

Why We Believe What We Believe 4

Multiple Sources are Convincing

(preached 11/20/22)

Please turn to *Matthew 18:18*.

PREVIOUSLY:

- 4 Factors of why we believe as we do are: 1) Justice/Morality, 2) Mercy/Compassion, 3) Provision/Protection, and 4) Multiple Sources saying the same thing.
- It's with the HEART that one believes or doesn't.
- We attach any or all of the above to what we believe which ignites our passion and zeal for the same.
- When we do so we're more likely to hear, agree with, and "keep our peace" with any information in alignment with our own/
- We're more likely to reject any that do not.
- This works for the good when we attach justice, mercy, and provision to God's Word.
- It makes us more passionate about Him and results in giving thanks, praising Him, and worshipping Him.
- It makes us less prone to deception and being misled.
- On the flip side, when we attach the above to anything else such as a political or social ideology, the same passions inspire a cognitive dissonance to facts, evidence, and the Bible.
- We are more prone to deception and being misled.

TODAY we bring things outside of us a bit more and we must acknowledge that external forces have great influence over 1) what we believe, 2) why we believe what we do, and 3) how we live.

We are far more likely to believe something, even something incredible and outlandish, when many authoritative sources are repeating the same thing.

EVEN IF THAT THING IS FALSE, A LIE, HAS A LOT OF EVIDENCE AGAINST IT, OR CLASHES WITH THE BIBLE.

We're far more likely to accept a concept or lifestyle, even something that would have shocked us a few years ago, when many sources are pushing it at the same time.

AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES ARE THE MEDIA, GOVERNMENT (INCLUDING POLITICIANS), THE MEDICAL FIELD, CELEBRITIES, AND PEOPLE WE KNOW PERSONALLY AND TRUST.

Despite the fact that polls show that both media and government have low approval ratings, most people trust and believe the news they put forth, the facts they portray, and the doctrines they preach.

One reason so many believe is these sources walk in lock-step with each other: repeating the same things.

YOUR SPOUSE. Have you ever been frustrated that you say the same thing to your spouse 50x, but the second they hear the exact same thing from another source they suddenly believe? AND act as though it's the first time they're hearing it? It's not just your husband or wife that does this, it's the human condition part of which God Himself has programmed into us.

Deuteronomy 19:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ "A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established."

CRIME. Even though this law was written for the sake of crime and proving the same, the Lord was making it clear that multiple witnesses/sources were stronger than just one, and established a solid case to convince judges of guilt or innocence. Quoting directly from *Deuteronomy 19:15*, Jesus used the same concept for relationships within the church:

Matthew 18:15-16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that '*by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*'

PRAYER. Then our Lord called upon the same thing when it came to prayer and calling upon Father God to act here on earth:

Matthew 18:18-20 (ESV)

¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for

them by my Father in heaven.

²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Verse 18 is famous and speaks to pleading with Father God to bring Heaven to Earth in the form of healing, prophecy, provision, protection, salvation, and most anything else we pray for.

BINDING is a legal term applying to a signed agreement or contract—when two or more parties agree and sign a contract, the terms of said contract are binding to all parties. That means they’re all obligated to live up to the terms.

Jesus lays out the two parties: earth and heaven. We represent earth, the Church, and Heaven represents the Lord. The agreement we have between us is the New Covenant that Jesus brought with Him.

LOOSE is an old-fashioned term also a term applied legally: that both parties will exchange the goods and/or services they agreed to. In this case Jesus is telling us that when we ask God the Father for things in the name of Jesus, Father is BOUND to His end of the covenant and will LOOSE the things we ask for to us.

Verse 19 is the power behind this covenant—two or three witnesses agreeing for the same thing and asking God together. Listen carefully: **God is moved by multiple sources among His Church, who are in agreement and asking for/saying the same thing.**

NOT MANIPULATED. No, God isn’t manipulated, bullied, or convinced and He cannot be deceived. The point is ***He wants us to approach Him collectively, as a Church.*** He wants us spreading His Kingdom Gospel here on earth, ***together***, and asking for His help.

Verse 20: multiple witnesses together, agreeing on God’s Word and Will are supernaturally powerful—the Presence of Jesus Himself is among us!

NOT PERFECT. We are made in the image of God yet we aren’t perfect like He is.

Whether for good or bad we’re moved, influenced, persuaded, convinced, and can even be bullied or intimidated when multiple sources are saying the same thing to us.

MOVE MOUNTAINS. When the Church is listening to and being led by the Holy Spirit, and multiple witnesses among us are hearing the same thing from Him, we can move mountains!

VACATION. There's been great power when people are unified for millennia. I recall years ago, the small publishing company I worked for was bought out by Bertelsman, the second largest corporation at that time. They moved us from our "backwater" section of Manhattan to Times Square, into a new skyscraper they constructed there! They sent in a bunch of bigwigs directly from Germany to run everything, and ours was a man of great authority and presence. He was a pleasant fellow, but when push came to shove, he had a "my way or the highway" attitude which intimidated many.

LESS GENEROUS. People were afraid to approach him about anything! Yet when the corporation made us convert to their far less generous vacation policy, something weird happened—we all rose up. I remember the day it happened: a few cornered the CEO when he was walking down our corridor. Next thing you know, all of us came out of our offices and here's what happened: we all began saying the same thing to this very powerful, intimidating, and authoritative CEO.

AGREED & SAYING SAME THING. We all surrounded him in the hallway and we're saying telling him about the vacation time we were losing. I went from two weeks to 4 days! Others who'd been there far longer lost a lot more. The CEO kept trying to repeat the Corporate policy to us which had already been laid out in the interoffice memo he'd sent everyone. Yet despite him having the backing of the second largest corp in the world, and being one its Chief Executive Officers, he was only one man and we were many.

HE CAVED! He kept repeating himself and so did we...and then the darndest thing happened. He finally said "alright...you can stick to your original vacation times. Take the days off, but only record the number of days that conforms to the policy and don't tell anyone."

NO MOB. Please understand we weren't a howling mob carrying torches and pitchforks. We didn't threaten to quit, call him names, or make accusations.

What did happen is that multiple witnesses agreed on the same thing, said the same thing, and the man in charge was convinced by this power.

God wants us to be the shining Light of this world by doing exactly the same. If the Church brought the unified message of the Gospel like Jesus and the Apostles did in the first century, just imagine how the world might change!

DEVIL DOES SAME. That being said, we must understand the devil does the same thing. The "high places" of this world are preaching the same message and saying the same things to us all the time through governments, news media, social media, big corporations, the entertainment industry, and celebrities constantly.

These sources are many, they say the same thing, and influence us far more than we may think.

LISTEN TO SPIRIT. When we're listening to the Holy Spirit, reading to His Word, and hearing Bible based sermons and teachings at Church then God's sense of justice, morality, mercy, compassion, protection, and provision is being instilled within us. It's being written on the tablets of our hearts and giving us a rock solid foundation to stand upon.

LISTEN TO WORLD. When we cling to news, Youtube, TV commentators, and political party rhetoric then they're instilling their own sense of justice, morality, mercy, compassion, protection, and provision within us and we've built our house upon the sand.

Proverbs 11:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

GODLY COUNSEL. The guidance and counselors Solomon is referring to here are Godly men and women. The MSM and Government do not fit that label!

GODLY WITNESSES. The Lord Himself is a witness, and so is the Bible. ***Therefore the Holy Spirit always works in perfect lock-step with the Scriptures to convince our hearts of truth.*** The Lord then commands men and women to quote His Word out loud to others, so we are the 3rd witness to truth should we be speaking it.

Proverbs 15:22 (ESV)

²² Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 20:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Plans are established by counsel; by wise guidance wage war.

SURROUND YOURSELF. Again I say: ***when we surround ourselves with fellow Christians who seek to hear the Holy Spirit and let Him lead them to the Scriptures, our hearts will align with truth and our lifestyles will follow.***

The company we keep makes a MASSIVE difference.

SORTING. Please allow me to sort something out, a controversy that tends to spring up in the Church now and again.

Here is how we influence the unsaved, especially those leading lifestyles of the flesh:

- We do it as a group.
- We don't do what they do.

JESUS SAT DOWN WITH SINNERS. People often tell me that Jesus sat down with sinners, including thieves and prostitutes, and hung out with them. This is true! That being said:

- He often had some of His disciples with Him
- He didn't do what the sinners did.

DIDN'T LIVE LIKE THEM. Jesus did minister to thieves and prostitutes and even told the Pharisees that said sinners would see the Kingdom while the Pharisees would be kept out. All true. Yet after preaching the gospel to them and healing their sicknesses, Jesus didn't hire out one of the ladies of the night for Himself or one His disciples. He didn't steal or accept stolen goods either.

I say that because if you're one person trying to minister to a group of unsaved people, chances are they will change and influence you more than you will them.

- They will persuade you to live their lifestyle, talk as they talk, and do as they do.
- You may resist for a short time, but when you're one person keeping company with non-Christians you're fighting a battle uphill, in the mud, during a storm.

MATTHEW 18. If you truly want someone in your life to be Saved and start living a Christian lifestyle, then approach then follow what Jesus said in Matthew 18, which works for more than just confronting a brother about his sin:

- Start with them one on one.
- Then bring in two or three other Christians, all of whom are in agreement, and minister to them as a group.
- Then bring them to church.

GENTILES CONVERTED. When the Church was in its infancy, after Jesus' Ascension to Heaven, a weird thing started to happen that took the Apostles by surprise: Gentiles started receiving Jesus as their Savior and we're all in. The Apostles were all Jewish, raised under the OC, and their understanding was that all of Israel would be Saved first then the Gentiles later.

DEBATE! Yet Israel was resisting even to the point of riots, and it was mainly Gentiles who were repenting and declaring Christ as Lord! What to do? All the Apostles gathered together to discuss this issue and Acts 15 actually states that a heated debate between them began! Some felt the new Gentile converts needed to be circumcised because circumcision was a sign of being in covenant with God. Others said no, that wasn't necessary.

They weren't in agreement! Then this happened:

Acts 15:6-18 (ESV)

⁶ The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.

⁷ And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us,

⁹ **and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.**

¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

¹¹ **But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”**

¹² And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me.

¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.

¹⁵ **And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,**

¹⁶ “‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,

¹⁷ that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things

¹⁸ known from of old.’

WITNESSES. The Holy Spirit takes over the meeting, speaking through Peter, and then referring them to God’s word through the OT. James points out that the prophets all agreed that God would extend covenant to Gentiles and said covenant would NOT be the Law of Moses, but a new one that Jesus brought.

With the multiple witnesses of God, the prophets of old through Scripture, Peter, and James ... all were convinced.

To conclude:

- Let’s surround ourselves with Godly witnesses starting with God Himself. Then His Word, and other Christians.
- Let’s call upon these witnesses to help keep us from the Devil’s machine of falsehood that’s everywhere.
- Let’s call upon these witnesses to help us minister to someone—we shouldn’t be lone sheep.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (ESV)

⁹ Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.

¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!

¹¹ Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?

¹² And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.