

Dumb Things: Introduction

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, February 26th. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my absolute joy to be the lead pastor here. So we're starting a new sermon series this morning called, maybe you saw it in the newsletter, Dumb Things That Smart Christians Believe.

So I'm going to confess something right out of the gate. Dumb is not a good word in my family. Shut up was communicated to me as profanity as a child.

So I remember, so it's hard for me to say dumb things because it's bad words from my childhood.

So I remember I have two older brothers, much older, much, much older.

And I remember as a little child, knowing that shut up was profanity in my home, I would weave it into sentences. I would tell my brothers to shut up the door or shut up the window.

And I thought I was getting away with it. So anyway, so in this new series, we're going to look at some of the dumb things, some of the incomplete or mistaken concepts that some Christians have come to believe over time.

[1 : 21] And often with the best of intentions. That's something else we're going to recognize. Or with no reason to doubt what they have heard or have learned from others over time.

So maybe that title sounds mean, as I said. But I'm not saying that people who may believe these things that we're going to consider are somehow dumb or unintelligent themselves.

See, I said the D word again. Only that they've come to believe something. Come to believe something that is possibly somehow untrue or maybe incomplete.

And in some cases in this series, we're going to discover that there may be concepts or sayings that you think are in the Bible that may not actually be there at all.

Ready for that? That'll be fun. So belief. As we begin this series, I want to consider something together. What is belief? What does it mean to believe or to believe in something?

[2 : 26] That's usually how we apply it. I believe in something. Well, you know my love for language. The Latin root word cred, C-R-E-D, translates into believe.

And this is where we get the English concept of belief. So that's an interesting root word, cred or creed. So we can begin to, I think your wheels might already be turning, recognize other words that are then connected to the idea of belief or believing with that same root.

What about credence? Belief in something. What about creed? As Christians, we follow creeds, which are statements of belief.

What about credentials? See the root in there? That's an official record that proves you are who you say you are. What about credit?

That's a big, broad concept. To give credit means believing that what someone has said to you or what is attributed to them is correct.

[3 : 34] To give credit to someone. So if I say, Michelle said something to me, I'm giving her credit for having said it. Credit for said it. There you go. Financial credit is another type of credit.

It shows, it indicates the belief by the lender that you have the ability, the capacity to pay it back. You see that? Credit. All of these things.

What about discredit? To discredit something as being untrue. Inaccurate somehow. What about accreditation?

When you're formal, when you're a professional or certified in a certain area, when you become a doctor or an electrician or even a pastor, you're accredited in some way that says you have done the work and a board or some group of people who hopefully know better than you, know more than you, have recognized that you deserve the credit for the work that you've put in.

You have become accredited for what you have chosen to do. How about incredible? So literally, do you see what, when you take it as its basic form, given what we've just said, incredible means

there's no credit for it.

[4 : 54] There's no credit behind it. It's not credible. But actually, do you see what it has come to mean? Incredible has come to mean unbelievable, beyond belief, belief to the millionth degree.

But we recognize the common factor in all of these concepts is the idea of belief, the idea of believing in something. You know what I believe?

Ha ha. I believe the idea belief in the source of belief actually requires two important factors. I'm going to look at that right now. You can cheat and look ahead.

Trust. Trust in the source of information. So you've been given information, you are trusting that that information is accurate, it is correct.

and then faith. Faith that any part that you can't fully see or fully understand in the information you've been given can still be trusted.

[5 : 58] Belief requires, I believe, trust and faith. Does that make sense? So in recognizing the meaning of this idea of belief or believing and some of the essential elements of that, what does it mean to believe something?

Well, I think we can agree that if we say we believe something, it means that we trust it is reliable. It is dependable. It is consistent, perhaps.

So to believe in something suggests that we trust that it is true or based on fact. Right? You wouldn't believe something that you know is made up.

You wouldn't believe, hopefully, you wouldn't believe something that you haven't looked into. It implies that we accept the information. We accept the advice or whatever it is that we have been given because we have checked the source, we know the source, we can trust and have faith in the source.

So I think also to believe in something suggests that we trust the information information that we have received is correct. It is factual, maybe somehow complete or accurate.

[7 : 18] Right? That is where we trust information that we get. And so also, to believe in something inherently implies that we have to have a subject of that belief.

Right? There's some kind of information or knowledge that has been passed along to us that we then weigh or consider for ourselves.

So what are our usual sources of information? That made me chuckle when I thought about it. Perhaps people we know or someone we don't know.

Right? We may not know the originator of the information that we have come to believe or we might know them well. Hopefully, reputable sources and not just whatever you can Google.

My doctor, my family doctor many years ago, he's retired now and that's not my fault. My family doctor many years ago told me some information and he said, wait.

[8 : 20] And I said, what? And he said, I know you. And he said, you are a thinker and you are a research guy. And I said, yep. And he said, here are your limited sources of research for this topic.

And I said, okay. So he said, Mayo Clinic and that's pretty much it. And I said, gotcha. And I said, so just Google and he said, not a chance.

Not a chance. He said, you will rabbit hole so fast it won't even be funny. So credibility or credence, right? Sources of information.

Maybe we've done some research in the right way. We've read books. We've consulted professional sources. We've talked to people who at least they have done their homework so that we can be more comfortable or confident in where we place our belief.

See all of that? And I believe that even with the best of intentions, we come to believe in things or believe concepts that are ultimately not true.

[9 : 30] Ultimately not based in fact. Ultimately not originating from reliable sources. I think that happens all the time. Perhaps it's happened to you personally.

I have family members who believe stuff that makes me do this. Shrug. I love them. I trust them. I don't trust their sources, however. So even with the best of intentions, we see that. That people can come to believe things that maybe is a stretch.

So maybe you know someone that that has happened to. Certainly the last few years, rife with that kind of issue, right? And a personally held belief or conviction, maybe for you or someone you know, didn't wind up standing the test of time.

something they believed in their core, in their very fiber of their being, didn't stand up to further study, to further information. So how does that happen?

[10:34] How does that happen that we come to believe something so concretely in our lives, so importantly, becomes a fundamental part of who we are and then all of a sudden it's not accurate?

Well, even if something is untrue, if you trust the source, you can come to believe something. Do you see that?

So if you trust the source, the information provided to you, then you might inherently trust that as well, even if that's not the best choice. So you might come to trust something that isn't true or maybe isn't in the way that you think it is.

So the good news, here's the good news, as Christians, we can always trust that God is trustworthy.

He is reliable. He is consistent. He is all of the things that I have suggested so far this morning. We need to believe in something. And we can also trust that God will always be the best source of truth in our lives.

[11:42] It's that simple. And then connected directly to that, God's word, the Bible, is also a trustworthy source in our lives.

And I believe lots of people, especially people who are outside the church, think, oh, the Bible, it's old, it's irrelevant. Have you read it? It's incredibly relevant.

It's incredibly relevant to our story, to our times, to our struggles, to our triumphs, to our highs and our lows. It is relevant to everything. everything. It's like God knew what he was doing.

So, as you all know, I love language, right? I've said that many, many, many times. And I've always been fascinated by the ways the writing and words of certain authors have come to be embedded in our culture, in our language.

And so I have a theater background. Some of you know that. I've taken courses on Shakespeare during my university studies. I loved Shakespeare in high school when that was super not cool.

[12:48] My English teacher loved it. Some of my friends, not so much. So, I want to tell you, though, do you realize how much influence Shakespeare's writing has had on our everyday expressions?

I'm going to blast through a bunch here, and I'm hoping your mind is blown. Eaten out of house and home, with bated breath, too much of a good thing, break the ice, a heart of gold, dead as a doornail, not slept one wink, a foregone conclusion, faint-hearted, melted into thin air, of our own flesh and blood, method in the madness, full circle, neither rhyme nor reason.

all these expressions, which I think you probably hear every day or quite often, are all Shakespearean in origin. Isn't that crazy?

And those are just some of them. Those are just some of the ways Shakespeare's writing has come to influence our common everyday expressions. So, maybe that's surprising to you. Maybe you've never, especially if you've never read a single piece of Shakespeare's writing, never read a sonnet, never read a play, never seen any of those things.

You can see that influence. So, what about the Bible? Well, the words of the Bible have also become deeply ingrained in our language and common expressions.

[14:18] Here we go. Forbidden fruit, by the sweat of your brow, ashes to ashes and dust to dust, my brother's keeper, an eye for an eye, scapegoat, apple of my eye, nothing but skin and bones by the skin of your teeth, the root of the matter, drop in a bucket, see eye to eye, like a lamb to the slaughter, the powers that be, fight the good fight, twinkling of an eye, good Samaritan, the truth will set you free.

Again, just a handful, and I hope you recognize them. And one source that I read said there are at least 85 common sayings that we use today that most people don't even recognize come from the word of God.

People that aren't familiar with God's word use it all the time without even realizing. So, when the Bible's influence in our language and culture, and hopefully in our own lives as well, is undeniable, over time there have been expressions or concepts that people have come to think originate in the Bible when they actually don't.

Or biblical concepts or wording have come to be adapted for other purposes and then lost their original connection or context from Scripture.

And those can cause confusion for people. I know they have for me in the past. And while some of them are fairly harmless, others can actually be contrary to what Scripture actually says about these things.

[16:07] So, let's take a look at some of the more harmless examples. Are you ready for this? So, harmless examples. Eve ate an apple in the garden, right?

Don't answer. That's what we have come to believe. That's what paintings and popular culture have led us to believe.

So, that must be true, right? Well, while Western art has traditionally depicted the fruit that Adam and Eve ate in the garden as an apple, maybe that idea has some appeal for you.

People paying attention. The Bible is not that specific. Do you recognize that? Genesis 3, verse 6, merely describes Eve eating some of, quote, the fruit of the tree and sharing it with Adam.

That's it. Maybe it was a lemon. That would give us more of a reason to feel sour about the whole thing, wouldn't it? Come on.

[17:18] Everyone's got to be awake. I can see you all. You've got to be awake. So, what about our commonly held belief in three wise men? Don't answer. Once again, we find a specific perspective here that's been drawn from limited information in the Bible and then popularized by art.

So, while we may sing We Three Kings of Orient Are at Christmas, Matthew 2, verses 1 to 12, in that story, the Bible tells us that there were three gifts, but never specifies the number of wise men or magi who came to see the baby.

Never specified. We have come to assume, right, it's logic. Well, there were three gifts. Therefore, is it a stretch?

Maybe. So, logical, as I said, in some ways, but it's unnecessary. And it's also limiting in that case. Oh, three gifts must be three done, packaged, neatly wrapped up.

It's not what it says. Oh, and take wise men out of your nativity scene as well because they came much later. Much later. The story of Jesus' birth is condensed into those figurines that we put up in our houses every year.

[18:44] Those three guys, later. We almost need an addendum to the nativity scene, like a separate section. Because they did arrive much later when we read in scripture.

When Mary and Joseph and Jesus had already moved into a house in Bethlehem, then they came. But we package it all neatly and logically in our minds.

Okay, so what about the whale of a tail from the Bible that you may have first heard? Paul and I were talking this morning about flannel graph. Maybe that's the first time you experienced it.

Flannel graph characters, paste it up. So despite what you've seen in Bible story books or maybe veggie tales, if you're a little more contemporary, the Bible never specifically says it was a whale. Right? I learned it was a whale. I'm sure my Sunday school teacher thought that was logical. But the runaway prophet Jonah, some translations of Jonah 1.17 and Matthew 12.40 use the word whale.

[19:48] Some do. But the original Hebrew and Greek translations, the words used there mean great fish. We assume it's a whale, right?

Because maybe that's our limited understanding. Or again, as I said before, that's what we were told by someone we trusted. Why would we think otherwise? So you can see from these examples that assumptions or traditional interpretations, no matter how they may be inaccurate, can become belief, can become ideas that we assume are correct and come to take as being fact.

So let's take a moment to look at some of the things the Bible says itself about belief. And I want us to recognize two things this morning. First, to believe in the sense of having faith means trusting in and having security in what Jesus Christ is, sorry, who Jesus Christ says he is.

Good thing it's on the slide because I can't read it. Who God the Father says he is and then who we are as a result. So let's look at three passages.

John 14 verse 1. Jesus makes it clear here. He says, do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust, he says, or believe in God.

[21:18] Trust or believe also in me. The truth of Jesus Christ right there. In John 20 verse 29, we read that when Thomas truly came to believe Jesus was the Son of God, then Jesus told him in John 20 verse 29, because you have seen me, you have believed.

But Jesus goes on to say, blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. Have you seen Jesus? I haven't. Do you believe in him?

I think you do. In John 14, 12 to 14, Jesus said, I tell you the truth. Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.

He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

You may ask for anything in my name and I will do it. Faith in Jesus. Faith in God.

[22 : 31] Who Jesus says he is, is true. It's trustworthy and reliable. Who the Father says he is, is true and trustworthy and reliable. faithful. Second, to believe in the sense of having faith means that belief in Jesus Christ and belief in God the Father then opens the door to the eternal security of salvation.

In Acts 16, verse 31, when a jailer asked Paul and Silas how he could be saved, they reply, and maybe you know it, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

You and your household. There's the equation they give him. How do I do this? Here's the answer. Believe in the Lord Jesus.

And then Paul expands on this concept with direction and clarification in Romans 10, verses 9 and 10. where we read that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. There's the complete picture.

[24 : 05] So remember, as we began this morning, we considered that the fact that to believe means to trust. It means to trust in the source of information.

Trust in the information you've been given. And then faith. Have faith that any part that you can't see or fully understand can still be trusted.

And this is exactly what the Bible is telling us about the importance of believing in Jesus Christ and God the Father.

These are the keys to being adopted into God's family. The keys to being connected to God's power and his favor according to his will.

And then ultimately to being reunited with God and others who have gone before us into eternity.

So can you see what else we have done here this morning?

[25 : 05] We've considered some of the things we may have believed to be true. And then we've returned to the ultimate source of information, the Bible, to confirm that what we believed is actually true.

Friends, this is what we're going to continue to do as we progress through this series. We're going to consider potentially dumb things, there's that word again, that smart Christians believe.

And we're going to seek to get the truth out of some of the statements that we've come to take for granted and believe. Does that sound good? Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.