

Get into the Action!

3. This I Believe #1

The Importance of What We Believe

I guess we have all come across the saying that “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe something”. Consider this cartoon depicting a man who has climbed a ladder. The steps have given way and he is heading for the ground. The caption says, “It does matter what you believe as long as you believe it!”



How have you been growing this past week? Keep up the regular daily feeding of your life with God’s Word! Life can get very busy, but we are heading for trouble if we don’t give ourselves regular time with God.

Let’s go over together your discoveries (and questions) from the week’s readings set in *It’s a Great Life!* Those readings focussed our attention on what we call “assurance”, knowing we are forgiven, that we are in a right relationship with God, that when we die we will go to heaven. Think about your response on p.17.

#1 Why can I be sure that I have eternal life?

It does matter what you believe as long as you believe it!

The cartoon is graphically suggesting the danger of putting your faith in what is untrue, no matter how plausible it may seem. It has been said that “mankind is incurably religious” – as if to infer, “we need religion” and “any religion is better than none”. There is, of course, a hunger for God, a need for God, which people try to satisfy in all sorts of false ways.

The caption is emphasising that it's not just a question of having a right set of beliefs, but of actually putting your trust in them!

The Bible – the Foundation of What We Know

The *Basis of Union* of the Uniting Church (para.5) states that “the Church has received the books of the Old and New Testaments as unique prophetic and apostolic testimony, in which she hears the Word of God and by which her faith and obedience are nourished and regulated. When the Church preaches Jesus Christ, her message is controlled by the Biblical witnesses. The Word of God on whom man’s salvation depends is to be heard and known from Scripture appropriated in the worshipping and witnessing life of the Church. The Uniting Church lays upon her members the serious duty of reading the Scriptures, commits her ministers to preach from these and to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as effective signs of the Gospel set forth in the Scriptures.”

This statement clearly emphasises that the Bible is not just important for Christian growth (as we noted last week), but for all the Church believes and does. Let’s look again at Hebrews 1.1-2.

“God has spoken” _____

“Of old” “in these last days”

“In many and various ways”

“By the prophets” _____

“By His Son” _____

The Uniting Church also commits ministers and instructors to study the witness of the Reformation fathers “as expressed in various ways in the *Scots Confession of Faith* (1560), the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), and the *Savoy Declaration* (1658),” and “to listen to the preaching of John Wesley in his *Forty-Four Sermons* (1793)” (*Basis* para.10).

Next session we want to look specifically at some of the things we believe. We won’t be able to cover all of Genesis to Revelation! However, we will use the framework of the *Apostles’ Creed* to help organise our thoughts as we consider some of our key doctrines.

Keep on Growing!

The third week’s readings in *It’s a Great Life!* focus on growth, covering some things we talked about in our session last week. Make sure that your reading flows into praying. The Christian life is a relationship!

¹ Paul Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith*, p. 117. Intervarsity, Chicago, 1966

Peter (2 Peter 1.20-21) says that prophecy came as men “moved (carried/blown along) by the Spirit spoke from God”. Paul (2 Timothy 3.16) describes Scripture as being “inspired (breathed out) by God”.

We know about God, His plan for the world, the meaning of life itself.... by REVELATION. The Bible is the Word of God written. It bears witness to Jesus, “the Word made flesh” (John 1.14; 5.39-40).

Statements of Faith

The Bible is our final authority in all matters of faith and conduct, but it is an historical collection of divine revelation, not an organised statement of what we believe!

So across the centuries – often because of the pressure of unbelief or of false belief – a number of other important statements of faith have been made. These are secondary to the Bible, and need to be interpreted in the light of Biblical teaching.

The Uniting Church acknowledges the **Apostles’ Creed** and the *Nicene Creed* “as authoritative statements of the catholic faith, framed in the language of their day and used by Christians in many days, to declare and to guard the right understanding of that faith” (*Basis* para.9).