



Belief

RENEWING OUR MINDS

CHRIS THURMAN

(Romans 10:9, 10)

One of the main causes of emotional and spiritual problems in life is faulty thinking. Thinking untruthfully, unrealistically, and irrationally leads to damaged emotions, destructive actions, and failure to mature as Christians. For us to experience the abundant life that Christ offers, we must believe the truth and live it out in our daily lives.

The Bible talks a great deal about our thinking. Romans 12:2 exhorts us to renew our minds, while Philippians 4:8 offers us guidelines for correct patterns of thought. Isaiah 26:3 promises peace to those whose minds are steadfastly focused on God, and Colossians 3:2 challenges us to set our minds "on things above." The biblical message is clear: What we think plays a critical role in determining emotional and spiritual health. God, who *is* truth, wants us to think and believe the truth because doing so sets us free to have an abundant life.

WHEN WE BELIEVE LIES

Satan, the deceiver and "father of lies," wants us to believe lies because they destroy us and put us in bondage to emotional and spiritual problems. Satan has many lies in his arsenal, all of them destructive. Here are some examples:

> *"I must be perfect."* Believing this lie results in feeling anxious about making mistakes and in self-condemnation when we do. God wants His people to be holy (1 Pet. 1:16), but we need to accept that growing in Christ is a process that will involve making mistakes along the way.

> *"I must have everyone's love and approval."* This lie leads us to focus on pleasing people rather than pleasing God (Gal. 1:10). We cannot afford to make the love and approval of others more important to us than the love and approval of God.

> *"Things have to go my way for me to be happy."* This unbiblical belief causes us to focus our attention on circumstances rather than God, and on being happy rather than being mature. Our peace and contentment should not be based on the situations we find ourselves in (Phil. 4:11), but on being unconditionally loved and cared for by God.

> *"Life should be easy."* Life is not easy. The effects of sin on us and the world we live in are pervasive and have made living life difficult. Christ promised that we would face troubles in life (John 16:33). The false belief in an easy life only sets us up for bitterness and resentment when life proves to be difficult.

> *"God hates the sin and the sinner."* Believing this lie causes us to run from God when we sin, even though God is the only One who loves us unconditionally. God, being holy, hates sin (Prov. 6:16-19), but He died for and loves us even when we sin (Rom. 5:8).

These and many other lies create emotional and spiritual difficulties and slow our progress toward being mature in Christ. What can we do to replace these lies with the truth in order to be transformed into the people God meant us to be?

WHEN WE BELIEVE THE TRUTH

It must first be understood that people cannot properly renew their minds apart from God. Believing and applying the truth need

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to be done within the context of a relationship with Christ. Only then can people develop the beliefs and attitudes that lead to true emotional health and spiritual maturity.

But what can believers do to help the process of renewing their minds in order to live out God's truth?

First, they can keep a "self-talk" journal in order to identify the lies they tell themselves. This involves spending time each day writing down what they mentally say to themselves when reacting to various life events. In their journal, they record the event that "triggered" them, what they privately thought about it, and their feelings and reactions. Once they have written down their thoughts about the situation that occurred, they ask themselves, "Are any of the thoughts I had lies?" Doing this is a very important step toward better understanding what lies are in their minds each day and how they are negatively impacting their emotions and behavior.

Next, once they have identified the lies that they tell themselves, those lies can be analyzed in light of God's Word. For each lie they believe, they must find biblical truth that contradicts it. Then they can memorize that truth, meditate on it, and apply it in real life situations as often as possible. The threefold process of memorizing, meditating on, and applying truth will transform their thought patterns and their life.

LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE

Knowing, believing, and applying biblical truth are the three key steps toward having a renewed mind and experiencing the transforming power of a relationship with God. God's thoughts are perfectly true, and He is more than willing to help us believe the truth. Our emotions and actions will be transformed as we replace lies with truth. This is a difficult, lifelong process that in-

volves challenges at every turn. As we grow in our awareness of the unbiblical beliefs we hold and commit ourselves to taking a biblical view, our minds will be renewed and we can experience true freedom in Christ. The abundant life Christ promised is ours if we will commit ourselves to a life lived in truth.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of belief include:

- > Genesis 15:6
- > Psalm 27:13
- > Daniel 6:23
- > Jonah 3:5
- > Mark 9:23; 11:24
- > John 14:10, 11
- > Acts 16:31
- > Romans 10:9

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on belief at Romans 10:9, 10 on page 1478. See also the personality profile of King Agrippa on page 1459.

from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."^a ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."^a

ISRAEL REJECTS THE GOSPEL

¹⁴How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,^a Who bring glad tidings of good things!"^b

¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?"^a ¹⁷So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

¹⁸But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:

"Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."^a

¹⁹But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says:

"I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."^a

²⁰But Isaiah is very bold and says:

"I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."^a

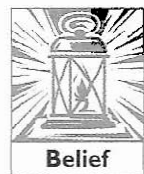
²¹But to Israel he says:

"All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."^a

ISRAEL'S REJECTION NOT TOTAL

11 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ²God has not cast away His people:

10:11 ^aIsaiah 28:16 **10:13** ^aJoel 2:32
10:15 ^aNU-Text omits *preach the gospel of peace, Who.* ^bIsaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15 **10:16** ^aIsaiah 53:1 **10:18** ^aPsalms 19:4 **10:19** ^aDeuteronomy 32:21 **10:20** ^aIsaiah 65:1 **10:21** ^aIsaiah 65:2



Belief

KEY PASSAGE

IN YOUR HEART

(10:9, 10)

What is belief, as defined by God? To be saved, people must believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord, but what exactly does that mean?

It isn't enough to say that we believe in God—even the demons believe that much (James 2:19). It is not enough to believe that Jesus lived as some great teacher or miracle worker. True belief begins in the heart as the Holy Spirit opens a person to the truth of the gospel message that God sent His Son Jesus, who died for our sins and rose again. Those who believe in Jesus simply move beyond intellectual assent that He lived to heartfelt gratitude that He cares for them personally. Belief then reveals itself in actions. People who believe in what Christ has done for them will desire to live for Him. If we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord, and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about belief on pages 1480, 1481. See also the personality profile of King Agrippa on page 1459.

Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. ²¹For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—²³that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.”

AGRIPPA PARRIES PAUL'S CHALLENGE

²⁴Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside

yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!”

²⁵But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. ²⁶For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.”

²⁸Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”

²⁹And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.”

³⁰When he had said these things, the king

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Belief

KING AGRIPPA'S REFUSAL TO BELIEVE

(ACTS 26:28)

King Agrippa was the youngest of five Herods who participated in biblical events. Roman emperors gave the Herods authority over various parts of Israel even though the family did not come from Jewish stock. They ruled over a conquered but resentful people.

During its glory years, Rome practiced a remarkable system of justice. Conquered people had few rights, but citizens, like Paul, could appeal to Caesar as their ultimate judge. The apostle Paul exercised this right when he was imprisoned in Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey. By law, the local political leaders had to send him to Rome. Along the way, Agrippa interviewed Paul. Paul's powerful spiritual autobiography and his challenge to Agrippa are recorded in Acts 25:13—26:32.

King Agrippa realized that the apostle Paul's argument required a response. He used a question to avoid a decision. “You almost persuade me to become a Christian” (Acts 26:28) actually translates better as “Do you think you can convince me to become a Christian so quickly?” The king's tactic reveals his unbelief. He didn't argue against the truth of Paul's words. He couldn't. He was simply unwilling to believe.

Becoming a Christian has little to do with speed. It has nothing to do with political position or intellectual insight. Many different kinds of people come to faith in Christ while many others reject the gospel. God has given people enough reasons to believe in Christ. Those like Agrippa who reject Christ do so not because they are unpersuaded, but because they do not want to believe.

Questions make effective tools when we use them to find the truth. But questions can also be used to avoid facing the truth. Agrippa had a clear opportunity to meet the Truth Himself. Instead, he used a question to turn away from Christ. Sadly, his mistake gets repeated every day.

When given the opportunity, some will refuse to believe. We can continue to pray for them and live Christ before them, hoping that one day they will decide for Christ. Ultimately, their decision rests in God's hands.

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sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. ²⁶Our livestock also shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind. For we must take some of them to serve the LORD our God, and even we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there.”

²⁷But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go. ²⁸Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!”

²⁹So Moses said, “You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.”

DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN ANNOUNCED

11 And the LORD said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether. ²Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.” ³And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.

⁴Then Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; ⁵and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals. ⁶Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again. ⁷But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the LORD does make a difference

between the Egyptians and Israel.’ ⁸And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will go out.” Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

⁹But the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not heed you, so that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.” ¹⁰So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED

12 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ²“This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. ³Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. ⁴And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. ⁷And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. ⁸Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails. ¹⁰You shall let none of

SOUL NOTE



Truth or Consequences? (12:3) In this final plague, God required the Israelites to apply the blood of a sacrificial lamb to the doorposts of their houses. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you,” God promised (12:13). This placement of blood between God and man pictures the blood of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross, which pays for believers’ sins and causes God’s wrath to pass over them (Heb. 9:11–28). Those who do not respond to God’s truth will face the tragic consequences of their unbelief. **Topic: Belief**

And He works signs and wonders
 In heaven and on earth,
 Who has delivered Daniel from the
 power of the lions.

²⁸So this Daniel prospered in the reign of
 Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS

In the first year of Belshezzar king of Bab-
 ylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of
 his head *while* on his bed. Then he wrote
 down the dream, telling the main facts:²

²Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision
 by night, and behold, the four winds of heav-
 en were stirring up the Great Sea.³ And four
 great beasts came up from the sea, each differ-
 ent from the other.⁴ The first was like a lion,
 and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings
 were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the
 earth and made to stand on two feet like a
 man, and a man's heart was given to it.
⁵And suddenly another beast, a second,
 like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and
 had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth.
 And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much
 flesh!'

⁶After this I looked, and there was another,
 like a leopard, which had on its back four
 wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads,
 and dominion was given to it.
⁷After this I saw in the night visions, and
 behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible,
 exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it
 was devouring, breaking in pieces, and tram-
 pling the residue with its feet. It was different
 from all the beasts that were before it, and it
 had ten horns.⁸ I was considering the horns,

7:1 ² Literally the head (or chief) of the words

continually, been able to deliver you from the
 lions?"²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live
 forever! ²²My God sent His angel and shut the
 lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me,
 because I was found innocent before Him; and
 also, O king, I have done no wrong before
 you."

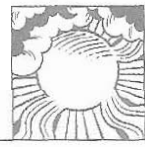
DARIUS HONORS GOD
²⁴And the king gave the command, and they
 brought those men who had accused Daniel,
 and they cast *them* into the den of lions—
 them, their children, and their wives; and the
 lions overpowered them, and broke all their
 bones in pieces before they ever came to the
 bottom of the den.

²⁵Then King Darius wrote:
 To all peoples, nations, and languages
 that dwell in all the earth:
 Peace be multiplied to you.

I make a decree that in every dominion
 of my kingdom *men must tremble and*
 fear before the God of Daniel.

For He is the living God,
 And steadfast forever;
 His kingdom is the one which shall not
 be destroyed,
 And His dominion shall endure to the
 end.

27 He delivers and rescues,



A Glimpse of the Miraculous (6:23) King Darius and Daniel experienced the

miracle of the lions' den from significantly different perspectives. The king

mouthed faithful-sounding encouragement when Daniel was thrown into the pit

(6:16), but his sleepless night (6:18) didn't show faith in God. Daniel, on the other

hand, approached his sentence with complete confidence in God's will. As a result, Darius

was only able to witness the event as a spectator, only able to appreciate it from afar. In

contrast, Daniel experienced the miracle firsthand and felt the loving, protective hand of God

"because he believed." When we trust in God, we will recognize His touch on our lives.

Topic: Belief

SOUL NOTE

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Or what will
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to you that:

Elijah has also come, and they did to him what-
ever they wished, as it is written of him."

A BOY IS HEALED

¹⁴And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. ¹⁵Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. ¹⁶And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?"

¹⁷Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. ¹⁸And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."

¹⁹He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." ²⁰Then they brought him to Him. And when He saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

²¹So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?"

And he said, "From childhood. ²²And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into

the water to destroy him. But if You can do any-
thing, have compassion on us and help us."

²³Jesus said to him, "If you can believe,^a all things *are* possible to him who believes."

²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

²⁵When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!"

²⁶Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

²⁸And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"

²⁹So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."^a

JESUS AGAIN PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

³⁰Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone

^{9:23} ^aNU-Text reads "If You can!" All things. . . . ^{9:29} ^aNU-Text omits and fasting

SOUL NOTE



Just Believe (9:23) A desperate father sought healing for his son, pleading, "If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us" (9:22). Jesus answered, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Belief cannot make things happen apart from the sovereign will of God. Within the sovereign will of God, however, anything is possible to those who believe. When we face difficult situations, we must trust God, believing that He loves us and cares for us as a loving Father. That belief makes all the difference. **Topic: Belief**

SOUL NOTE



Help! (9:24) "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" This was an honest response from the heart of a desperate father who wanted to believe that Jesus could do the impossible. There may come times when we may believe God up to a certain point but then need His grace to enable us to deal with our unbelief as well. At times, our faith may become shadowed by worry or fear. We want to believe, but too much logic or too much emotion clouds our faith. In those times, we can tell God, "I do believe, Lord, but help my unbelief." **Topic: Belief**

perfect in love. ¹⁹We love Him^a because He first loved us.

OBEEDIENCE BY FAITH

²⁰If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can^a he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

5 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And

His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our^a faith. ⁵Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S WITNESS

⁶This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three

4:19 ^aNU-Text omits *Him*. **4:20** ^aNU-Text reads *he cannot*. **5:4** ^aM-Text reads *your*.

SOUL NOTE



Without a Doubt (5:13) Christians need have no doubts about their faith. Those who believe in the name of the Son of God can *know* that they have eternal life. Other religions offer merely the hope of eternal life—if one has been good enough, done more good deeds than bad, or has sacrificed enough for others. Christians, however, can know for sure that they will be with Christ forever in heaven. We may face doubts, difficulties, and times of spiritual dryness, but through it all, we can know that we have eternal life, now and forever. **Topic: Belief**

KEY PASSAGE



Decision Making

MAKING CHOICES

(5:14)

God promises eternal life to those who believe. He also promises a continuing relationship with His people, "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." Believers have the ultimate Guide to walk them through life, helping them make right decisions.

How can believers know God's will as they make decisions? First, they should consider whether they truly want to know what God wants and if they truly want to follow His leadership. Then they should pray and study God's words for guidance. The Holy Spirit will help them interpret what God is doing in and around them in the decision-making process. Believers learn how to seek God's will, asking not what they want, but what He wants for them. When the answer comes, believers know it and can act upon it.

Whatever decisions we face—large or small—God will guide us. We need only ask Him, truly seeking His will, and He will answer.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about decision making on pages 1484, 1485. See also the personality profile of Joshua on page 296.