

True Belief!

I know this now. Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she believes. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing yet give their lives to that little or nothing. One life is all we have and we live it as we believe in living it. And then it is gone. But to sacrifice what you are and live without belief, that's more terrible than dying. – Joan of Arc

Some people don't believe in much and so their lives don't end up meaning much, but whatever you do believe – great or small – will guide what you do with your life. Joan of Arc knew that living her life for God was the only real way to live at all.

The Bible tells us that to live for God means we are to do two things: 1) spread the good news of how Jesus Christ has made it possible for us to be with God, and 2) do good deeds by caring for those around us. This week we will learn how we can put our belief in God into practice in our lives.

Monday – A Comforting Message

"Compassion costs. It is easy enough to argue, criticize and condemn, but redemption is costly, and comfort draws from the deep. Brains can argue, but it takes heart to comfort." Samuel Chadwick

1. Please read Isaiah 61:1-7. To whom is Isaiah's message speaking? Why would they find his message so comforting?
2. Verses 1-3 seem to speak to the individual listener. What is promised to him/her? What is promised to the community as a whole in verses 4-7?
3. How might these blessings to God's people, both as individuals and as a community, lead them to serve others and tell others the news of what God has done?

Prayer Focus: Pray for FBC; for individuals and the Church community as a whole. Ask God to help us realize the great work God has done on our behalf and that we will respond with good news and good deeds on behalf of others.

Tuesday – A Message from the Comforter

"If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth..." C.S. Lewis

1. Please read Luke 4:14-21. What is significant about Jesus' choice of scripture? Thinking back to Monday's questions, what is significant about Jesus' comments?
2. Read Luke 24:26-32, 44-48. What impresses you about Jesus' relationship with Scripture?
3. Read John 1:1-2 and 2 Peter 1:20-21. Where did the prophecies about Jesus come from? What does this tell you about the nature of Jesus' sacrifice as he discussed in Luke 24:46-47?

Making it Personal: Consider the sacrifice Jesus made. Why he did it for *you*. Ask the Lord to open up your eyes to the opportunities to tell others what he has done for you (Luke 24:48).

Wednesday – Adding it All Up

"And so all growth that is not towards God is growing to decay." George MacDonald, 19th c. pastor/writer

1. Please read 2 Peter 1:3-12. According to verse 3, what is the source of everything we need to live for God? How does this take the pressure off you?
2. What qualities are we to add to our faith in verses 5-7? How do the first five qualities focus on our own growth in God and the last two on our relationships with others?

Text Insight: Peter does not begin by telling his readers to add faith to their lives because he knew that faith is received only as a gift from God, impossible to obtain by our own will or efforts. (Ephesians 2:8-9.)

3. Peter warns against ineffective and unproductive knowledge (v.8). How can knowledge be unproductive?

Making it Personal: How can you add goodness, knowledge, etc., to your faith so that your knowledge of Jesus is productive and effective not only in your life but also in the lives of those around you?

Thursday – Belief that Works

"Faith is reason grown courageous." Sherwood Eddy, 19th-20th c. American writer and evangelist

1. Please read James 2:1-13. What should be our attitude toward those in need? Why?
2. Now look at James 2:14-26 and 4:17. What actions should we take when we see a need? What is wrong with relying on belief alone, according to James 2:19?
3. How does James 2:26 complement the truth of 2 Peter 1:8-11?

Making it Personal: Ask the Lord to open up your eyes to the opportunities to serve those around you, and for the strength to follow through.

Friday – Naomi, Ruth and Boaz: Faith in Action

"Do not merely listen to the word [of God] Do what it says." James 1:22

1. Please read Ruth 1:1-22. How did Ruth and Naomi serve each other?
2. Now continue with Ruth 2:1-23. How did Boaz serve both Ruth and Naomi? Why would he do so?
3. In Ruth 3:1-18, what did Naomi and Ruth hope Boaz would ultimately do for them?
4. How did the nearer relative fail to live out a faith in God in Ruth 4:1-12? Why did he choose to do so (v.6)? Now look at Ruth 4:13-22. How did God honor the faith that Naomi, Ruth and Boaz exercised?

Text Insights: 1) Being a kinsman-redeemer was a serious responsibility to take care of your family, even those distantly related. 2) Spreading the cloak over Ruth as she slept was a sign of protection.

For the Weekend: Read James 4:17, 2 Peter 1:3-12 and James 2:14-26, and consider how God is calling you to live out your faith in what you say and in what you do.