

We just heard from people about their beliefs about if God exists.

Beliefs are convictions or accepted truths that individuals hold about the world, themselves, or others, which may or may not be based on evidence.

Belief is a conviction that we generally accept to be true, especially without actual evidence or proof. They are the assumptions we have about the world, Beliefs grow from different sources; they can stem from what we see, hear, read and experience. On the other hand, they can also stem from what is taught. For example, religious beliefs do not stem naturally; they are usually taught from the childhood. In fact, most of our beliefs are related to culture and religion.

Beliefs are often very strongly ingrained in us that they influence our values, behaviours, thoughts, and attitudes in very powerful ways.

What do Christians believe?

The beliefs elemental to Christianity are summarized in;

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.
Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:1–4

Let's ponder that and expend on this a little.....

Jesus died for our sins and was resurrected and thereby offers salvation to all who will receive Him in faith. Unique among other faiths, Christianity is more about a relationship than religious practices. Instead of adhering to a list of “dos and don'ts,” the goal of a Christian is to cultivate a close walk with God. That relationship is made possible because of the work of Jesus Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Beyond the foundational belief in the gospel are other doctrines that define what Christianity is and what traditional Christians believe. Christians believe that ***the Bible is the inspired, “God-breathed” Word of God*** and that its teaching is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. Christians believe in one God who eternally exists in three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Christians believe that ***mankind was created to have a relationship with God, but sin separates all humanity from God***. Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son of God incarnate, that He is fully God yet fully man. Christianity teaches that Jesus died on a cross to pay for the sins of the world. Christians believe that, after His death, Christ was buried, He rose again bodily, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the Father's right hand where He intercedes for believers. Christianity proclaims that the shedding of Jesus' blood was sufficient to completely pay the sin debt owed by all people. His death and resurrection are what make possible the restoration of God's relationship with humanity.

Christianity teaches that, ***to be reconciled to God, one must place his or her faith in the finished work of Christ***. *If we believe that Christ died in our stead to pay the price of our own sins* and that He rose again from the dead, then we are saved. Salvation is the gracious act of God in which we are forgiven of our sin, adopted into God's family, and given a new nature. At salvation, the Holy Spirit indwells us, seals us, and transforms us to live as God would have us live.

Christianity teaches that there is ***nothing anyone can do to earn salvation***. We cannot be "good enough" to please God on our own, because we are all sinners. Christians believe that Christ has done all the work on their behalf.

He gives us ***the Holy Spirit*** to be with us forever. He teaches us in His Word. He enables us to live out His ways by the power of His Spirit. The struggle against sin continues; however, Christians can have victory over sin as they obey God's Word and submit to the Holy Spirit's leading in everyday circumstances.

Christianity is characterized by ***love for God and love for others***. Christians trust that fullness of life is in God and that He is faithful to His promises. The Christian life is one of growth—in love and knowledge of God, in awareness of our own sinfulness, and in learning to hate sin and live in righteousness.

Christians believe that, one day, ***Jesus will come again*** and they will be with God forever in the new heavens and new earth.

We believe this, but how does it affect our lives? *Is believing things enough?*

The Parable of the Two Sons

“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

“‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

“Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

“Which of the two did what his father wanted?”

“The first,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Matt 21: 28 - 32

Jesus spoke this to the pharisees to challenge them to integrity in their lives. He was saying that they were teaching one thing and acting in another.

The challenge for us is the same. Are we saying we believe things but not acting on them? How many things in our lives do we profess something to be true and yet we act differently.

Jesus is saying that what we do is more important than what we say and promise. If we are not going to follow through with our beliefs, they are meaningless.

For example Do you believe in Heaven? Do you believe that God will bring you home when you pass from this life? If we truly believe it, how does that affect how my life looks?

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Phil 1: 21 -24

Is what Paul says here reflective of how we live?

Are we longing to be with Him in Heaven and yet realise that everything we do here is to serve Him?

So, how much of what we believe forms the basis of our lives?

The phrase is found in James 2:19, which states:

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder."

This verse emphasizes that belief alone, without accompanying actions or works, does not equate to true faith. It is saying that we can believe things that have little or no effect on our actions.

Faith and Deeds

James 2: 14 - 26

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. James 2: 14 - 26

There is a difference between our Faith and our deeds. But should there be? I would say that if our deeds do not reflect our faith then we really don't have a faith.

There are 2 words that are similar and often used interchangeably and yet they are different and will reflect in our lives on how we see them.

The difference between beliefs and values is as follows:

Beliefs are convictions or accepted truths that individuals hold about the world, themselves, or others, which may or may not be based on evidence.

Values are principles or standards that individuals consider important enough to use to guide their behaviours and decision-making. Our values lead to our deeds.....

In summary, beliefs are specific ideas held to be true, while values are broader concepts that influence actions and choices.

The Role of Values

Values are the guiding principles that flow from belief and faith. Christian values emphasize love, humility, compassion, righteousness, and an eternal perspective, providing a framework for ethical decisions and interactions with others

They contrast sharply with worldly values, which often prioritize material gain, self-interest, and immediate gratification. By embracing God's values, believers align their lives with His character, fostering integrity, generosity, and community-oriented living

Integrating Belief and Values

Beliefs shape what we hold to be true, while values determine how we act upon those truths in daily life. Living out Christian values is both a reflection and an extension of faith.

“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” James 2:17

Christians are called to actively demonstrate faith through acts of love, service, and obedience, which concretely express their commitment to God's truth

Impact on Behaviour

Beliefs and values both play a significant role in shaping an individual's behaviour and decision-making. Beliefs can influence how a person perceives the world and interprets events, leading to specific actions or reactions. Values, on the other hand, serve as a moral compass, guiding individuals in making ethical choices and determining what is important in life.

Conflict

Beliefs and values can sometimes come into conflict with each other. For example, an individual may hold a belief that conflicts with their deeply held values, leading to internal conflict or cognitive dissonance. In such cases, individuals may need to reevaluate their beliefs or values in order to resolve the conflict and maintain a sense of integrity.

In Christianity, belief is the acknowledgment of God's truth, while values are the principles that guide how we live according to that belief, shaping both character and actions.

The there is a third word that is similar Faith

Faith is a complex and multifaceted topic that holds significant weight in the lives of many. It serves as a moral and ethical compass, guiding individuals towards particular values and behaviours. Faith often emphasizes values like love, forgiveness, hope, and faith itself. These values are not only central to religious teachings but also shape how individuals interact with the world and their communities.

Ultimately, faith is a deeply personal subject that varies across individuals and cultures, impacting their values and actions in diverse ways.

Faith = belief + values

The interplay between beliefs, values, and faith is a complex and multifaceted relationship.

Beliefs form the foundation of a person's identity and guide their actions and decisions. What I attest to be true.

Values are the principles that individuals prioritize and act with, shaping their behavior and interactions with others.

Faith is the commitment to what we know to be true which provides the purpose, plans and reasoning undergirding our lives. Faith forms the commitment to the promises and outcomes that I am convinced will come to be that give purpose and direction to our lives.

Our faith is the reason (our purpose, the driving force) for holding onto (committing to) these beliefs and values.

Understanding Belief and Faith

Belief can be defined as acceptance that a statement is true or that something exists, as in acknowledging God and His promises (John 20:31)

However, belief alone, without corresponding action, is passive and may not lead to spiritual transformation.

As I am sure you know, a luge is small one- or two-person sled on which one travels feet-first down an icy track at 135 kmph. The thought of that is not inspiring. But that is exactly what you have to do to if you want to become an Olympic luge gold medallist. And the slightest lapse in concentration can be punished by a spectacular and bone-crunching crash. When one Olympic medallist was asked about her strategy for success, she laughed..... "Luge strategy?" she said, "Lie flat and try not to die."

There are times in life when we state things that we believe, or I should say, that we think we should believe. Our **beliefs** have us at the top of the course saying that we have the skills and training to be safe and to succeed. Our **values** have led us to train, prepare and practice for what we need to do. **Faith** starts the moment we begin to prepare for the race and is completed when we reach the bottom of the track.

The rubber hits the road when we launch from the start, trusting our preparation and see where we end up.

What Is the Difference Between Faith and Belief?

True faith is more than simply 'believing'.

One must believe that something, or someone, exists before it is possible to put one's faith in that person or thing. However, I can believe some things that do not affect my life.

I believe China exists, but I do not live my life any differently because of my belief.

Many people say with confidence, that they 'believe' in God. Many of these same people think that this is enough to guarantee that their sins are forgiven and gain them admission to Heaven. However, is this simple 'belief' in God enough? Is this 'belief' the same as the 'faith' spoken of in the Bible?

To put one's 'faith' in something, or someone, means that one is putting his or her trust in that person or thing. Who or what one trusts can have far-reaching, even eternal, ramifications. It means reliance on, dependence upon, that person or thing.

I can say that I believe a plane can take me from here to there, but if I'm afraid to get on it, I reveal that I have no 'faith' in that plane. Also, if I do not get on the plane, I have no reason to expect it to take me anywhere.

I must exercise my 'faith' in that plane, by boarding it, if I am to receive the benefits it offers.

Simply to say "I believe in God" means very little if it is merely coming from the lips and not from the heart.

George Barna research

According to George Barna, the research suggests that understanding and discussing the role of values in our lives could spawn an era of spiritual growth.

"Most non-Christians in America tell us they are unimpressed with the arguments about Christianity they have heard from believers."

"Perhaps if Christian leaders were less focused on transmitting information about their faith and were building relationships with outsiders, non-believers would be more interested in Christianity. Focusing on building relationships would enable them to demonstrate biblical truths and share their core values rooted in those truths. Dialogue regarding core values could become a pathway to a deeper spiritual conversation about the source of our values and their influence on our behavior," *Barna explained.*

Some areas that reveal our alignment of values and beliefs are:

Our changed actions:

I have heard of, and have known, some people who claim to be followers of Christ; however, their lifestyle remained the same after they became Christians as it was before they became Christians. They still lived the same way, talked the same way, and had the same mindset as they did when they were living without God.

Were they exercising true faith? Jesus said, "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*" (John 14:15), meaning that our actions will reveal the change our heart has gone through when we became His true followers.

Conversely, if our lives do not exhibit a change of allegiance from self to Jesus, we have good reason to doubt our salvation is real at all. John writes, "*And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments*" (1 John 2:3). True faith is evidenced by a change in the way we act.

Our finances: If we are so focused on how much money we are making, or how high up the corporate ladder we can climb, we must readjust our focus...our focus is on wealth instead of God. Also, on the other side of the coin, if we are so worried about not having enough money, our focus is on our need rather than on the One who provides for those needs.

Our thought life: What we spend our time thinking about reveals a lot about what we think is most important in our lives. While it is not wrong to think about things other than God, when we think about things to the extent that any thoughts of God are pushed out of our minds, we are in danger of shipwrecking our faith (1 Timothy 1:18-20). The Bible tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) which simply means keeping the lines of communication open between you and God at all times.

Our priorities: How we spend our time, money, and energy reveals what we think is important. Where does God fit into your life? How important is prayer and Bible study as opposed to making sure you do not miss your favourite television show? The Bible tells us to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Our relationship with God should be the most important thing in our lives...if we have true faith.

Beyond the Fence Are we living it?

We believe in evangelism. We believe in transforming the community. We believe in “Beyond the fence”.

To value something means we act on it. But do we value it? Do we do it?

What actions are associated with our beliefs?

What have I done this last week to go beyond the fence? How about the last month?

What do we do each week? Each day? Do I give more time, money and energy to my family, my hobbies, my friends, my church? Often this reflection reveals more than our quick thoughts and memories.

Practical Implications:

Reflection: Evaluate your beliefs to ensure they are grounded in God’s word. Genuine faith transforms understanding into action

Behavioural Alignment: Let your values guide daily choices, relationships, and priorities, reflecting Godly principles rather than worldly pressures

Community Impact: By living consistent values, Christians influence their communities positively, encouraging spiritual growth in others

Conclusion

“Belief” can be simply a passive mental acceptance which amounts to nothing when it comes to how it affects our life. Simply to say “I believe in God” means very little if it is merely coming from the lips and not from the heart. People can, and do, say that they ‘believe’ in God, but their lives never change at all.

However, when one has true faith in God, one’s life cannot help but reveal this truth. True faith, dependence/reliance/trust, in God reveals itself in our actions, our thought life, and our priorities. We can then love God with all our hearts and we will love others as we love ourselves.

Belief in God lays the foundation,
faith activates it,
and values shape the life that flows from it.

Together, they ensure that a Christian’s life is both spiritually grounded and actively reflective of God’s glory, producing transformation in personal life and the broader community. Living faithfully means moving from mere belief to active, value-driven obedience, demonstrating God’s truth in every aspect of daily life

Are we living out what we believe?