

Session 3

WHOEVER BELIEVES

John 1:12-13; 3:16; Romans 1:16-17; 4:1-5

Memory Verse

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

– JOHN 3:16, CSB



Whoever Believes

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Scripture tells us anyone who believes in Jesus will be saved. There is no distinction—the gift of salvation through faith in Jesus is available to all people.

People who gamble place their faith in an outcome they have no control over. They put their money down and hope, fear, and stress over what will happen to that money because they are betting on something that may or may not happen. Nothing is ever a sure thing in the world of gambling but there are also ways that people “bet on things” without putting money down in any way.


When you sign a contract to work at a job, you are betting your career that it will be a good move. When you marry someone, you are betting that that’s the person you should spend your life with. When you choose what to eat for dinner, you are betting that the food you chose will fuel your body and do good things instead of bad things. When you bet on something you are putting your belief in it, and we do this all the time in many ways.

The idea of belief can be seen as betting your life on something or someone. When you really believe, you are betting your life on what or who you believe in. When you choose to believe in Jesus, you are betting your life on a sure thing. He is a winner, and He is victorious over all things. You never go wrong by placing your belief in Jesus and betting your life on Him as the only sure thing.



What are some things you have “bet on” in your life without gambling money?

 How would you compare the ideas of belief and betting?

 Would you say Jesus is a sure thing to bet your life on? Why or why not?

Session Summary

The message of the gospel is that salvation is a gift offered to anyone who believes in Jesus as Savior. It is for all who believe; we don't have to do any work to receive salvation. In fact, we can't do anything to earn salvation.

Although we can't earn salvation, once we are saved, there is a change that happens, and your life will display evidence that you now have a relationship with Christ. Believers should not be ashamed of the gospel but rather celebrate it and want to share the hope they have with others who need it.

1. Whoever Believes (John 3:16; 1:12-13)

Today's focus phrase of John 3:16 is "everyone who believes," and it packs a lot of punch into three common words. Previously John wrote that God loved the world. He used this to set up the motivation behind salvation. "Everyone who believes" refers to the recipients of that great love of God. Though God loves the whole world and Jesus died for the world, no one receives that love or benefits from it until they believe in Jesus.

The word *believe* carries more than just head knowledge of God or even a recognition of Jesus. It is about trusting in, relying on, and even "betting" your life on Jesus. That moves belief from an intellectual concept and applies it to daily life. In John 1, John shared that when we receive and believe in Jesus, we are blessed by God.

 Why is having a head knowledge about Jesus not enough? How does stopping at head knowledge fall short of full belief?

It was counter-cultural for the Jews to hear that anyone, whether Jew or not, could believe in Jesus and receive salvation. We also need the reminder that the gospel is for anyone. Sharing the gospel is not just about going to people who are like us but literally any person who needs Jesus. Everyone is qualified to receive the gospel because everyone needs Jesus.

According to John, those who receive Jesus become children of God. This is a reference to the new birth or being born again. Once you are part of the family of God, nothing and no one can remove you from it. When you believe and receive, you become a child of God and that includes all the rights and privileges of being in His family.

? What does it mean to be a child of God and part of His family? How does that change our lives?

John also made it clear that this new birth is not dependent on the flesh or works or will of man; it's all about God. The people of John's day believed they had to work for salvation—that they had to follow the law and do everything right to be justified. However, Jesus fulfilled the law when He became the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice. Though we may not be bound by the law today, there are still often misconceptions or just false beliefs that keep us from truly believing and receiving Jesus. The Bible makes it clear: anyone who believes and receives Jesus will be saved.

? Application: What has kept you from fully believing and receiving the true gospel message? How might you move beyond those obstacles today?

2. Belief and Righteousness (Romans 4:1-5)

This concept of faith through belief is a big deal. In Paul's letter to the Romans, he addressed this issue. He used the example of Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, who was highly esteemed by God's people.



What are some ways we try to work our way to salvation today?


If anyone could be justified or made right with God by their own works, Abraham might come close. But Paul made it clear that even Abraham, the father of God's people, could not be justified by his own works. When people try to work their way to salvation, it becomes something to boast about. This kind of boasting is about self, not God, and these kinds of efforts will always fall short of the glory of God. If it was possible for humans to work their way to salvation, then the cross would not have been necessary, and Jesus would have died for nothing.



Why is it insulting to Jesus's work on the cross for us to try to earn our way to salvation?

Paul made clear that Abraham was not declared righteous because of his works but because of his belief. Paul did not say Abraham was made righteous in everything that he did. He was man. He sinned and fell short of God's standard. Paul said Abraham was counted as righteous because he believed. Likewise, our justification is not based on our work of making ourselves righteous but that we are counted as righteous. Once we receive Jesus, God justifies us and begins making us righteous through the process of sanctification. As this happens, we see the difference in our daily lives. But we will still mess up. We will still sin, but we are in the process of being transformed to be more like Christ until we are finally united with Him for eternity.


Righteousness is a big concept that some people have a hard time wrapping their minds around. One simple description is "right living." When your faith is real and you have been changed by Jesus, you will be more focused on right living than worldly living. Right living is all about reflecting Jesus and the way He lived. It means not allowing your fleshly nature to rule your life but making choices and decisions in a way that lines up with your faith. The primary way to do that is to be increasingly immersed in God's Word. As we grow in understanding of God's Word and will, we are empowered by His Spirit to live in a way that gives God glory over ourselves. You are not saved by your works, but your salvation through belief in Christ will be evident in the way you live out your life.

 Application: What needs to change in your life for you to display your faith and live in righteousness?


3. Belief Blesses (Romans 1:16-17)

Righteous living looks very different than the world. If you are very good at fitting into the world—looking, acting, and talking just like this culture—you may not be living a life of righteousness. Right living is about making choices that please God and reflect Him to lost people so that they may be drawn to faith.


Rome was a center of power and influence in that day. It was big, sophisticated, glorious, and impressive. Paul wrote to the believers there that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus. In that day people were segregated into classes with only the upper classes being able to access certain things, but the gospel of Jesus was and is for anyone who believes. Anyone. It was not exclusive to the upper class or even to the Jews. Paul's heart was that no one in that day or in our day would be ashamed to share the good news that Jesus saves and all that is required is to receive and believe.

 What are reasons someone today might struggle to live unashamed of the gospel?

Paul next explained why we should never be ashamed to share this good news. He wrote that it is the “power of God for salvation” (v. 16). This reminds us that salvation is not about man's work or effort but is based on a crucified, perfect, sinless Savior. There is nothing we do to give the gospel power. The gospel is filled with power and our role is to not hinder that power as we share it effectively with the lost world. Power is a word that resonated in Rome. The entire Roman focus was on building an empire of power over the rest of the world. Today we also relate to the word power. The quest for power drives people to many things. We may fear or respect those who have power, but human power is fleeting. The gospel has inherent power that cannot be diminished by man, and God will not withhold that salvation-giving power from any who believe.

 What are some additional ways you can think of that the power found in the gospel differs from a worldly view of power?

Paul noted the pattern of the gospel being spread to the Jews and then the Gentiles. No one is restricted from receiving the good news of Jesus. His declaration that the righteous shall live by faith goes back to the concept we discussed regarding Abraham. When you believe and accept Jesus, you are declared righteous, and God looks at you as if you had never sinned. That is justification. A person who has truly accepted Jesus will live differently. We are not just saved by faith; we also live by faith. Do you trust Him Jesus every part of your life? Do people you work with or live near see you living out your faith? Does your faith affect your daily decisions? A person who lives by faith naturally expresses that faith in every part of their daily lives.


 Application: What do you need to do differently to further live by faith every day?


Conclusion

John 3:16 makes it clear that God loved the whole world and offers salvation as a gift to anyone who believes. We do not have to earn this gift or work our way to it; belief is the key. Everyone has a choice to believe and receive Jesus or not. The role of those who have believed in Him is to share the good news of the gospel with everyone we encounter. We do not pick and choose who comes to Jesus. He offered Himself as the sacrifice for everyone, and we need to share this life changing truth with everyone.

Once we receive and believe, our lives should reflect that. We do not and cannot work our way to salvation. Even the most esteemed leaders of the faith aren't justified by their works. The Bible emphatically states that we are only justified by our faith in Christ. Regardless of what culture or religious traditions teach, faith comes through receiving and believing Jesus.

Finally, we should never be ashamed of the gospel. Our lives should be lived by faith that will stand out in the world. We show our love for Jesus and are unashamed when we choose right living daily that honors Him.

 Who have you resisted sharing the gospel with because you think they will reject it or you?

 How have you failed to live consistently with the things you claim to believe? What will you do differently?

 How will you live unashamed of Jesus this week? Who will you seek to have a gospel conversation with?

Here's How to Become a Christ-Follower:

Read the following verses and ask after each one: "What does this say to me?"

- **All have sinned:** Romans 3:23 & 1 John 1:8
- **The wages of sin:** Romans 6:23 & John 3:18
- **But while we were sinners, salvation was provided:** Romans 5:8
- **Become a Christ-follower:** Romans 10:9-10 Confess and Believe

Accepting Christ is Just the Beginning:

Next Steps:

- Publicly profess your faith by being baptized (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 3:21; Romans 6:4).
- Join a church which follows the Bible, where you can grow in your faith through prayer, Bible study and fellowship with other Christians.
- Get involved in groups for encouragement and accountability.
- Begin a daily personal worship experience with God where you study the Bible and pray.
- Share with others what Jesus has done for you. Tell your story (Romans 10:14; Matthew 28:19-20).
- Begin to live for God (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; James 1:19-27).



FOR NEXT WEEK

Eternal Life

Main Passages

- John 3:16; Colossians 3:1-4; John 10:24-30

Session Outline

1. Eternal Promise (John 3:16-21)
2. Eternal Focus (Colossians 3:1-4)
3. Eternal Security (John 10:24-30)

Memorize

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

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