Creator of the Stars of Night:

Creator of the stars of night, Thy people's everlasting light, Jesu, Redeemer, save us all, And hear Thy servants when they call.

Creation's Lord, We Give Thee Thanks:

Creation's Lord, we give Thee thanks That this Thy world is incomplete; That battle calls our marshaled ranks; That work awaits our hands and feet. . . That Thou hast not yet finished man; That we are in the making still, As friends who share the Maker's plan As sons who know the Father's will.

God, of the Earth, the Sky, the Sea:

God of the earth, the sky, the sea! Maker of all above, below! Creation lives and moves in Thee, Thy present life in all doth flow. . . Thy love is in the sunshine's glow, Thy life is in the quickening air; When lightning flashes and storm winds blow, There is Thy power; Thy law is there. . . We feel Thy calm at evening's hour, Thy grandeur in the march of night; And when Thy morning breaks in power, We hear Thy Word, "Let there be light."