

Believing Doesn't "Just Happen"

You Must "WILL" to Believe!

(How does that work?)

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Many churches have enshrined what is called "the Sinner's prayer" as though repeating these words automatically brings *belief* – and thus instant salvation.

"Heavenly Father, I know that I am a sinner and that **I deserve to go to hell**. I **believe** that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. I do now receive Him as my Lord and personal Savior. I promise to serve you **to the best of my ability**. **Please save me**. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Obviously there are many problems with this "prayer."

1. The church uses it to remind the "sinner" that if he doesn't say this prayer (and join the church) he IS going to hell – a word that never appears in the Bible.
2. The 'sinner' says, "I believe. . ." Just how does the person obtain that immediate "belief"? Does "belief" appear by just saying the word?
3. The "sinner" promises to serve God "to the best of my ability." Is that standard good enough for God? God demands perfection: "You SHALL be perfect – even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matt 5:48 (Literal translation), It takes more than "the best of my ability" to become perfect, even though virtually ALL pastors preach that "No one can be perfect on this earth."

In fact, most pastors preach that "all we must do is try our best, and God will make up the rest." But how good is 'good enough'? No one ever gives the answer to that question.

Unfortunately, almost NO Christians truly "believe" in God -- though they will vehemently deny that.

The word *belief* is the same word as *faith* or *trust* in the Greek, the word *pistis*. The Bible tells us:

“What does it profit, my brethren, though a man SAY he has faith, and has not works (the actions that accompany that faith)? Can faith (alone) save him?

“Even so, Faith if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith BY my works.

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

“But you need to know, O foolish man, that faith WITHOUT works is DEAD.

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

“Seest thou how faith was working, and by works (actions) was faith made complete?

“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God.

“Do you see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

“For as the body without the breath is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” James 2:14,17-21

Faith, without the actions that correspond to that faith – is useless.

If one REALLY “believes” – his actions will correspond to what he says he “believes.”

What are the works of the flesh?
(They CAUSE disease, both physical and mental)

Adultery
Fornication

What are the fruits of the spirit?
(They CAUSE Healing.)

Love
Joy

Uncleanness
Licentiousness
Idolatry
Sorcery and witchcraft
Hatred
Contentions
Jealousies
Wrath
Selfish ambitions
Dissension
Heresies
Envyings,
Murders,
Drunkenness
Revellings

Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faith
Humility
Self Control

How do we change?

How do we get rid of the Lusts of the Flesh and obtain the Fruits of the Spirit so we can be well physically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically?

“Be anxious for nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

“And the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

“Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just (righteous), whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be anything praiseworthy, **think on these things.**” Phil 4:6-8

Guilt, Anger and Fear are Major Causes of both Physical and Mental Illness

It is IMPOSSIBLE to get well from a life-threatening physical illness or a serious mental illness while holding on to anger, grudges or fear (or any of the other lusts of the flesh).

They all trigger the Fight or Flight Reaction that causes adrenalin, cortisol, and many other damaging hormones to be produced in your body. Cortisol suppresses your immune system so it cannot fight disease.

Giving up Anger

One of the hardest things to change when one is trying to reverse a serious illness is to give up anger. The thoughts of anger and grudge-holding, lack of forgiveness, and even hatred continually pop into one's mind suddenly, without any warning. How does one get rid of them? How does one change?

1. Admit to yourself and to God that you have these thoughts, that you are still angry and hurt and unforgiving to the one who hurt you. If you hate this person who has wronged you, admit it to yourself and to God.
2. Tell God that you don't want to hate this person, but you do, even if your motives are selfish (you don't want to continue being sick – and maybe even die). After all, God knows your heart. Even if your motives are selfish, admitting that the anger is killing you, is a first step in the right direction.
3. **Prepare to succeed.** Decide in advance what you're going to do when those angry, unforgiving thoughts come into your mind. Decide that you are going to put those thoughts immediately out of your mind, and decide, in advance, what you're going to think about instead.

When a person wants to quit smoking, he or she may go to Smoking Cessation classes. One important principle that is always taught in those classes is to figure out when you will be most tempted to smoke a cigarette, then decide what you are going to do instead: chew a stick of gum, suck on a piece of hard candy, drink water, listen to some favorite music, eat a snack, etc. These things may not all be ideal for your general health, but none of them are as bad as smoking.

Likewise, if thoughts of anger, hatred and unforgiveness continue to pop into your mind, decide ahead of time what you're going to think about instead: the happiness surrounding the birth of a child, a favorite vacation, the fact that God is going to give you the power to overcome, or repeat a certain verse that is particularly important to you, or whatever other happy, noble thought can fill your mind.

And then - - - Do It! Every time!

You **MUST** Prepare to Succeed by doing this. If you don't you will never overcome these problems and you will never be able to get well.

You must dwell on the fact that anger is killing YOU, and not the other person who is the subject of your anger. That other person is going on his or her merry way, with no thought of you, whatsoever.

You must recognize that by holding on to anger, you are still allowing this other person (the subject of your anger) to **control** how you feel. Even though that person is nowhere near you, he or she is still controlling you. Don't allow that to happen.

You must dwell on the fact that the only One who can handle these burdens without it affecting Him – is the Lord.

You must dwell on the fact that, “God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7). The person who has harmed you WILL reap what he or she has sown – God will make sure of that. But all God's disciplines are remedial, not punitive. They are meant to turn us back to right doing, not to destroy us permanently.

Years ago, a woman acquaintance of mine was struggling with Breast Cancer. One day, when I ran into her, she told me how angry she was after having just found out yet another woman with whom her husband had cheated while married to her. This woman acquaintance of mine had been divorced for well over fifteen years, but this new information was making her very angry.

I suggested that she spend time in prayer with the Lord and ask Him to put it in her heart to forgive her husband – NOT to condone what he had done – but to forgive him, even if for her own health benefits. Then I suggested she write him a letter telling him that she forgave him.

Her response was, “I can't do that. My ex-husband has been DEAD for over ten years.”

Shocked, I replied, “Why are you letting this DEAD man control you from the grave!! He's dead and gone and you are still allowing him to make you angry, to the point that your cancer is continuing to progress. Get over it! Let it go! You're only killing yourself!”

As one writer wisely said,

“Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is...the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you have been given and the pain you are giving back – in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is

that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.” Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*

As Jesus said to the man at the pool of Bethesda, a man who had been sick, and apparently paralyzed for 38 years,

“Do you want to be well?”

That’s the question you must answer, “Do you want to be well?” And “How much do you want to be well?” Enough to give up your anger, grudge-holding, desire for revenge and unforgiveness? Would you rather be sick, whether emotionally, mentally or physically, rather than give up those destructive emotions? Would you rather hold on to them even to the point of dying from an illness?

And what about you?

Are you perfect? Have you never hurt anyone else? Has anyone ever forgiven you for your misdeeds?

The only Perfect One who has ever walked this earth is Jesus Christ. All the rest of us are sinners.

“ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

“But if you do NOT forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Matt 6:14,15

Belief/trust/faith

As stated above, the word **belief** in the Greek, is the same word for **trust** or **faith**. In order to trust someone, you must have a relationship with that person. You can’t “believe” what someone says if you don’t have a history with that person, a history of knowing that you can trust his or her word, knowing from past experience that this person WILL come through for you when necessary.

That’s why saying that little “Sinner’s prayer” is rather useless. You cannot “believe” in Jesus Christ if you have not had a personal, relationship with Him. That’s why church members go to “man” when they have problems, they go to doctors, psychologists, pastors, and psychiatrists, rather than turning to God.

They can’t “believe” in someone they can’t see.

But that's what it means to have "Faith." Faith means you believe WITHOUT seeing. It takes no "faith" to believe in something you can see!

And "Without Faith, it is impossible to please God." Heb 11:6

Handling Guilt Properly

Some New Age TV gurus say there is nothing that should make us feel guilty. They promote the idea that guilt is harmful to the psyche and there should be no such thing as guilt. "No one should feel guilty about anything" is their message.

Whatever happened to shame?

There seems to be no shame anymore – for anything. One is encouraged to "Do what thou wilt, that is the whole law," as stated by Satanist Aleister Crowley. And that is the way many people live. They are not ashamed of anything: drug abuse, pregnancy without marriage, the use of pornography, homosexuality. Everything now is O.K.! And if anyone has the audacity to think any of these things are wrong – or shameful – well, "the problem is with that person's bigotry and closed-mindedness." In other words, the present-day "morality" is that there are no actions that are "really wrong." It's just that some people are so "narrow-minded" that they *think* these actions are wrong.

But the right kind of guilt and shame is good. We should feel "guilty" for wrong behavior. It is this guilt, this understanding that we have failed our heavenly Father, the realization that we need help from God to run our life is a good kind of guilt. It should lead us to repentance. And true repentance not only gives forgiveness, but it brings peace.

But before we can be forgiven, if our wrong behavior has been against someone else, we must make that right with that person. And we also must be willing to forgive all those who have wronged us.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

"But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matt 6:14,15

If our sin is in our own conduct that has not harmed anyone else, we need to have the "guilt" that leads to repentance, and God will forgive us. But if we continue to hang onto that private, personal guilt even though God is willing to forgive, it means that we really don't "believe" in God. If we did, we would believe His promises, accept His forgiveness, change our behavior, move on with our life, and pursue an even closer relationship with the Lord.

If we choose to hang on to the guilt, it is either because we don't want to give up our bad behavior, or that we have chosen to wallow in self-pity. Self-pity reveals that we are selfish, self-centered, and immature. We need to grow up and become mature in Jesus Christ.

Overcoming Anxiety and Fear

No matter what the cause of the fear is – fear of failure, fear of normal social situations, fear of what others think, fear of the future – God has a remedy.

First, you must make sure that all the physical causes of anxiety and fear have been addressed in your life, including:

The proper nourishment for your body – a vegan vegetarian diet of unprocessed whole foods.

The elimination of all refined sugar and sugar substitutes.

The elimination of all processed foods, alcohol, smoking, caffeine, MSG, Nutrasweet, and other harmful substances

Daily exercise (relieves anxiety and stress)

The proper amount of purified water (relieves anxiety and stress)

The proper amount of sleep at the proper time of night (relieves anxiety and stress)

Sunlight and fresh air (relieves stress and boosts the immune system)

A close personal relationship with the Lord, knowing Him well enough that you can believe His promises, and trust Him with your life.

Your life is not subject to the whims of fate

God planned every day of your life before you were born. And everything that we go through – the good and the bad – is necessary for our purification and salvation. We are not subject to the whims of fate. God does not subject us to gratuitous (unnecessary) pain or sorrow. Everything that happens to us has a purpose – the purpose of helping us realize that we need Jesus Christ to run our life.

“Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?” Prov 20:24

“The steps of a man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way.” Psalm 37:23

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” Prov 3:5,6

“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” Jer 10:23

“All is of God, through God and to (for) God.” Romans 11:36

God is in charge of every moment of your life. Nothing can happen to you unless God allows it. And if God allows it, He will go through it with you.

“Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yea, I will help you; yea I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.” Isaiah 41:9

“The righteous cry, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.” Ps 34:17

“Be anxious for nothing.” Phil 4:6

“Therefore I say unto you, Do not worry about your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink: nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

“Behold the fowls of the air: for they do not sow, nor do they reap, nor gather food into barns; yet your heavenly Father =feeds them. Are you not much better than they?

“Take no thought saying, what shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink” Or with what shall we be clothed?

“Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matt 6:25-33

“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort Me.” Psalm 23:4

“Call to Me and I will answer you.” Jer 33:3

“I will never leave you or forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5

If necessary, write your favorite texts on 3 x 5 cards and carry them with you. When thoughts of fear come to your mind, memorize, and concentrate on, these calming promises in God’s Word.

How do we Learn to “Believe”?

Study to Show Thyself Approved

We learn by studying. Facts are learned through our five senses. But Wisdom is required to use those facts to reach the right conclusion. And ALL wisdom comes from God.

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally without reproach, and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, never doubting. For he that doubts is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

“For let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord.

“A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways.” James 1:5-8

“Faith (Belief) comes by Hearing (understanding) the word of God.”
Romans 10:17

We must seek the Lord with all our Heart

“You will seek Me and you will find Me (but only) when you seek Me with all your heart.”

You Must WILL to Believe!

Everything in this carnal world will tempt you away from believing in God and His Word. Your family and friends will push you to follow the world’s way. The “Experts” will urge you to believe in “science” – rather than to believe in God. Satan will try to overwhelm you with Fear and Guilt. Satan will incite you to be angry and hold grudges.

But you must say, in essence, “Get behind me Satan.”

You have to make a choice: will you follow God’s way or will you follow man’s way – Satan’s way - the antithesis of Jesus Christ and His way.

You must “Prepare to Succeed.” You must decide ahead of time to stand for the Lord. Even if you stand alone, with no one by your side by Jesus Christ, you will have the greatest power in the Universe with you. As the apostle Paul said:

“No one stood with me, but all forsook me. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.” 2 Timothy 4:16,17

When everything looks dark, and there appears to be no way out of the dire situation you are in, you must WILL to “Believe.” You must stand firmly on God’s promises. That is what it means to have Faith – to believe in the Lord and His promises when there appears to be no hope!