

Sunday March 5th WCBC

Choosing to Believe the Truth

Proposition: Everyone lives by faith in something. Faith in God however is about finding out what is actually true, what He has said, and choosing to believe it.

One of the things that I have really enjoyed in ministry is marriage counselling. So many kiwi's counsel their friends who are struggling by saying; just do what your heart tells you, just do what feels right to you. And yet I would say to those couples looking for help; don't trust your feelings. Some days you will eat too much pizza or have a bad night's sleep and you won't feel like loving anyone. Sometimes your feelings are an echo of previous hurtful life experiences. Kiwi's say trust your feelings, follow your heart, faith however requires us to do something very different. Instead of trusting feelings which often lie to us, faith requires us to believe what God says about life and about us over our feelings. You may not feel confident, you may not feel worthy, you may not feel loved or loveable but God says you can do all things through Christ Jesus, He says you are worthy, you belong, because he says it and that He enjoys you just how you are, it shouldn't matter what others think. And, so this morning we are going to touch on the battle of the mind. Echoes of the past, and feelings that often cannot be trusted. However there is a God in heaven who made you, who believes in you, who knows you better than you know yourself and what He says is true, and so this morning I want to encourage you to daily choose to believe Him over anything else you think or feel.

In Hebrews 11:6 it says

“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.”

When your feelings disagree with what God's Word says, it's time to exercise faith and believe God's Word over feelings.

In the letter to the church in Rome Paul wrote that nothing can separate us from the love of God. That's true. God's love does not change according to what you do but your life does. The authority you walk in, your spiritual growth, your maturity, your freedom and joy as a Christian will depend on this; are to daily believing what God has said and applying that to what you confess with your mouth and how you live your life?

When we see a Christian, who is helping many get saved, or who is blessed in business or who is seeing miracles around them daily; what do we do? We buy the book or we watch the video. That's of some value but what is of more value is to see how they apply faith daily in their lives and to try to imitate that.

Hebrews 13:7 (CEV)

⁷ Don't forget about your leaders who taught you God's message. Remember what kind of lives they lived and try to have faith like theirs.

Living a Holy Spirit filled, dynamic Christian life where God events happen all the time is not about how much you know or whose ministry you have sat under, its primarily about how you are living by faith one day at a time.

What is faith?

Choosing to believe what is *already* true!

If you find the will of God through the Bible or through revelation, choose to believe it, but don't try to make things happen that are not God's will. Don't try to put your own opinion or mingle your own thoughts with faith.

Some 30 years ago a lot of Christians, like me bought "The Sacred Diaries of Adrian Plass". Does anybody remember those? They were really Adrian Plass's reflections on how stupid and misguided Christians can be when it comes to applying faith.

Monday January the 6th

Bought a really good book on faith. It's called "Goodness Gracious – in God's name, what on earth are we doing for Heaven's sake?" A very witty title I feel.

It's all about how Christians should be able to move mountains by faith, if they are really tuned into God. Very inspiring.

Waited 'till there was no one around, then practiced with a paper clip. Put it on my desk and stared at it, willing it to move. Nothing! Tried commanding it in a loud voice.

Tuesday January 7th

Had another go with the paper-clip tonight. Really took authority over it. Couldn't get it to budge.

Told God I'd give up anything He wanted, if he would just move it move half an inch. Nothing!

All rather worrying really. If you only need faith the size of a mustard seed to move a mountain, what hope is there for me when it can't even get a paper-clip to do what it's told.

Saturday January 11

Got up early today to have a last go at the blasted paper-clip. Ended up hissing viciously at it, trying not to wake everybody up. When I gave up and opened the door I found Anne and Gerald listening outside in their night-clothes, looking quite anxious.

Anne said, "Darling, why did you tell the paper-clip you would straighten it up if it didn't get its damned act together?"

What a crazy Christian? What do we learn from Adrian's diarying of the paper-clip? Simply this, God had never said, Adrian, pray that the paper-clip would move, therefore what he was doing wasn't faith, and not surprisingly nothing happened.

Whether faith works depends on what or whom you believe in.

I believed that when I sat on my pew this morning it wouldn't collapse. I believed as I drove through the green light as I came over the bridge this morning that the cars on the other side of the intersection had red lights and would not side swipe me. Everyone has faith, even the person who says they don't believe in God needs faith to make that statement. The issue is, is what you are believing in true?

One of the most outrageous events in world history is recorded in 1 Kings 18. The prophet Elijah vs the prophets of Baal. Altars are built, sacrifices are put on the altar, both Elijah and the prophets of Baal believed that their God/gods would send down fire and consume the altar. The prophets of Baal had no success while Elijah's God sent the fire. Both religions represented that day believed, they both had faith, but Elijah's faith was based on a God that was real, it was based on reality and so His faith alone was effective.

That is why Jesus said in Matthew 17:20 that you only need faith the size of a mustard seed to move mountains. You see it doesn't depend on how much faith you have, but on whom you put your faith in. It's not your power that moves the paper-clip or the mountain – it's God's.

And if God said it, its true. He doesn't change.

Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)

⁸ *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

So, if everyone has faith, and they do, but some faith is based on lies or wrong imaginings, or changeable feelings and some is based on the truth, then Jesus is the ultimate object of faith because He doesn't change and He is the truth. Therefore, faith focused on Him will work, it will bring about results because its faith based on truth!

How many of you here would like to increase your faith, for your faith to be more effective?

I think we all want that don't we.

The point is growing your faith is not about trying harder to conjure something mystical up in us so that we can do miracles.

If you and I want our faith to increase, then the key to doing that is to get to know better the One that we are putting our faith in.

How much faith we have will be determined by how well we know the One we are putting our faith in!

Jesus is the Truth. Therefore, faith is choosing to believe daily in what He has done and in what God has said. God never gave humanity the option of making up what they believe. Oh, hey mate. Faith is whatever works for you. Not!

God is truth and it's his role to reveal truth, our role is to choose to believe truth.

How can you grow your faith?

I believe that every time you hear the word preached, taught at a bible study or on a CD in your car or you read it on your phone. The more truth you hear and you receive, the more you chose to believe what truths God has revealed to you, the more your faith will grow.

Faith comes though not just through hearing, that's the starting point but it also comes through acting.

This is a very generous church and I bet for so many of you there have been multiple occasions you felt led of God to give to a need in the church or in missions when it was a real stretch to do so. What happened when you did? God turned up, that's what happened. He revealed a need or asked you to do something stretching; pray for that person, share with this one, help that stranger and when you stepped out in faith in response to what God had revealed to you, something supernatural and exciting happened and your faith grew.

I know lots of Christians who were set free of their victimhood type mentality by simply believing what the bible says

Deuteronomy 28:13

The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.

I know of Christians who have experienced supernatural recovery from sickness by simply believing

Psalms 118:17

I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.

God has given them that scripture as a revelation to them, a rhema word to them and they have believed it and gotten better.

I know Christians who have gotten over their fear of public speaking and leading from the front in their organisations by simply believing what God says about them in

2 Timothy 1:7

God's Spirit doesn't make cowards out of us. The Spirit gives us power, love, and self-control.

You need to hear the Word and then you need to act on it irrespective of what you feel. You believe it and act according to it.

I remember little AJ when I first asked her to jump off our bed and I would catch her. She might have been about 18 months. Before she jumped she would put one or two hands on me, so that if I didn't catch her she could save herself from, hitting the floor. I told her I would catch her but she wasn't sure if I would and she did this very tentative type of jump while in contact with me. After she had jumped half a dozen times she stopped holding me as she jumped. Now two years' later she so believes me when I say I will catch her. She asks me to step back over two metres and she will just launch herself at me and I have to step forward to catch her because her faith in me is so great. She has come to trust my words and act in faith, as she has acted in faith her faith has grown and grown. So, to with your faith in Jesus, hear it, then keep acting on it and your faith will grow.

I think the scariest story in the bible is when God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son and Abraham is willing to do it, then God provides the lamb at the last minute. I marvel at Abraham's faith, I cannot imagine having faith so great and yet he didn't just happen to have that faith, Abraham had spent a life time learning to hear what God wanted him to do and then doing it and finding out that God was faithful.

Something I have learnt about marriage counselling is that people shouldn't follow their feelings in marriage, they should do what is right. If they start with God's truth, doing things His way, then their feelings will follow, follow their feelings and they could end up anywhere.

People don't always live according to what they say they believe, but they will always live according to what they actually believe.

The good news is that there is no one here who cannot become a more mature and effective Christian. There is no one here who is unable to resist temptation. There is no one here who cannot break free of depression and hopelessness. There is no one here who cannot break negative behaviours or get free of past hurts. No one! For those things to happen we don't need a special evangelist with a special anointing. You don't

need to learn how to move the paper-clip. For those things to happen you and I need to learn what is true and choose daily to believe it.

Twenty "CANS" of success – by Steve Goss

1. Why should I say 'I can't when the Bible says that I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength (Phil 4:13)?
2. Why should I live in poverty when I know that God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19)?
3. Why should I fear when the bible says God has not given me the spirit of fear; but of power, love and a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7)?
4. Why should I lack faith to fulfil my calling when I know that God has given me the measure of faith that I need already (Rom 12:3)?
5. Why should I be weak when the Bible says that the Lord is the strength of my life and I will display strength and take action because I know God (Psalm 27:1; Dan 11:32)?
6. Why should I allow Satan authority over my life when I know that greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4)?
7. Why should I accept defeat when the Bible says that God will always lead me in triumph (2 Cor 2:14)?
8. Why should I lack wisdom when Christ has become wisdom for me and when God gives wisdom to me when I ask Him for it (1 Cor 1:30; James 1:5)?
9. Why should I feel depressed when I can call to mind God's loving kindness, compassion and faithfulness and have hope (Lam 3:21-23)?
10. Why should I worry or fret when I can cast all my anxiety on Christ who cares for me (1 Peter 5:7)?
11. Why should I ever be in bondage knowing that, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor 3:17; Gal 5:1)?
12. Why should I feel condemned when the Bible says I am not condemned because I am 'in Christ' (Rom 8:1)?
13. Why should I feel alone, when Jesus said He is with me always and he will never leave me or forsake me (Matt 28:20; Heb 13:5)?
14. Why should I feel cursed or the victim of bad luck when the Bible says that Jesus has saved me from the curse of the Law so that I might receive His Spirit (Gal 3:13,14)?
15. Why should I be discontented when I, like Paul, can learn to be content in all my circumstances ((Phil 4:11)?
16. Why should I feel worthless when Christ became sin on my behalf that I might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor 5:21)?
17. Why should I have a persecution complex knowing that nobody can be against me when God is for me ((Rom 8:31)?
18. Why should I be confused when God is the author of peace and He gives me knowledge through His Spirit in me (1 Cor 14:33; 2:12)?
19. Why should I feel like a failure when I am a conqueror in all things through Christ (Rom 8:37)?

20. Why should I let the pressure of this world overwhelm me when I know that Jesus has overcome the world and its tribulations (John 16:33)?