



1 Timothy 4:10 *“That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.”*

## **Why believe Part Two: Believe in God**

Why believe in anything at all? I began with that line in the last chapter. Yet, to the unbelieving world I am trying to be honest. Why bother? We have all heard the stories of terrible religion. Doesn't all religion tend to murder, sexually abuse kids, and mishandle money? Don't they? I do talk to people who would not be caught dead in a church for those very reasons. Are they unfounded? I will not defend how Christianity and religion has done business. Moving priests, asking for forgiveness, and changing church names does not work well in the public eye. Oh, the religious think it does.

I have equally been annoyed with my own faith community. Do they have clicks? Do they cater to the rich? Is some theology of God wonky? At times it's a resounding yes. Yet, I cannot throw the baby Jesus out with the bath water. Yes, even if the bath water is muddy. Understand that the real Jesus tossed the religious under the bus several times, just look at these two verses.

Matthew 23:13-14 *““Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.”*

Matthew 16:23 *“Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”*

Is that your Jesus? Does your Jesus hold a lamb and say sorry a lot? I read this tweet on Twitter and it about sums up how I feel towards organized religion. This comes from theological Christian author Alan Hirsch *“If you're not hanging out with sinners and pissing off religious people, you're probably not being very much like Jesus.”* Yep, I get it. I also read him describing his church this way. He saw God more in the back streets with the drug users and prostitutes than in an established church. How so? Those people wanted Jesus and appreciated Jesus far more than the wealthy did. Believing is about living with God and not using him as a thing to wield.

Believing is not saying your Catholic or Protestant. It's not saying you go to church every Sunday. Faith is not found in how many verses you know or how many times you read the Bible. I sat with a lead Pastor in a wealthy church who said I was way better off working in a church that being stuck in a low life job as a Postal worker. Seriously? Are those types of jobs and people low life's? Believing is found in the people who need Jesus. Not the ones that say they know Jesus. Quite frankly, Jesus would not be welcome in many churches. Believing will always begin in your heart and not your head.

Romans 10:8-10 *“But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”*

Just read through those verses. The heart must be first. Jesus even mentions that what goes in the mouth is not half as bad as what comes out. The heart tells no lies. Our words and actions do speak volumes. Should a pastor think anyone is lower than him? It does not appear that I'm selling church, does it? What I am selling is believing first, friends first, and people first. Just look at John 3:16. I know exactly why it's so famous. "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" It begins with God so loved the world. Did you know that God cares for the world? Not just the rich, poor, or certain groups. God loves the world. Could you believe in a God who loves the world? Could you believe in a God who would let his Son sacrifice himself to save that world from judgment? I will guarantee that God and his kingdom do put people first.

Pride, arrogance, and entitlement run too deep in the organized church. They think that just because they believe that they are the chosen ones. Yet, God so loved the whole world, didn't he? To have belief is to believe in the character of God. The church is good, yet, at times, it does not look so good. Don't throw the church out with the bath water too. There are many good churches. However, to the ones that suck, you need my list. What list?

Here is what makes believing strong. It's four levels of love: God, family, work, and church. The number one comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*" Then take a look at Luke 10:27 "*Jesus answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*"

Love God first then love your family like you love God. Love work like you love God. Love the church like you love God. Yet, do it in that order. I am positive that within many

churches my list would never be accepted. Believing is not a thing. It's a lifestyle. To believe in God is to believe in his ways. To be like Jesus. So, love God first. Then Love your family second with all your heart. Thirdly love the sustainer of your family: work. Make work fun and a priority, but it's never above your family or God. Then love your church. Remember they are people and not God. Never put work or the church ahead of God or your family. So often people think believing is "in God." Yes, but it's about being like God by loving what God loves: the world. Then you will believe that nobody is a low life. That's something I can believe in.