

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday March 21, 2021. "I Believe: there is truth I can place my trust in."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're well into 2021 and thankfully, we're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We have also opened our children's and youth area also. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Recap.

Okay, recap. I'm not even sure where to begin other than a few thoughts trying to condense the past two Sundays. First, scriptures say we are hardwired to seek things to believe. To help us understand our world and how to be in it. It's how God made us. So, it's okay ... in fact even desirable for us to dive into this holy curiosity and look for truth to believe in. Second, what centers us in this search is knowing we are secure in our relationship with God, and we learn about God through aligning our 'beliefs' with the person of Jesus. The Jesus we read about in scriptures, and the Jesus we experience through the Holy Spirit in our day to day lives. It's in these two things we find the assurance to follow this drive to find beliefs we can depend on.

III Sunday.

Sunday was the third in our "*I Believe...*" series. We hit the topic; "*truth I can place my trust in*". We established the foundational understanding we were built to seek greater truth. We also said there is a God that draws us towards that truth, 'light', to guide us towards understanding. In spite of these two truths we admitted that the search for 'truth', what we claim as reliable and valid, can be hard. Sometimes we acquire and hold onto beliefs, truths, because they worked and served us well for a period of our life. But then some event or situation, forces us to determine if those truths still work. Do they still hold up? And often all the duct tape and super glue can't hold our beliefs together any longer. So, when we approach the topic of "*truth I can place my trust in*", we have to differentiate between certainty and assurance, and even more challenging, between 'truths' and 'truth'. We're going to spend some time wrestling with these different words, what they might mean, and then we'll give you some additional things to consider about them later.

What does 'certainty' mean to you? What does 'assurance' mean to you?

How do you see them as similar and as different?

Do you see a distinction between the plural 'truths', and the singular 'truth'?

Our scripture reference was an instruction to early followers to stay firm in their understanding of truth, when so much that wasn't truth was infiltrating the early gatherings of the followers of Jesus. Read it with that understanding, and then we'll see what it says about truth for us. **1 John 4:1-6.**

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What did the author seem to say needs to be our understanding and practice to find truth?

There were a couple of things John said we need to understand and practice, to help us find truth

1. Everything we hear, and are tempted to move into our 'truths' column, we need to carefully examine to make sure it's actually true.

We are naturally wired to want to believe in things that help us and help make sense of the world. So eager in fact, we will jump at almost anything if it seems to fit even the littlest bit in helping explain the world, and how we are to be in it. These people were living just a generation after the death of Jesus, and were already struggling to separate truth from untruth. John said the not so secret secret was to make sure before we adopted anything as truth, we "*carefully examine*" it before we embrace it. Some things sound like they might be true, so we have to be extra careful in checking it over first.

What processes do you have to help you examine your beliefs to make sure they're true?

2. Jesus is that standard template, what we measure EVERYTHING against, to make sure what we believe to be true is actually...true.

The way we find truth is by holding what we call 'truth' under the light of Jesus. Jesus said if we saw him we saw God. So, if we want to believe in this God, and live for him, then all we incorporate into our life as truth must pass the Jesus test. There is much in scripture, the history of God revealing himself to his people, but not all of it is for instruction. This feels scary, but we know it to be true. Much of what we see in the Old Testament, Hebrew scriptures, is people trying to understand God, and God often having to modify his message to work with very flawed and imperfect people who often got it wrong. However, in the life of Jesus, we see God himself revealed in the teachings, life, and death of Jesus. And it is in Jesus we find the standard to what we measure any truth we're going to live by.

How do you see and practice the centrality of Jesus in your pursuit of truth?

IV Challenge.

This brings us back to our original questions around the ideas of certainty vs assurance, and truths vs truth. Certainty requires us figuring out things correctly, gathering the 'correct truths', (specific set of beliefs), and having our confidence centered in us getting it right. On the other hand, assurance is centered not on getting it right, nailing the answers, but rather centered in the person of Jesus. And also fully trusting our relationship with God is secure. It's in this 'truth' we can have assurance in our relationship with God, and not in the certainty of our wisdom or ability to get it right.

So, what can you do to build your dependence on an assurance in who God is, and that truth, and begin to let go of the need for certainty in leaning on your own understanding?