

Believing God

- Last couple of lessons
 - Actions are the result of decisions
 - Decisions are driven by values
 - Values come from what people believe to be true
 - Common arbiters of truth: science, experiences, society / culture, imagination
- Our calling is to believe God
 - This is where faith comes in
 - *Pistis* (pē'-stēs) - faith
 - Scripture provides us a definition of what this word means:
 - **[Hebrews 11:1-2 ESV] [1] Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. [2] For by it the people of old received their commendation.**
 - Other translations say, "being certain of what we do not see."
 - Remainder of Hebrews 11 - Faith hall of fame
 - People who believed God, and acted accordingly
 - **[Hebrews 11:7-8, 17, 24-25 ESV] [7] By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. [8] By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ... [17] By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ... [24] By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, [25] choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.**
 - Chapter lists several others
 - Faith is active
 - The ones who were recorded in Hebrews 11 were people who believed God and then acted out of that truth
 - Beliefs, values, decisions, actions - based on the truth of what God said
 - **[Hebrews 11:6 ESV] [6] And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**
 - We are called to live by faith (*pistis* - just like the list in Hebrews 11)
 - It means seeking God and believing what He says
- God is trustworthy
 - Truth is at the center of all of our interaction with God because it is part of His character
 - It's the reason that Jesus came
 - **[John 18:37 ESV] [37] Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."**
 - Jesus is about to die - talking to the man who could stop it
 - Says that he came to bear witness (tell us about) the Truth

- When our arbiter of truth is God's Word, we are operating on a higher plane
 - It is how you and I operate out of eternal truth, even though his ways and thoughts are beyond our comprehension.
- **[10] "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, [11] so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**
 - Rain falls, waters the earth, causes crops to grow, yields seeds, which are sown, harvested, made into bread, which becomes food
 - Those raindrops have purpose
 - God says his word is the same way
 - Every word He has spoken WILL accomplish His purposes
- Jesus gives us a picture of one of the purposes that God has for His Word
 - He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane for the disciples, and for us, before he was arrested
 - **[John 17:16-20 ESV] [16] They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. [17] Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. [18] As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. [19] And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. [20] "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,**
 - Though this portion of the prayer was for his disciples, there doesn't appear to be anything in there that would not apply to us.
 - **[John 17:16-19 ESV] [16] They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. [17] Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.**
 - Jesus just said that, in the SAME WAY that He is not of this world, that we are not of this world
 - We are to be set apart by the truth, which is God's Word
 - This is what distinguishes us
 - **[18] As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.**
 - Do you know how He was sent? -with purpose
 - **[John 1:14 ESV] [14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**
 - Jesus was sent bringing grace and truth
 - **[19] And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.**
 - "Consecrate" and "sanctified" in this verse are the same word in the Greek word that means "set apart" / to "dedicate to God"
 - Jesus is the only human who has ever been able to perfectly set himself apart from this world
 - If Jesus hadn't done that, we would not be able to be set apart
- When our standard is God's Word, we have a firm foundation for our faith
 - **[2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV] [16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**
 - "God breathed" means that God actually spoke the words
 - Scripture is just as true as creation
 - People of faith from Hebrews 11 did not have blind faith

- **[Galatians 2:9 ESV] [9] and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.**
 - They heard Paul’s message, confirmed that he was teaching truth, and agreed that Paul would go to the Gentiles and they would go to the Jews
- Paul continues...
 - **[Galatians 2:11-14 ESV] [11] But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. [12] For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. [13] And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. [14] But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"**
 - Peter’s conduct “was not in step with the TRUTH of the gospel”
 - While the church was still small and just getting started, the Satan was desperate to corrupt the message
 - Paul’s intervention was an answer to Jesus’ prayer for the disciples
 - **[John 17:17] Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.**
 - God used Paul to correct Peter, for our sake
 - It was critical for God to preserve truth, because we are held accountable to it
 - If the message had been changed and we were taught a gospel that wasn’t true, then God would not accept it.
 - We would stand condemned before God, because we would have put our faith and our hope in a lie.
 - Uzzah
 - Even if he didn’t know the truth about touching the holy things of God, he was accountable to the truth
- Some people don’t believe all of Scripture
 - **[Deuteronomy 12:32 ESV] [32] "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.**
 - When people pick and choose what we believe to be true from Scripture...
 - We are sitting in judgement of it
 - We didn’t write it, and we don’t get to edit it
 - Peter WAS one of the writers, and he was corrected for not being in step with the truth
 - When we inject our opinion into the Word of God, we are corrupting it
 - Our faith becomes blind and incomplete
 - We are creating an alternate truth, just like Peter did
- We should do an inventory of the things we believe
 - What arbiter do we use to determine that our beliefs are true?
 - Tradition? Something we were taught in church?
 - Our own experience?
 - Society? Culture? Science?
 - Satan would love for us to hold tightly to alternate truths
 - Especially “Christian flavored” ones - Sound right / afraid to let them go
 - We must be willing to examine what we believe