



Peninsula City Church

We Believe...

An Introduction

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We Believe...

An Introduction

Q. As Christ-followers, do we know what we believe about the Christian faith and why we believe these things?

We need to know what we believe regarding our Christian faith. This is especially true in this day and age when the Christian faith is under attack from many angles and new sources. The Bible talks a lot about the fact that, Christ-followers are to believe or believed, are believers or believing in God and His ways from the root word *pisteuo*. In fact, it is used almost 250 times. But as a Christ-follower what do you believe regarding God and His ways?

There are some who attempt to understand the various aspects of the Christian faith, and are not even sure if they believe it. They work themselves into a dilemma and declare that it is all too hard. It has been said that,

“Why in our finite ‘wisdom’ do we have to try to understand everything and attempt to put it into little boxes with labels? Why do we struggle with or reject what we cannot understand?”¹

However, we need to believe and then attempt to understand. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthian church said,

“For we live by believing and not by seeing” (2 Cor 5:7 NLT).

So, here I would like to suggest the right perspective that we need to take. That is, believe first, and then you may understand. This is not a new take on the matter; it has been said in the fifth century AD by a theologian and philosopher named Augustine (345-430),

“Therefore, seek not to understand so that you may believe, but believe so that you may understand; for ‘unless you believe, you will not understand.’”²

1. What’s in a belief

Q. So what do we believe?

Do you know what and why you believe about the Christian faith? So why do you believe these things? This series will briefly look at some of Peninsula City Church’s fundamental beliefs that are reflected in our statement of faith. The reason for doing this is series is, if we are believers who believe in God and His ways then we need to attempt to understand them better.

As believers, it’s important to know what we believe about the Christian faith and why we believe it. The Church has been called a “community of believers,”³ so that is who we are. Since we are called believers; why is it that many Christ-followers do not know what they believe and why they believe it. It has been said that,

“Now ‘belief is essentially a word that relates and defines: it relates people, situations, and ideas; but it in turn, as I shall argue, it is also in very important ways defined by the context of its use.’”⁴

¹ Pink, Nick. *Hear God... Hear God More... Hear God More Clearly...* (Durham, CT: Strategic, 2010), 38.

² Augustine, *The Fathers of the Church. St. Augustine Tractates on the Gospel of John 28–54*. Vol 88. John W. Retting (trans.). (Washington D.C. The Catholic University, 1993), 18.

³ Kung, Hans. *The Church*. R. & R. Ockenden. (trans.) (London: Burns & Oats, 1968), xi.

⁴ Ruel, Malcolm. “Christians as Believers.” In *Religious Organization and Religious Experience*. J. Davis. (ed.). (London: Academic, 2002), 244.

Although there are more, we have chosen nine of our core beliefs that we believe as a local church, and we will briefly discuss them. These are:

- **Prayer:** We believe prayer is communication with God by which the believer can offer supplication, intercession and thanksgiving. It's the right and privilege of every believer to speak the word of faith, to pray with authority and so release the transforming power of God. We believe that through prayer, the believer can communicate with God and receive comfort, guidance, reassurance, encouragement, direction and edification.
- **Salvation:** We believe in the salvation of sinners by grace, through repentance and faith in the perfect and sufficient work of Christ by which we obtain remission of sins.
- **The Prophetic:** We believe that the Lord speaks prophetically and progressively, a present Word for each generation.
- **The Word of God:** We believe in the plenary verbal inspiration of the accepted canon of Scriptures as originally given. The Scriptures are infallible, inerrant, and the sole and final authority for all matters of faith and conduct.
- **Communion:** We believe in the table of the Lord, commonly called the Communion or the Lord's Supper, for believers.
- **Water Baptism:** We believe in the necessity of water baptism by immersion in the name of the eternal Godhead, to fulfil the command of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **The Resurrection:** We believe Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose the third day again and personally appeared to His disciples.
- **The Trinity:** We believe in the Eternal Godhead who has revealed Himself as One God existing in Three Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinguishable but indivisible.
- **The Church:** We believe that there is one true universal Church, made up of genuine believers, but this one universal Church is also composed of many local Churches in given localities. These Churches are under the sovereign headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, exercising autonomous government under Him, administering all its local affairs and ministry, as well as the propagation of the Gospel.

These are some of what are called the orthodox Christian beliefs (traditionally held beliefs) that have been believed down throughout Church history.

Jesus challenged those around Him to believe, that is why those who did believe in God and His ways were called believers. He wanted them to believe first and then understand later; this is how faith works. However, Jesus went even further and challenged them to also believe in Him. For example, He said,

“Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard Him ourselves. Now we know that He is indeed the Saviour of the world’” (Jn 4:42 NLT).

“But if I do his work, believe in the evidence of the miraculous works I have done, even if you don't believe Me. Then you will know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I am in the Father” (Jn 10:38 NLT).

“Jesus said to her (Martha), ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die’” (Jn 11:25 NLT).

“Then Jesus cried out, ‘Whoever believes in Me does not believe in Me only but in the One who sent Me’ (Jn 12:44 NLT).

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; also believe in Me” (Jn 14:1 NLT).

“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!’” (Jn 20:27 NLT).

“But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing in Him you will have life by the power of his name” (Jn 20:31 NLT).

The early church was also called believers,

“And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts 5:14 ESV).

“What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever?” (2 Cor 6:15 NLT).

¹⁰ “This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Saviour of all people and particularly of all believers... ¹² Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity” (1 Tim 4:10,12 NLT)

So if we are already believers in God and His ways, then we need to prayerfully study the matter of knowing what and why we believe these truths. One reason for this is that it can give us conviction regarding our beliefs. Although it was said in the context of leadership, what Ps Rick Warren has said can apply to all believers,

“One aspect of a leader’s character is the convictions to which they are deeply committed. Great leaders have strongly held beliefs. An opinion is something you’d argue about; a conviction is something you’d die for.”⁵

If it came to it would you be willing to die for a feeling, what about a conviction from the Word of God? The reason for this that this is asked is that too many times we are merely subjective instead of being objective in what we believe. That is, we feel that it is good to believe something, rather than knowing the truth of the matter. Our feelings need to be based on truth, not the other way around. For example, could you explain to someone who asks you why you believe in the resurrection? It is not good enough to say that it makes you feel good. The Bible has laid out the objective truth of the matter so that, we can then position our subjectiveness upon it. The truth of the Word of God is an objective, strong eternal foundation; our feelings are up and down throughout the day.

2. Be ready to explain what you believe

We need to be intentional about knowing what we believe about the Christian faith and why we believe it. As C.S. Lewis once said,

“You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you.”⁶

As was asked above, if it came to it would you be willing to die for a feeling, what about a conviction from the Word of God? We never know when our belief will be challenged and we will need to be prepared to make a stand. We need to work out what we believe when we have the

⁵ Warren, Rick. Great Leaders Live By Strong Convictions.

http://pastors.com/convictions/?utm_source=Resources&utm_campaign=3d3dc7a4b4-PCOM+Newsletter+9.27.17&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3a3ff6b713-3d3dc7a4b4-45812093&mc_cid=3d3dc7a4b4&mc_eid=9886ed21cb (28th September 2017).

⁶ Lewis, C.S. *Greif Observed*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1989), 34.

time because many of us are not good at thinking on our feet. The book of Proverbs has made the following statement,

“The heart of the righteous ponders (meditates or mutters as in Ps 1:2) how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things” (Prov 15:28 ESV)

Peter in writing to the scattered Christ-followers encouraged them to live as they had been instructed. This was at all times even in the midst of suffering for their belief in Jesus Christ. They need to be at the ready to answer someone at any time. He said in chapter three,

¹³ “Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don’t worry or be afraid of their threats. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ But do this gently and respectfully. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. ¹⁷ Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong! 17 (1 Pet 3:13-17 NLT).

So let’s briefly break this down and look at what has been said here:

In verses 13-14 it was said that,

- Who will want to harm you if you are eager to imitate Christ by doing good or upright? Well, many would eagerly line up to do this.
- That if you may suffering for doing what is right, God will reward you for it: The reason for this is that we are the spiritually prosperous ones.
- So don’t worry or be afraid and run away because of their threats: Do not let fear be the controlling factor here, but remain under God’s control.

In verse 15 Peter gives the alternative response when he said,

- Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life: In a fight or flight situation, the previous verse says do not go into flight mode. However, as Christ-followers neither do we fight; we worship, i.e. sanctify or set apart Christ as holy in their hearts in that situation.
- And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it (*apologia* from where we get apologetics): In other words, know what and why you believe what you believe as biblical truth. As was said above we need to be always prepared to explain what we believe and why we believe it rationally. Explain why it gives you so much hope.

Then in verse 16 he reveals the attitude that this defence needs to be made in,

- But do this gently and respectfully. Keep your conscience clear: That is, do not fight with them, but answer as we see Jesus Christ answered those who questioned Him.
- Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ: If you are defamed or spitefully abused and insulted for what you believe that is a kingdom truth, they will be put to shame. This is the result that should follow from your response to their questions and persecution.

Finally, in verse 17 Peter reminded them,

- Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong: Therefore, do not be a troublemaker, rather be someone who knows what they believe and why they believe it and present this in a way that is gentle and respectful keeping your conscience clear.

You may be thinking that we live in really bad times. Well, some challenges are going on around the world to the Christian faith. But let's just stop for a minute and put things into perspective. In the days that Jesus was on earth, the all-powerful and vicious Roman Empire was ruling in the realm. A Roman soldier could kill someone on a whim, by any means at his disposal and there were soldiers everywhere. Then there were the Caesars whose morality was, well let's just say that often there was none. There was the enforcement of Caesar worship at the pains of death. Then there were the various Jewish religious groups and sects striving for top place.

Jesus was able to walk through the midst of all of this and not be swayed to the left or the right. He had a kingdom mindset; He knew why He was here and what He needed to do. He knew what He believed and why He believed it. Jesus then encouraged His followers of the day to walk and live as He did and not get pulled into the worldly struggles and battles. Instead, they were to know what they believed and why. They also needed to know why they are here and what they need to do.

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. As Christ-followers, do we know what we believe about the Christian faith and why we believe these things?

So we believe so that you may understand. As a result, in light of these verses what is it that you believe and why? What is it that you now need to understand more clearly to be able always to be ready to explain it if someone asks about your hope as a believer? Are you sloppy or lazy in knowing what you believe? Maybe as a new Christ-follower, you have not had the opportunity to study what you believe. However, if you have been a Christ-follower for a length of time, you need to know what you believe.

Are we merely subjective instead of being objective in what we believe? Rest assured if you have not been challenged about what you believe and why you will. Knowing what we believe about the Christian faith and why we believe it is vital. If you have not intentionally wrestled with your faith, it is about time you did. Because how can we always be prepared to rationally explain what we believe and why we believe it if we have not spent the time understanding it. Also when we do explain why it gives you so much hope, we need to do this gently and respectfully keeping our conscience clear.

So, if it came to it, would you be willing to die for a feeling, what about a conviction from the Word of God? Are your feelings based on truth, or is it the other way around? Could you explain to someone who asks you why you believe in God and His ways? It is not good enough to say that it makes you feel good. The Bible has laid out the objective truth on this matter. So we can then position our subjectiveness upon it. The truth of the Word of God is an objective, strong eternal foundation; our feelings are up and down throughout the day. Remember that,

“The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things” (Prov 15:28 ESV).