Believing God

- Last couple of lessons
 - o 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."
 - o 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
 - o 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

- The Truth was that he had to die to become the payment for our sins
- Jesus himself is Truth
 - [John 14:6 ESV] [6] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
 - He isn't "a" truth, he's our only eternal hope
- We have the Spirit of Truth in us
 - [John 16:13 ESV] [13] When the <u>Spirit of truth</u> comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.
 - Jesus was promising his Holy Spirit to the disciples, who eventually came at Pentecost
 - He still guides us into the truth (conviction, recalling scripture)
- It is how we're called to worship
 - [John 4:23 ESV] [23] But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.
 - God wants us to approach Him in truth, seeking the truth, and believing Him
- It sets us free
 - [John 8:31-32 ESV] [31] So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, [32] and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
 - Bible describes three aspects of salvation Being saved from the Penalty, Power, & Presence of sin
 - Jesus talking to brand new Christians
 - They are already saved from the PENALTY of sin, going to heaven
 - That comes from hearing the Truth and believing it
 - Jesus is describing to them how to be saved from the <u>POWER</u> of sin
 - Some believers never experience this → True discipleship
 - Jesus says If you abide (continue in, do not depart from, remain) in my word, you are truly my disciples (students / learners / followers), and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.
 - Living in the truth will free us from the POWER of sin
 - Truth \rightarrow Belief \rightarrow Values \rightarrow Decisions \rightarrow Actions
 - In Heaven, our salvation will be complete Saved from the PRESENCE of sin
- The way God speaks to us and shares truth is through His Word (Bible)
 - Called his "word" because he actually spoke these things
 - [Psalm 119:160 ESV] [160] The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.
 - God's word is truth and it lasts forever
 - [1 Peter 1:24-25 ESV] [24] for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, [25] but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.
 - Everything that originates from man is temporary
 - God's word is eternal
 - [Isaiah 55:8-11 ESV] [8] For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. [9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

- 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
 - o 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 <u>truth</u>.
 - 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
 - o 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
 - o People of faith from Hebrews 11 did not have blind faith

- Blind faith is believing something when we have no reason to believe that it is true
 - God spoke, and they believed Him
 - We aren't called to blind faith either
- God went to great lengths to preserve truth for us
 - Paul wrote the book of Galatians to the churches in the region of Galatia
 - About 6 months after bringing the Gospel to the region, the believers began to be led astray
 - Judaizers came in and told them that salvation was based on more than faith alone
 - They taught that it was also necessary to keep the law
 - Paul confronts them:
 - [Galatians 1:6-8 ESV] [6] I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- [7] not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. [8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.
 - Because he knows that it is 100% truth.
 - Rest of chapter 1, he explains that the Gospel he taught them was straight from God
 - [Galatians 1:11-12 ESV] [11] For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. [12] For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.
 - Jesus met him on the road to Damascus and revealed the Gospel to him directly
 - He explains how God eventually called him to go meet with the other Apostles, many years later:
 - [Galatians 2:1-2 ESV] [1] Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. [2] I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.
 - Remember that Paul is refuting the false teachers who were telling believers that they are still under the Law
 - [Galatians 2:3 ESV] [3] But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.
 - Paul demonstrates that the other Apostles agreed with his "Faith alone"
 Gospel
 - [Galatians 2:4-5 ESV] [4] Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in--who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery-- [5] to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.
 - First ever meeting of Paul with the other Apostles, and the enemy tried to pressure them into changing their message
 - If that had happened, then the gospel would not have been preserved for the Galatians, or for us.
 - Here's how Paul's meeting ended up:

- [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?"
 - o 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
 - o 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
- o 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