

BELIEVE IT!

Scripture used: [Luke 24:36-43 NIV](#)

OVERVIEW

At the core of the Christian faith is the invitation from God to believe: to believe that that God exists, to believe that God is love and desires relationship with us, and to believe that God expressed His love and made relationship possible through His son Jesus. In this message, Pastor Tilden tackled two major areas that often raise questions that can become obstacles to believing. First, we looked at the question of whether the New Testament is an accurate and reliable description of who Jesus was. Second, we looked at the interaction between science and faith. The takeaway from this message is that it is reasonable and credible to believe, and it takes at least as much faith to not believe as to believe.

KEY POINTS

- 1) We looked at the question of the reliability and trustworthiness through the lens of the life of C.S. Lewis, who was an atheist before he became a Christian. C.S. Lewis was a Professor of Literature at Oxford University, and he brought his expertise of myths and legends to the study of the New Testament. He became convinced of the reliability and authority of Scripture for the following reasons:
 - a. [Luke 1:1-4 \(NIV\)](#) makes clear Luke's intent to write a historic biography of Jesus. The Gospels demonstrate the hallmarks of accounts based on eyewitness testimony, like [Mark 15:21](#) mentioning that Simon of Cyrene was the father of Rufus and Alexander and Luke's mention of Cleopas earlier in [Luke 24](#). The eyewitness accounts of the gospels are consistent with the dating of the Gospels and NT letters to between 50 AD - 80 AD, roughly 20-40 years after Jesus' death.
 - b. The content of the Gospels contains details that only make sense in the context of reporting actual events, like Jesus eating a broiled fish. It would not be until the 19th Century that novelistic fiction would begin to incorporate such details. Furthermore, the Gospels include all kinds of inconvenient information, like the embarrassing failures of the disciples, who would become the leaders of the early church. If there were not an absolute commitment to accurate narrative, these surely would have been changed.
 - c. Lastly, the Gospels match the historical context of the early church, both the explosive growth of the early church, and the reality that all the disciples ended up dying as martyrs for their faith. They would not have done so if they knew that the actual events were not true.
- 2) There is no real conflict between science and faith. Science addresses what is testable, repeatable, and falsifiable (able to be proven false). It answers "how" questions well, but not "why" questions, and has no way of falsifying miracles, which are by definition one-time, non-repeatable events. On the other hand, science demonstrates that our universe seems uniquely fine-tuned for life as we know it, and the odds of a universe having any kind of life similar to ours is infinitesimally small. We looked at Francis Collins, an example of a leading scientist who became a Christian, as an example of why science and faith are not only compatible, but science can give clues to the likelihood of God as a Creator.
- 3) We closed with philosophical reality that a world without God has no foundation for moral absolutes, like love, justice, or compassion. But in our real lives, we believe that these things are worth pursuing not just because they are helpful, but because they are real. It makes sense to accept God's invitation to believe and align our actions with our faith convictions, and take more faith not to do so.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Where do you struggle with faith? What doubts do you struggle to overcome? If you consider yourself a follower of Jesus, what convinced you to believe and continues to convince you?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - This would be a good week to perhaps give space to allow people in your group to share their spiritual journeys. How did they come to faith? Where are they in their relationship with God right now? Some discussion of doubts may be helpful, but it may be most productive to point people to great resources as a starting point, like "Making Sense of God" or "The Reason for God" by Tim Keller.
- 3) **DO** - We were challenged to take a next step of belief in Jesus, whether committing to faith, exploring faith more deeply, or going from a "believer" to a confident proclaimer and witness. Take that next step!