

# By believing, you may have LIFE

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] If you find yourself in the middle of the ocean, treading water to stay alive, and you are offered A, B, or C, at the same time, which one would you choose?

I don't think there will be any hesitation for anyone in choosing C. The answer is so evident that it makes this question sound ridiculous. But who would reject an all-inclusive, safe and secure cruise liner to choose instead to rely on themselves, to brace their elements without any provision, and keep treading water and working hard to save themselves?

However, if you disagree that C is the most logical and reasonable choice, I would love to hear your reasoning behind your decision during a morning tea. Turning this question around, if you are a believer, if you are a person of religion, is your faith and belief in a God you are following and devoted to more like A, B, or C?

Which is a more accurate account of your relationship with God and your life right now? Are you living out an abundant life, trusting and enjoying all that is provided for you by the generous God, or is your life more like holding on to a life safer or life rough, keeping working hard until and waiting for your next rescue?

How do you feel about your life right now? It's a telltale sign of whether you have a life-giving faith or invalid faith. It is a sign of whether you have a belief that leads to life or one that leads you to rejection of God or by God.

[ 1 : 4 9 ] If you have not decided whether you believe in God or have faith or not, and you are here gathering with us today, may I take it as a sign that you want to find out more about what and who we are believing in.

And for that, I welcome you and hope that what you are going to hear will be helpful in your journey of discovery. We have mentioned a few times since the beginning of our current series that John's Gospel has recorded some particular signs of Jesus for definite intention.

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing, you may have life in his name.

The signs are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Saviour, the Son of God, and by believing, you may have life in Jesus' name. There is faith that will lead to abundant life in Jesus.

And by implication, there is faith that will not lead us there, but cause us to get further away from God. Jesus was in Canaan in Galilee back in chapter 2 at the wedding.

[ 3 : 1 3 ] John told us that Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed him.

Between chapter 2 to chapter 4, Jesus traveled to Capernaum, then he went back down to Jerusalem, and then he came through Samaria, and right now he's back in Canaan after a couple of chapters.

The distance between Canaan and Caponim is about 26 kilometers, a little bit more than a day's journey. And at the end of chapter 2, it says, Now while Jesus was standing in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name, but Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people.

Here is a group of people who have a faith that distanced themselves from God. Jesus knew their faith was forged with a hidden agenda and wrong motive. Even though they trusted in Jesus' name, Jesus did not entrust himself to them.

So what is a life-changing faith? In chapter 4, what we read out to us in verse 46, there is a royal government official from Caponim whose son was very sick.

[ 4 : 32 ] And in verse 52, indicate that he has a fever. Very different to today, where we have ready access to medicine, fever is a life-threatening sickness that often leads to death around Jesus' time.

We can sense the urgency and how desperate the father is regarding his children, his child, by how John described the situation. The son lay sick at Caponim in verse 46 and was close to death in the next verse.

And then in verse 49, the father begged Jesus to come down before his child died. He went to Jesus and begged him to come and heal his son.

It was in this royal official coming to Jesus as a desperate father that we see life-changing, life-giving faith. John told us at the end of chapter 4 that the healing of this official son and the consequence belief of him and his whole family in Jesus was the second of those particular signs with definite purpose that Jesus performed in this gospel.

This official demonstrated a belief that leads to life. He heard the report of the miraculous things Jesus was doing in Jerusalem and Canaan.

[ 5 : 55 ] He got him thinking, maybe, perhaps, Jesus can save my son like how he performed those signs in Jerusalem. Jesus is the last resource to stop him from dying.

Can I really trust Jesus to keep my son from dying? He is using his head as he begins his journey while feeling heavy on his heart. He came to Jesus with an agenda to save his child, his little boy.

He is not looking at Jesus and his works as a spectator. He is like being in the ocean with his little boy in his arms, threatening water desperately. His little boy is drifting asleep, falling, can't stay afloat, choking on water and drowning, and he looks to Jesus at his last and final hope.

And he in the man's request, what did Jesus do? He says, unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe. What?

What kind of a fight is that to a desperate father? Come on, Jesus, don't you see this man is suffering right now? Jesus seems to want to engage this man in a theological discussion about relationship between signs and wonders.

[ 7 : 08 ] But in fact, Jesus is helping him to make his need for Jesus personal. To ensure his trust in him is sure and certain and intimate.

Jesus engaged with him to make sure his knowledge of who Jesus really is does not stay in the head only, but is one that comes from the heart. Jesus is making sure their interaction engages both the head and heart.

When the royal official says, Sir, come down before my child dies, the whole treasure of his life, this little boy's life, is on the line. His heart would have tossed and thrown within him like raging seas.

This father may be thinking if only Jesus would come to his home. May he be to wave his hand or to touch a boy and pray, there may be a chance that this boy will not die.

But on him, Jesus said, Go, your son will live. He did not insist on his way. He took Jesus at his word and headed home. Up to this point in the Bible, miraculous healing over a long distance was so rare and rarely heard of.

[ 8 : 25 ]     Something has to have happened within this desperate father to make him ruling to take Jesus at his word and start heading home. Something in Jesus' words and the interaction caused hope to grow within this man.

Something supernatural has been given to him. I cannot imagine what is going through his head as he walked those 26 kilometers down towards home.

What he got to hold on to is only those four words spoken by Jesus. Your son will live. Would he be repeating those to himself, My son will live, my son will live, to reassure himself?

Or would it be a quiet expectation? It would last at least 12 hours before beginning to the journey that his servant bring him the news about his sons because his servant referred to yesterday at one in the afternoon when he asked about when exactly his son was restored.

It's at this moment of inquiry that genuine faith come about in this man when he realized that his boy came alive and got well at precisely the time Jesus told him, Your son will live.

[ 9 : 47 ]     This royal government official from Caponean Caponean come to Jesus to beg him to keep his little boy alive and ended up with life-giving faith because this faith was granted to him.

Jesus helped him to see what he needed was not a miracle worker who did wonders for his son. Jesus helped him to become fully aware of his incompetence in this situation.

Jesus engaged with this man intellectually and emotionally through his head and his heart. And by doing so, Jesus showed the man that Jesus himself has the power to heal over a distance because he is the source of life.

Jesus did not just perform a healing miracle here. He gave the desperate father a chance to see who he was. The royal official received life-giving faith by taking Jesus at his word.

And after hearing the official son remotely, Jesus returned to Jerusalem, a place where he did not entrust himself to the people before. It was a place full of invalid faith.

[ 11 : 03 ]     And he came to a place where a lot of disabled people, the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed, usually. He came across a man who had been sick and had a disability for 38 years, an invalid.

And he asked him, do you want to get well? And the invalid replied, sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.

Have you noticed the difference between Jesus' previous interaction with the official father and now? It was Jesus who instigated the interaction on that particular day.

And John will tell us the reason and purpose very soon. What about the way the invalid replied? The official father and the invalid both seemed to know what needed to be done, but there was no urgency or desperation with the disabled man.

He sounded like he's looking at Jesus and saying to himself, you seem to be able to help me to get whatever I need. I will partner with you so you can help me.

[ 12 : 15 ]     I will do you a favor and let you get some merit or maybe gain some popularity for helping me. Jesus ignored his excuse and commanded him in verse 8, get up, pick up your mat and walk.

And the man was cured immediately and picked up his mat and began to walk. John told us that the day on which this sign took place was a Sabbath, which means there is going to be some controversy.

Jewish leaders were agitated that the man was doing something forbidden by the law on the Sabbath and they questioned the man who had been healed.

I must highlight an actual but disheartening fact that a lot of religious leaders are more concerned about people obeying the law they have laid down than celebrating life-changing events.

Equally disheartening is that a lot of religious followers are busy getting approval of their leaders and concerning themselves with the approval of man more than God.

[ 13 : 23 ] When the invalid was challenged about his non-compliance with the Sabbath law, he was stripped to defense and stripped to blame. He replied, The man who made me well say to me, pick up your mat and walk.

If you have heard some Bible stories, especially those from the Old Testament, does this remind you of someone? It sounds so similar to the way Adam and Eve answered God in Genesis 3 after they disobeyed and ate from the tree that God commanded them not to eat from.

Their disobedience marked the fall of humans and the breaking of relationship between the creation and their creator. The creation's relationship with God, the creator from this point on, is in turmoil.

It becomes something good, sometimes good, sometimes bad, ups and downs like tossing about in a raging sea. When Jesus found this man later at the temple, he said to him, see you are well again, stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you.

Jesus is not saying that all worse things are the consequence of sin, but it's very apparent that the infinite needs to repent. He needs to repent at least of his ingratitude towards Jesus.

[ 14 : 45 ] There's no record of him thanking Jesus for healing him. There are other sins that he needs to repent of for him to have life, such as having other things above God or loving himself more than God and others.

It seems that he wants to please those religious leaders at any cost, even if it means to getting the person Jesus into trouble who has just killed him.

He has no interest in who Jesus is or what it means to have a relationship with him. Jesus is only someone who helped him to get his physical help, but his life is more about whether he's accepted by his people or not, especially the leaders and the social elites.

The infinite has an invalid faith that does not lead to life. He has no idea who healed him, and when Jesus presented himself to him later, instead of seizing that moment to get to know Jesus, he went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who made me well.

He wants Jesus to take the blame for his violation of the Sabbath law so he can stay in favor with the religious leaders. His belief did not lead to life because he has no interest in the only one who can give life.

[ 16 : 08 ] He does not see Jesus as who he is, the Savior, the Son of God. Jesus was just another person who could partner with him to get what he wanted.

One, he is healed, he has no interest in getting a new life. He wants to fit right back into the day-to-day Jewish life that the Jewish leader monitors. He has no interest in what Jesus has to offer.

Jesus restored this infinite, and he cannot walk, but Jesus to him is like a life saver or a life raft. The man is busy keeping afloat among the social elites of his time, but he is missing out on the extraordinary life and the adventure that living in Jesus would bring.

Jesus offered life to the full, an abundant life that makes this illustration seem very insufficient. Imagine you're living on an all-inclusive, lustrous cruise liner, already paid for for the rest of your life.

It would take you to visit all the wonders of God's creation around the world, and while doing that, keep on rescuing people from the raging sea and picking up more people at each port.

[ 17 : 24 ] The abundant life that Jesus offered is way better than that. The abundant life that Jesus offered outweighs any illustration a human can think of. It's a life resting in God, a life with sure hope and certainty, in perfect relationship with God and his creation, a life rested in God.

Jesus picked the Sabbath to heal the influence, to point out the invalid faith of people around the religious center at the time. It also speaks to those who treat a relationship with God, a genuine belief in the living God, as a religious, spiritual practice.

Many people, inside and outside the church, falsely imagined that the primary purpose and message of Christianity is to get people to behave in such a way that they can get to heaven.

That is a gross distortion of God's message to us in the Bible. Jesus came to bring salvation as a gift for guilty sinners, not as a reward for the righteous, as there are no person who fits that description.

God created the world in six days, and on the seventh day he rested. Genesis 1 says that God looks at every day of his creation and concludes each day as good.

[ 18 : 49 ] Then, on the sixth day, it says, God saw all that he had made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Then, by the seventh day, God had finished the work he had been doing.

So, on the seventh day, he rested from all his work. Then, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it, he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

God stipulated the Sabbath, a day of rest, in all the work of creating. Sabbath is what God set aside for him to enjoy his creation with his creatures.

It was there before the fall of humans and no fallen human mind, nor the religious elite, would be able to restore the Sabbath to its original meaning.

No amount of laws or regulations would be able to get humans back to that original design and relationship that God intended, except for Jesus, who is the Son of God, who was there when the world was created, and when the Sabbath was installed.

[ 20 : 03 ] Jesus is the only person who can restore us to God the Father. And healing the influence on Sabbath is a way Jesus showed the religious leader and any religious person that whatever they are doing to get back to God without him is invalid and in vain.

what Jesus has done infuriated those with invalid faith. In verse 16 to 18, it says, so, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.

In his defense, Jesus said to them, my father was always at his work to this very day, and I too am working. For this reason, they tried all the more to kill him.

Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. Jesus has been working alongside the Father from the time the world was created.

And soon after this interaction, he will perform the most significant work of all to restore relationship between human and the creator. Jesus, the Messiah, was crucified, buried, physically resurrected, and sinned by hundreds.

[ 21 : 30 ] Life-giving faith comes about because the resurrected Son of God lives today. As Jesus told the royal official, your son will live, and keeping the son alive to spare the father and son from going through the suffering of death and separation, he knows that he will go through death and separation from his heavenly father.

It was the necessary step that only he could take to give life to all those who believe in him. The foundation of our life-giving faith was an actual, complex, historical event that took place in the life of Jesus.

And Christianity is not a merely philosophy of behavioral modification. As the sun rises, change the sky from darkness to light, believing in Jesus should change your world from striving and trying to please others to a state of rest that is enjoying the presence of God in his creation.

You will definitely experience some behavioral changes as you believe in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and start a new life. But I hope that is not the only reason you have become a Christian or are interested or wanted to become a Christian.

What kind of faith do you have? Are you still restless, kicking and treading water, struggling to stay afloat in life? Consider the report you heard about Jesus.

[ 23 : 07 ] Look to Jesus and take him as his word. Realize what he has done for you and this world and believe in him. And by believing you may have life.

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