

Belief in John's Gospel **John Hepp, Jr.**

John's Gospel never uses the Greek noun for "faith." However, it uses the verb for "believe" far more (98 times) than any other New Testament book. Consider some facts about believing as seen in this "Gospel of Belief."

1. John often shows that believing is the only way to get eternal life:
1:11-13; 3:15-16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 11:25-26; 17:20; 20:31.

The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent. (6:29)

To those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (1:12)

2. John implies that effective believing is more than a mental acceptance of facts. Note some equivalents to believing in Messiah.

Receive Him: 1:11; 5:43 (cf. receive the one He sends: 13:20)

Drink the water He gives: 4:14

Come to Him: 5:40; 6:44

Eat and drink Him: 6:50-58

Follow Him: 8:12

Die, not love life but hate it: 12:24-26

Love Him: 14:21-24

In 12:24-26 the Lord applies to His followers the law of His own life. As in Matthew 16:24-26 and Luke 14:26-27, true faith in Him involves a new attitude toward the world and toward ourselves.

Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man **who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life**. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.

3. John shows that for Jesus' close followers believing was not once-for-all but repeated and growing.

Some of their earliest statements of faith are in 1:41 (Andrew, "'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ)'" and 1:49 (Nathaniel, "'You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.'"). But watch their faith grow as the evidence comes in:

2:11 After His first sign at Cana, "his disciples put their faith in him."

2:22 "After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled....Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken."

11:15 He told His disciples, "For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe."

11:40 He told Martha, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

14:1 He exhorted the eleven disciples, "Trust in God; trust also in me."

14:10-11 Talking to the eleven: “Don’t you believe?...Believe me...believe...”
 14:29 To the eleven, “I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.”
 16:30 The eleven say, “Now we can see that you know all things....This makes us believe that you came from God.”
 16:31 Jesus responds to v. 30: “You believe at last!” (or He questions it, KJV).
 20:8 “The other disciple...went inside [the empty tomb]. He saw and believed.”
 20:25,27,29 Thomas says: Unless I see and touch Him, “I will not believe it.”
 Jesus appears, tells him to touch Him, then says, “Stop doubting and believe.”
 After Thomas’s confession, “then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”

Chapter 9 illustrates the birth and growth of faith. Note the stages in verses 7, 11-12, 15-17, 24-34, and 35-38.

4. John gives several examples of defective faith.
 - 2:23-25 “In Jerusalem...many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them....”
 - 3:2; 11-12 Nicodemus claimed, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God.” Jesus countered, “You people do not accept our testimony.... You do not believe.”
 - 6:14-15, 26-27 Many confessed that Jesus was the Prophet and wanted to make Him King, because they ate the bread He had multiplied.
 - 6:67-71 The Twelve confessed His Messiahship, but one of them was a devil.
 - 8:30-47 “Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him. To the Jews who had believed in him Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” When they objected to His language, He proceeded to show that they were yet “slaves to sin” (v. 34) and “belong to your father the devil” (v. 44). Twice He said they did not believe Him (vv. 45, 46); they did “not belong to God” (v. 47).
 - 12:42-43 “Many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear....for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.”