July 2, 2017

Series: Keys to Life-Giving Relationships

**Life-giving Belief**

John 12:37-50

***Growth Track Step 1 today …***

**Intro:** July 4th - when people founded this nation they were looking for a better life … They lived lives of honor, many of them giving their lives to give us the life we enjoy in America today.

Many of them shared this belief that we are speaking of today, so we honor them by continuing to spread this belief and living a lifestyle according to this belief.

As we started this series we said we believe in and talk a lot here about life-giving relationships. Not all relationships are life-giving, so we want to provide people with opportunities to enter into relationships that will bring them life and not death - encouragement not discouragement - joy not despair.

Keys to Life-Giving Relationships -

**John 12:1-11 - Extravagant Desire is a key to a Life-Giving Relationship.**

God has an extravagant desire for you, and He wants us to return the desire.

**John 12:12-29 - We’ve got great life-giving news that leads to a great relationship!**

**John 12:20-36 - Our relationship with Jesus is a relationship of honor.**

**Big Idea: Belief is required for this life-giving relationship.**

If you don’t really believe in someone, how can you have a real, genuine, healthy, life-giving relationship with that person?

The same is true in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

**T.S.:** In this passage we see three stages people might be on regarding belief in Jesus.

**1. Blind Unbelief**

John 12:37-41 - But despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, most of the people still did not believe in him. This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted: “Lord, who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?”

But the people couldn’t believe, for as Isaiah also said, “The Lord has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts— so that their eyes cannot see, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and have me heal them.”

Isaiah was referring to Jesus when he said this, because he saw the future and spoke of the Messiah’s glory.

Romans 9-11 - Paul explains God still has a plan for the jewish people, but explains why they have such a hard time believing in Jesus -

Romans 9:31-32 - But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him. They stumbled over the great rock in their path.

They failed to trust! He was right there in their path, but they stumbled over Him instead of believing in Him.

This is Tree of Life vs. Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil … trying to get right with God by what we do, vs. believing and being right with God and doing right things as a result …

Romans 10 Paul wrote they heard and understood the message of how to be right with God. He wrote they heard and understood God’s plan for them to receive eternal life. They just rejected it. They refused to believe.

This is still true for many today … they just have a hard time believing …

Because the Jewish people failed to believe, and persecuted the first messengers - they went to the non-Jewish world - and that is why there are Christians all over the world today!

No one has to refuse to believe - no one has to remain blind - anyone can believe -

Romans 10:11-13 - As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

That includes you! That includes me! We can believe!

I pray that anyone here who is blind, not believing, thinking they can’t believe, would be changed. May the Lord open your eyes so that you can see!

* Maybe you are blinded by the stuff this world offers - there are some things you are afraid you will have to give up - you don’t want to - so you refuse to believe in Jesus even though you know His story is true …
* Maybe you are blinded by false teaching - false ideas - things you have been told in the past about Jesus, faith, and religion that simply aren’t true. You need correct teaching to open your eyes.
* Maybe you are blinded by past hurts. How can Jesus be a God of love if He let me experience the things I have experienced -

Jesus didn’t do those things to you. We live in a world gone backward because of sin. Don’t blame Jesus for what’s happened to you. He loves you and wants to heal you. He wants to give you freedom from those past hurts!

**2. Secret Belief**

John 12:42-43 - Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn’t admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.

Among these were a man named Nicodemus …

Another named Joseph from Arimathea …

Many people say faith is a private thing - their faith is very personal - it is - Faith is a very personal and private thing that at some point must go public.

And when Jesus died on the cross, and Nicodemus and Joseph knew that He had fulfilled all the prophecies - they knew He was the One sent from God - they knew they had to go public -

So they went to take Jesus’s body from the cross - and within hours of the biggest Jewish holiday of all, Passover, they held Jesus’ body in their arms - beaten, blood drying all over, body cold and turning yellow & blue - they knew He was the Son of God. His blood was now on their robes. They knew their old way of life was unclean and unacceptable - but by putting their faith in Jesus and the sacrifice He had just made, they were pure, whole, clean and free in a way their religion could never make them!

They came out - they came out in the open as believers in Jesus. No more secret disciples. They became willing to risk their lives and their closest relationships to identify with Jesus. They wouldn’t hide it any more. They no longer cared about the praise of men, they wanted honor & life from God.

If you are really going to follow Jesus and be in this life-giving relationship with Him, you must believe openly -

Baptism …

Mark 8:34-48 - Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

That pretty much says it all -

Psalm 68:34 - Tell everyone about God’s power…

Psalm 96:3 - …Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

Psalm 105:2 - …Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds.

Colossians 1:28 - So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ.

We must tell everyone … this is for you - you are to tell people about Jesus.

This is evidence of the third level of belief -

**3. Sufficient Belief**

John 12:44-50 - Jesus shouted to the crowds, “If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me. For when you see me, you are seeing the one who sent me. I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark. I will not judge those who hear me but don’t obey me, for I have come to save the world and not to judge it. But all who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken. I don’t speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it. And I know his commands lead to eternal life; so I say whatever the Father tells me to say.”

We must believe fully in Jesus because:

* **Believing in Jesus is believing in God.**

“When you see me you are seeing the one who sent me… I don’t speak on my own authority … The Father …”

* **Jesus is the pathway to enlightenment.**

John 12:46 - I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark.

So many have looked in so many places for enlightenment and answers and remain empty. Why don’t you look into Jesus, He’s got the answer!

Greeks came to see Jesus - when you’ve seen Jesus, you’ve seen the Father - God!

When you believe in Jesus, you’ve believed in God!

When you receiving Jesus’ teaching & truth, you are receiving the truth of God!

John 8:12 - Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”

His light - His truth - is life-giving - if you believe it!

* **Sufficient belief leads to being saved, not being judged.**

John 12:47-48 - …I have come to save the world and not to judge it. But all who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken.

He doesn’t want you to be judged -

John 5:24 - I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

John 3:17 - God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

- **Jesus’ message is God’s message.**

John 12:49-50 MSG - I’m not making any of this up on my own. The Father who sent me gave me orders, told me what to say and how to say it. And I know exactly what his command produces: real and eternal life. That’s all I have to say. What the Father told me, I tell you.

Jesus is saying, “Trust me. Understand me. Get to know me. Hear me. Believe in me - and you will have eternal life.”

**Concl:** Belief, or believe, is used 92 times in this book. It’s the heart and soul of the book. It is what the book is all about.

Have you believed?

Will you believe?

If you are believing - who are you telling?