

# LOVE THE LORD



## Lesson Two - What does it mean to believe in Jesus?

August 2023

---

### Summary of key points

- Belief involves our hearts, not just our minds.
- Worldly doctrines and the sinful nature of our hearts can hinder childlike faith.
- We can wrongly accuse and blaspheme God by the way we think about Him.
- God describes Himself as light. That gives us an insight into His nature.
- We need to repent of our unbelief.

### Watch the lesson online

<https://youtu.be/Ar8Xn4xeoxM>

### Transcript

Welcome to the second lesson of Love the Lord where we discuss the subconscious unbelief that many Christians have towards God without even realising it.

Let us begin with our opening prayer. Please click pause at any point if you need more time.

First, let us thank God for His perfect character and will for us.

Next, let us tell Him about all the things that have been stressful in our lives and ask God to give us the faith and endurance we need to persevere in love.

Next, let us lay down any burdens of sin. Please confess the ways we have sinned against God and ask for His forgiveness. If we have been upset and hurt by what other people have done, let's also forgive them in Jesus' name.

Now, let us ask God to open our hearts to receive His teaching as He purifies our attitudes.

Finally, please repeat these words after me, "In Jesus' name, I silence all distractions and voices that are not from God. Amen."

Let's begin the lesson for today. So, what does it mean to truly believe in Jesus?

---

---

Perhaps one of the most often quoted verses in the Bible is John chapter 3 verse 16. “For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” What does that type of belief look like?

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV)*

As Christians, we probably say that we believe in Jesus Christ and have faith in the one true God. The Bible points out that even demons believe that there is one God. James chapter 2 verse 19 says, “You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe, and tremble in terror.” So, what makes our belief different from that of demons?

*James 2:19 You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. (NLT)*

We all know what it feels like to have people doubt our abilities and our word. Outwardly, they may say that they believe us, but we can tell by their attitudes and actions that they don’t fully trust us or have confidence in us. That’s probably how God sometimes feels about us too! The attitude and actions of our hearts reveal if we truly believe in Him.

This world doesn’t reward us for having simple, complete faith and confidence in God.

In fact, it will tell us that we should only trust what we can see — when that is just the opposite of faith. God is Spirit. We cannot see Him with our eyes but we can know Him in our hearts.

*Hebrews 11:1 Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. (NLT)*

The world will also teach us that we should make our own plans for our lives — when God tells us to trust His plan instead because He will guide us along the best path. When we follow Him, we will experience perfect peace and perfect love.

*Psalms 32:8-10 The Lord says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule... sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the Lord. (NLT)*

The world will teach us that we should listen to our families and obey their traditions, no questions asked — when Jesus has said that we should follow Him first if we want to truly be His disciple.

---

*Luke 14:26 “If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. (NLT)”*

The world will teach us that “faster is better” — when God’s Word tells us to wait and trust His plan for us. As we wait, our personal courage is strengthened. Those who are weaker in faith tend to rush ahead.

*Psalm 27:13-14 Yet I am confident I will see the Lord’s goodness while I am here in the land of the living. Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord. (NLT)*

The world will teach us that we should trust the crowd and copy their ways so that we don’t fall behind — when God’s Word tells us not to copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform us by changing the way we think. Then we will know God’s good, pleasing, and perfect will.

*Romans 12:2 Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (NLT)*

Many opposing doctrines from this world hinder our ability to trust God with childlike faith. These are just five examples. Can you think of more? Please click pause now and take the time to write some more down.

List more examples of opposing doctrines:

Welcome back. To follow Jesus, we will find that we first need to renounce the doctrines of this world before we can follow Him with childlike faith.

Our belief and confidence in God can also be corrupted by the painful experiences that we have had in relationships with other people, particularly with authority figures. As we go through some of the following statements, you may notice that they reflect how you feel about other people too. Unfortunately, when we project such feelings towards God, we can also make unintended accusations about God. Let's take a look.

1. Have we believed, “Maybe He isn’t everything He says He is”? By doing so, we imply that God is a liar.

- 
2. Have we believed, “He is too busy, He will overlook me”? By doing so, we imply God is limited and forgetful.
  3. Have we believed, “He will help me, but maybe not in the best way”? By doing so, we imply that God is unwise.
  4. Have we believed, “I haven’t done enough to deserve His love”? By doing so, we imply that God is calculative and nitpicking.
  5. Have we believed, “He helps other people but not me”? By doing so, we imply that God shows favouritism and is biased.
  6. Have we believed, “He may let me fail miserably”? By doing so, we imply God is a mean, uncaring, and demanding Father who isn’t interested in helping us.
  7. Have we believed that “He will condemn me for my mistakes”? By doing so, we imply God is harsh and condemning, and has no compassion for us.
  8. Have we believed, “I’m not sure that He can truly change things”? By doing so, we imply that God must be impotent and powerless.
  9. Have we believed, “He will take the fun out of my life if I follow Him”? By doing so, we imply that God is a killjoy.
  10. Have we believed, “He is never satisfied with what I do”? By doing so, we imply that God is ruthless.

Our ignorance of God’s character leads to unbelief. Let us take a short pause here and consider how such statements affect our willingness to follow God’s commands. Will they create some anxiety in trusting God?

1. “God is a liar.”
2. “God is forgetful.”
3. “God is unwise.”
4. “God is calculative.”
5. “God is biased.”
6. “God is uncaring.”
7. “God is condemning.”
8. “God is impotent.”
9. “God is a killjoy.”
10. “God is ruthless.”

Now, let’s consider how it would feel to have other people level such accusations against us. Would you feel hurt, angry and wrongly accused? In our last lesson, we talked about the sinful nature of our hearts. Can you see how this plays out in the way we view God too?

---

We tarnish God's image and blaspheme Jesus the same way our sinful hearts view other people. Truly, God is so patient and gracious towards us! (In future lessons, we will discuss how and why we need to resolve the hidden bitterness in our hearts, so that we can see everything in our lives more clearly.)

*1 Timothy 1:13-14 ... I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus. (NLT)*

In the meantime, let us read Numbers chapter 23 verse 19 together; “God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?” We can be truly thankful that we serve a good and faithful God.

*Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through? (NLT)*

Most Christians will not deny that God is real, their disbelief is in His character, His abilities, and His promises. Such unbelief will make it hard for anyone to have confidence in God and to trust Him with childlike faith.

*Mark 9:21-23 ... He replied, “... Have mercy on us and help us, if you can.” “What do you mean, ‘If I can?’” Jesus asked. “Anything is possible if a person believes.” The father instantly cried out, “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!” (NLT)*

Once there is any unbelief in our hearts, our sinful nature will come up with all sorts of excuses for why we can turn away from God. Unbelief hardens our hearts towards God and quenches the Holy Spirit. Thankfully, for each and every unbelief towards God, there is always a truth that reassures us of God's character. Let's go through some of them now.

*Hebrews 3:12 Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. (NLT)*

1. Firstly, it is impossible for God to tell any lie. | *Hebrews 6:18 ... it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. (NLT)*
2. He never forgets any of His creation. | *Isaiah 49:15 “Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! (NLT)*

- 
3. Even if it is possible for God to do anything foolish, it would still be wiser than the very best of our plans. | *1 Corinthians 1:25 This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength. (NLT)*
  4. God is so generous to us that He gave us His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins so that we can share in His heavenly riches. | *2 Corinthians 8:9 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. (NLT)*
  5. God does not show favouritism. | *Romans 2:11 For God does not show favoritism. (NLT)*
  6. He is compassionate and caring, He holds His children by the hand to ensure that we don't fall. | *Psalms 37:24 Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand. (NLT)*
  7. God is not interested in condemning us, He wants to save us. | *John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (ESV)*
  8. And everything is possible for Him, nothing is impossible for God. | *Matthew 19:26 Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible." (NLT)*
  9. He is the only true Source of pure joy. | *Psalms 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (NIV)*
  10. God is compassionate, merciful, and patient, filled with unfailing love. | *Psalms 103:8 The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. (NLT)*

*Matthew 5:8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. (NLT)*

For us to be able to see God clearly for who He really is, our hearts need to first be purified of our misguided ideas and bitter emotions. Let's try another test to see how our beliefs can be affected by what is in our hearts. We are now going to go through two questions. Take note of the answers that come out instinctively in your heart. Are you ready?

1. First, write down three words to describe what you think about God.

---

2. Secondly, write down three words to describe how you *feel* about God.

---

Do you notice any difference between your first and second answers? Belief isn't necessarily what we intellectually know about God in our minds. Belief in God involves our hearts.

---

So to summarise, we see that belief is not only what we think about God but also how we feel about Him, because how we feel about God will ultimately affect how likely we are to stay loyal to God as well as how we will worship Him. And this is where our belief in God is different from that of demons. The intellectual belief that demons have does not lead to worship because their hearts have been corrupted by wickedness.

Some of us may not know how to feel about God because we are not familiar with His character yet. So let us refer to something we are all familiar with, and that is light. Numerous times in the Bible, God refers to Himself as light. So, what are some qualities of light?

*1 John 1:5 ... God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. (NLT)*

Firstly, light is unique, constant, unchangeable, and cannot be destroyed. It travels at 300,000km per second. Nothing moves faster than light. At the speed of light, time becomes irrelevant. Therefore, light transcends time and space. Light is extremely powerful. Light energy from the sun, for instance, accounts for over 90% of the world's total energy supply. We also need light to see clearly. Without light, there would be no life. Light interacts with our bodies and brains in ways that help bring healing to mental depression, physical skin problems, pain, and so forth.

The most fundamental particles of light are called photons. These photons can be found in the furthest corners of our universe as well as the cells in our bodies. Even in pitch darkness of deep space, light is still present in microwave wavelengths. Light is literally everywhere.

We can rely on light for so many aspects of life and never question it. In the same way, we can rely on God and trust Him without any doubt.

Just like light, God is unique, constant, unchangeable, indestructible. He transcends time and space. He is also supremely powerful and enables us to see things clearly. He is the Source of all life and the Source of healing. He is present throughout the universe and in our bodies. God is truly omnipresent. So, when you wake up in the morning, thank God for His light and His presence. It surrounds you and fills you. God is so good and faithful to us, even when we stumble around in our disbelief.

He knows our weaknesses and is always present to help us. If you have noticed that there has been unbelief in your heart, we can now pray together to ask God to increase our faith.

*Luke 17:5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" (NLT)*

- Let's start by thanking God for His perfect character. List as many qualities as you can remember.
- Next, confess all the ways you have misunderstood His character and been misled by the world.
- Let us repent of unbelief towards God and tell Him how sorry we truly are.

- 
- Now, please repeat these words after me: “In Jesus’ name, I die to a spirit of unbelief and invite the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, to fill my heart with a deeper level of faith and confidence in the Lord. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

We hope today’s lesson has helped to build your faith. In upcoming lessons, we will shed more light into our relationship with God.

In the meantime, here are the two reflection questions. Please invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you prepare your answers before your next group discussion. There is also a testimony at the end of this video which we pray that you will be blessed by. See you next time.

### **Time for reflection**

1. What are your personal beliefs about life?
2. How will these affect your faith in God?

### **Watch the testimony for this lesson**



### **Personal notes**