

Sermon for May 5, 2024

Back Roads Church

Series: I BELIEVE

Text: II Corinthians 13:15; Proverbs 15:14, 12:19; Romans 7:20, 10:9, 14:23; I Corinthians 16:13; James 2:20, 4:17; John 5:24, 8:31-32

Title: "What Do I Believe?"

Introduction: WELCOME, BACK ROADS CHURCH! Glad you're with us TODAY as we KICK OFF **"I BELIEVE"!** Well, I BELIEVE it is IMPORTANT to KNOW WHAT we BELIEVE! What do I BELIEVE? WHAT are those BELIEFS BASED ON? HOW should I ACT? HOW do I LIVE? Do MY BELIEFS MATTER? WHAT'S the DIFFERENCE?

Well, WHAT we BELIEVE DOES MATTER. What we BELIEVE will DETERMINE HOW we LIVE / THINK ... about our MONEY / CAREERS / RELATIONSHIPS / LIFE. That seems PRETTY IMPORTANT. SO ...

Over the next FEW WEEKS, we are going to DIG DEEP at WHAT we BELIEVE and WHY. And we are going to UTILIZE a TOOL or TWO to HELP us GET THERE.

Now, WHAT we BELIEVE as HUMANS is IMPORTANT, BUT ... As FOLLOWERS of JESUS, it is VITALLY IMPORTANT to KNOW our BELIEFS. Do you KNOW WHY? BECAUSE there are SO MANY CONFLICTING BELIEFS OUT THERE!

This is NOT NEW! Back in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd CENTURIES, people had OPINIONS. And EVERYONE who had an OPINION was RIGHT. Let me know if this sounds familiar. AND, because CHRISTIANITY was SPREADING RAPIDLY, people had OPINIONS about JESUS.

Some SAID HE was a GOOD TEACHER / PROPHET. Some said HE was JUST a HUMAN. OTHERS said He was a MYTH / MIRAGE. Still OTHERS said HE was the GOD of the NEW TESTAMENT as OPPOSED to the GOD of the Old Testament. MANY BELIEVED He did NOT come BACK to LIFE in a RESURRECTED BODY.

SO, in THIS SERIES, we're going to USE an ANCIENT TOOL or TWO to HELP us CLARIFY WHAT we BELIEVE. Let's START with THE APOSTLES CREED. The word **"CREED"** comes from the LATIN, **"CREDO,"** which means **"I BELIEVE."** The APOSTLES CREED (and The Nicene Creed) / WHAT we BELIEVE about JESUS as the CENTRAL PILLAR of CHRISTIANITY.

Before we go FURTHER with CREEDS, to be CLEAR, The APOSTLES CREED is NOT SCRIPTURE ... but it is FULLY BASED on SCRIPTURE. The APOSTLES NOR The NICENE CREEDS STRAY from BIBLICAL HOLINESS. They are TRUSTWORTHY and have STOOD the TEST of TIME. ALL CREEDS should be TESTED with GOD'S WORD.

Today, The APOSTLES CREED. An "APOSTLE" is ONE who is SENT OUT. This is about JESUS EARLIEST FOLLOWERS / Disciples ... the TWELVE (one replacement) and The APOSTLE PAUL who had a PERSONAL ENCOUNTER with JESUS. The APOSTLES did NOT WRITE this CREED, but it is BASED on what they TAUGHT by the Power of JESUS' SPIRIT. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE shows The Apostles Creed was FIRST WRITTEN down in a way STILL FAMILIAR to US TODAY around 150AD, LIKELY in ROME. It was WRITTEN just over 100 YEARS after JESUS' DEATH / Resurrection and about 50 YEARS AFTER the LAST APOSTLE DIED.

After The APOSTLES died, CHRISTIANITY continued to SPREAD RAPIDLY. WITH a POWERFUL MOVEMENT comes PUSH-BACK from THOSE who DON'T UNDERSTAND

IT. So, there CAME MANY FALSE TEACHINGS about JESUS, LIKE ... He was NOT HUMAN, or He was NOT the SON of GOD, and HE NEVER came BACK to LIFE.

Well, THESE TEACHINGS and OTHERS did NOT AGREE with what The APOSTLES had TAUGHT. The APOSTLES CREED was used to DISTINGUISH between AGREED UPON, FIRST-HAND TRUTH and HERESIES (non-Truths). The Apostles Creed SUMMARIZES the most FUNDAMENTAL and CHRISTIAN BELIEFS about GOD, taught by JESUS and RECORDED by the APOSTLES. It would help DISTINGUISH between BELIEVERS and NON-BELIEVERS.

So, over the next FEW WEEKS, we're using the APOSTLES CREED to REMIND US OF what The APOSTLES (those who spent TIME with Jesus and were PERSONALLY SENT OUT by JESUS) BELIEVED. **TODAY is an INTRODUCTION and EXAMINATION ... an EXAMINATION of the BASIC QUESTIONS of LIFE.** What we BELIEVE DETERMINES our LIVES /PERSPECTIVES / RELATIONSHIPS / ETERNITIES. So, LET'S ASK FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS about our BELIEFS:

Four Questions of Belief:

#1 = What Do I BELIEVE?

This SEEMS like a SIMPLE Question, but MANY NEVER STOP and ASK IT. Many have NO IDEA WHY they THINK and ACT like they DO. More TROUBLING ... MANY who CLAIM CHRISTIANITY do NOT take TIME to ASK THIS QUESTION. They just FIGURE they will BELIEVE what they're TOLD to BELIEVE by their PARENTS / PRIESTS / PUBLIC ... *"I'll just BELIEVE what EVERYONE ELSE BELIEVES!"*

But the BIBLE says we SHOULD ASK this QUESTION CONSTANTLY ... **2**
CORINTHIANS 13:5 = Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.

Let's use these next few weeks as a FAITH TEST / SPIRITUAL CHECK-UP. NOT KNOWING what we BELIEVE is DANGEROUS. IF we do NOT KNOW what we BELIEVE, we have NOT BASIS for our IMPORTANT DECISIONS / knowing RIGHT from WRONG / TRUTH from FALSE ... we MAKE DECISIONS based on our CIRCUMSTANCES and what OTHERS DO. We kinda MAKE IT UP as we GO.

Have you EVER gone GROCERY SHOPPING? IF I use a GROCERY LIST (from Sarah), I DO WELL. I want to CONQUER that LIST. I GET what's ON the LIST! BUT if I GO W/OUT a LIST, I come HOME with 4 BAGS of CHIPS, some DIP and at LEAST a GALLON of ICE CREAM ... INSTEAD of what I REALLY NEED!

Think about WHAT you BELIEVE as a GROCERY LIST. Your BELIEFS SERVE as a COMPASS for your LIFE / SETS the COURSE ... HELPS GET what you REALLY NEED! BELIEVE in MONEY / SUCCESS as MOST IMPORTANT, those things will DETERMINE every STEP / DECISION of LIFE ... Relationships / Career / Family, etc. If GOD is MOST IMPORTANT, you make DECISIONS for LIFE based on THOSE ASSUMPTIONS.

Worst case SCENARIO = NO IDEA what I BELIEVE! Then you TAKE every STEP of LIFE W/OUT PURPOSE or DIRECTION. Over the NEXT few WEEKS, let's go after WHAT we BELIEVE and SET a COURSE for LIFE. But there are MORE Questions ...

#2 = On What Are Your BELIEFS BASED?

This TAKES us BEYOND WHAT we BELIEVE and MOVES us to WHY we BELIEVE what WE BELIEVE. This is IMPORTANT / FOUNDATIONAL. What are MY BELIEFS BASED ON? WHY do I THINK and DO the THINGS I THINK and DO? WE should THINK about this BECAUSE ...

PROVERBS 15:14 = A wise person is hungry for knowledge, while the fool feeds on trash. The IMPLICATION / TRANSLATION of “KNOWLEDGE” is LEARNING God’s TRUTH. Are the THINGS you BELIEVE about YOURSELF / LIFE / GOD based on ETERNAL TRUTHS or TEMPORARY TRASH?

Jesus talked about our LIVES being BUILT on ROCK or SAND, and IF we BUILD on SAND / TRASH, when the STORMS of LIFE HIT, our LIVES CRUMBLE. We NEED a FIRM FOUNDATION to BUILD our LIVES ON ... something that will LAST / INTEGRITY / TESTED TRUTH, or our LIVES will CRUMBLE. Back to PROVERBS ... out LOUD ... **PROVERBS 12:19 = Truthful words stand the test of time, but lies are soon exposed.**

As Christians, we BELIEVE The BIBLE is our SOURCE for ETERNAL TRUTH ... it has STOOD the TEST of TIME and STILL SPEAKS CLEARLY in our WORLD TODAY. But MOST AMERICANS are NOT CONVINCED. 44% BELIEVE the BIBLE, BOOK of MORMON, and The KORAN all POINT to the SAME TRUTH. Never mind they ALL say COMPLETELY DIFFERENT THINGS about what is TRUE. 55% of Americans believe they can DISCOVER TRUTH through HUMAN REASONING and LIFE EXPERIENCES.

When WE have OPINIONS, we need to ask: **“BASED on WHAT?”** You believe that ... WHY? BECAUSE I FOUND it on the INTERNET. Because EVERYONE BELIEVES THAT! BECAUSE my MOM always SAID... Are THOSE REASONS GOOD ENOUGH? ARE they GOOD GUIDANCE for TODAY, and will they MATTER in ETERNITY?

We NEED to know WHAT we BELIEVE and WHY, but there’s MORE ...

#3 = Do My BEHAVIORS Match My BELIEFS?

DO I LIVE IT? Is my LIFE CONSISTENT with what I SAY I BELIEVE? INTEGRITY comes when MY BEHAVIORS MATCH UP with what I BELIEVE. I don’t know IF you’ve NOTICED, but a LOT of PEOPLE have OPINIONS ... but FEW PEOPLE have BELIEFS. A BELIEF is something you’d STAKE your LIFE ON. A BELIEF NOT LIVED OUT is just an OPINION ... we KINDA THINK this or that.

That’s WHY the EARLY CHURCH WROTE DOWN the TEACHINGS of The APOSTLES ... they wanted to be CLEAR about their LIFE STAKING, CORE BELIEFS! They wanted to MEASURE what SOMEONE TRULY BELIEVED. PAUL wrote to the ROMAN CHURCH that our BEHAVIORS need to MATCH our BELIEFS ... **ROMANS 14:23b = If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.**

As FOLLOWERS of JESUS, IF you VIOLATE what you BELIEVE / The CREED, you are SINNING! PAUL went ON to ADMIT HE / WE still WRESTLE with the SIN INSIDE of US ... **ROMANS 7:20 = But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.**

So, we CONTINUE to WORK to BRING our BEHAVIORS in LINE with our BELIEFS ... CHRISTIANITY is about BEING CHRIST-LIKE, NOT just in what we SAY we BELIEVE, but in our ACTIONS. That gets us to #4 ... It FOLLOWS the other THREE questions:

#4 = How Will I LIVE OUT What I BELIEVE?

Once you ask WHAT and WHY and are my BELIEFS MORE than OPINIONS ... NOW, HOW do I LIVE IT DAILY? The REALITY is we can have RIGHT BELIEFS, but LIVE them WRONGLY. EXAMPLE: RIGHT BELIEFS about JESUS, but when they SHARE IT, it’s NOT with GRACE, but a HAMMER! And people are TURNED OFF to FAITH in JESUS.

HISTORICALLY, think about the CRUSADES ... KILLING people in the NAME of JESUS ... I think GOD was ANGRY / SAD about those. IF our LIVES do NOT REFLECT CHRISTLIKENESS, we’ve MISSED IT! WHEN our “CHRISTIANITY” causes us to BE

HATEFUL / DIVISIVE of PEOPLE / CRITICAL ... WRONG ACTIONS. We're trying to DO "Christianity" OUR WAY. Jesus COMMANDED ... LOVE ONE ANOTHER ... and PAUL paid ATTENTION (Together) ... **1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14 = *Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. 14 And do everything with love.***

Being STRONG in the FAITH is NOT about STRONG-HANDING ANYONE. We BELIEVE the RIGHT STUFF about JESUS, but we don't LIVE IT OUT in a LOVING WAY. We LIVE our FAITH / BELIEFS in a GRACE-FILLED, LOVING, WAY ... **JAMES 2:19-20 = *You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. 20 How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?*** Would you please UNDERLINE, "Good Deeds?" Our LIVES are RIDDLED with GOOD DEEDS, in our WORK / MARRIAGE / FRIENDSHIPS / PUBLIC ... GOOD DEEDS reveal (CHRISTLIKENESS) ... our CREEDS!

My BELIEFS have IMPACT ... (BRIEFLY) **My Beliefs Determine:**

- My BEHAVIOR

Behind RIGHT BEHAVIOR you find RIGHT BELIEFS. Right Behavior in MARRIAGE comes from RIGHT BELIEFS about MARRIAGE. Same with WORK ... Relationships, etc. IF you want to EXPERIENCE ALL God has for YOU, we need RIGHT BELIEFS about GOD. That's just HOW LIFE IS. Opposite is TRUE: MALICIOUS Behavior = MALICIOUS Beliefs.

Beliefs Determine Behavior!

- My SIGNIFICANCE

Our BELIEFS will DETERMINE what we THINK about our MEANING / EXISTENCE / WORTH. IF we BELIEVE GOD LOVES us with EVERLASTING, UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, that CHANGES what I THINK about my SIGNIFICANCE. IF I BELIEVE Almighty God SENT His ONE and ONLY SON to DIE so I can LIVE ETERNALLY ... Significance!

- My ETERNITY

LAST, NOT LEAST ... My Beliefs Determine my ETERNITY. Followers of JESUS BELIEVE we ARE CREATED for ETERNITY. This LIFE is PREPARATION for the NEXT LIFE ... we are IN a 2nd WOMB, WAITING to be BIRTHED into ETERNITY!

OTHERS believe DIFFERENTLY ... this LIFE is IT / BACK to the DIRT ... IF you BELIEVE that, you will MISS OUT on ETERNITY in God's PRESENCE. ETERNITY will STILL EXIST even if you do NOT BELIEVE IT ... and you will SPEND ETERNITY SOMEWHERE! Paul in ROMANS ... **ROMANS 10:9 = *If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.***

... For ETERNITY! And this MESSAGE is a START. Let's KNOW what we BELIEVE. Let's READ OUT LOUD The APOSTLES' CREED:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;* the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Let's Pray!

Next Steps: *Memorize 1 Corinthians 16:13-14*
Read James 1-5
I will examine myself and my faith ... honestly (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BACK ROADS ... Glad you've been with us!
 In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information.

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today

- We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.
 It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

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- Reminder ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... **James 2:20 = How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?**
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- Next Week: ***I BELIEVE ... In The FATHER (ON MOTHER'S DAY!!). Is "ABBA" just a 70s ROCK BAND?***

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."

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