

Beginnings of Belief

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Opening Illustration

Larry King's greatest fear.

Introduction

To believe comes from the word *pisteuo* and it means to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to place confidence in, to trust in.

Belief in Jesus comes in different ways. We may know a believer whose life shows us somethings missing in ours. It may have been from our parents, or it may be a friend, a neighbour or a co-worker who first tells us about Jesus. God uses each of them to bring us closer in relationship to Him that transforms us.

Three Ways Belief Can Begin in Us

1. Cleopas believed when Scripture was opened

*He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them **what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.** Luke 24^{''}25-27*

These men were lost in grief as they walked home to Emmaus. Then a stranger appeared and opened the Scriptures to them about Jesus. Like a bright star that appears on a dark night they were mesmerized as they listened. The Word of God has that effect on us when we read it and discover the truth it contains.

*When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, “**Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?**” Luke 24:30-32*

Jesus broke bread and disappeared. He opened God’s Word to them, and this caused their hearts to be set ablaze. Their eyes were opened to the truth of God’s Word about Jesus and why He came to earth. Now they understood what they hadn’t before. Now His suffering and death made sense to them. It was in the Word all along. God’s Word is the greatest treasure ever and its hidden until our hearts and minds are opened to its truth.

Illustration

F. Schaeffer read the Bible and it came alive to him.

2. Thomas believed when doubt was satisfied.

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” John 20:24-25

Thomas loved the Lord and was willing to die for Him on one occasion. But at that moment, he needed proof that Jesus was alive.

There’s nothing wrong with having doubts, but they can keep us from moving forward in faith or coming to Christ. When Jesus showed him the proof he needed, he responded with immediate obedience. Yet Jesus also challenged His reluctance to believe. His message is for us too when we’re tempted to doubt.

Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe. believe.”²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” John 20:27-29

Friends it’s ok to have doubts and questions but don’t let them keep you from putting your faith completely in Christ.

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

Illustration

Josh McDowell set out to disprove Christianity and then believed.

3. Mary believed when Jesus called her name.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." John 20:11-13

Mary Magdalene had lived a sordid life having seven demons tormenting her day and night. Then she met Jesus and He set her free. In gratitude she followed Him and helped take care for His needs. She freely gave out of her love for Jesus. She came to the tomb on Easter Sunday to give Him a proper burial.

When she saw the empty tomb, she wept. Then Jesus came to reveal Himself to her. He called her by her name. Just one word and it was enough to turn her darkness into day, her sorrow into joy and her sense of loss into a sense of wonder! He simply said Mary and everything changed forever.

*...she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "**Mary**." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). John 20:14-16*

Has Jesus called you by name? For some, that profound personal greeting is all it takes to come to Him. He is not an impersonal God. The Bible says that He knows the plans He has for you, that your sins can be forgiven, and that He died for you because you matter to Him. He promises that He will never leave you nor forsake you. Before you were created in your mother's womb He knew you personally. And if you were the only person living on this earth Jesus would have died for you. He loves you that much!

Closing Illustration

He knows your name