

50 Days of Living and Loving



Believing, Following, & Listening

Easter is more than just a day. It is a 50-day season that marks the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the ways we live into that reality, just as his disciples did. **50 Days of “Living” and “Loving” as God would have us Live and Love.** I want to focus on how to integrate faith into daily Christian living. **Believing, Following, and Listening** - This is how we live as a witness of the risen Christ!!

To Live for Jesus is to Believe in Him



BELIEVE IN ME
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- The Disciples were scared
- Jesus brought peace
- The peace of Jesus brings Power & Responsibility

To Live for Jesus is to Believe in Him - **Jesus arrives among a group of disciples who are scared for their lives**; they have every right to be. They saw their leader crucified and are concerned that they might be next. It is perfectly understandable for them to feel scared, anxious, and nervous—anything but peaceful. The disciples feared the Jewish and Roman authorities who had conspired to crucify Jesus. They feared those authorities because they feared that they could be next. That is a justified and specific fear. Many times later, the religious leaders had the disciples of Jesus arrested and brought before the ruling council. Then Jesus appears and states, “Peace be with you.” This ought to be seen as more than just a greeting. **With Jesus, comes peace.** I imagine that the disciples felt better once they saw that what was before them was not a ghost, nor a figment of imagination. Before them was Jesus; and to be in the presence of Jesus is to experience a “peace that surpasses all understanding.”

The Peace of Jesus Brings Power and Responsibility. After greeting them and bringing them peace, Jesus breathed on them, gave them the Holy Spirit, and then immediately gave them a task. God’s peace does not mean lack of fear or anxiousness. Having received verification that their leader was still with them, and that, indeed, they served a risen and living savior, they were instructed about how their life would change. They were to live as sent people. With the power of the Holy Spirit, they were sent into the world to reconcile the world to God and to forgive.

Thomas Believes

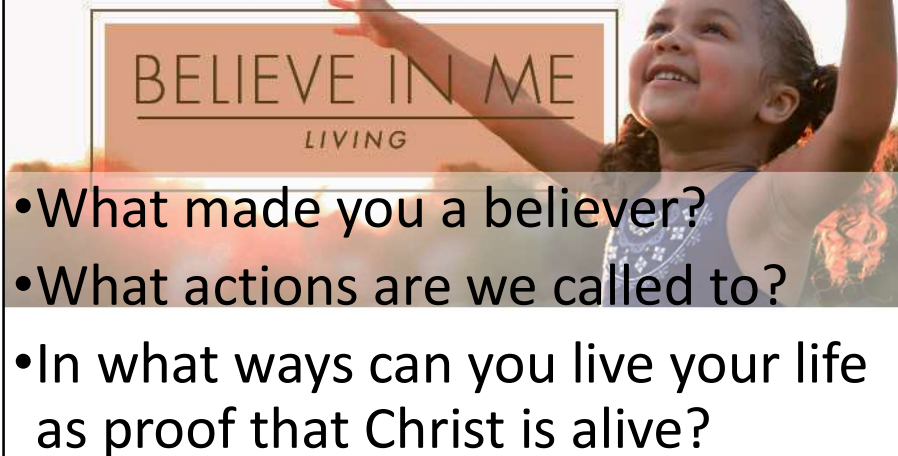


BELIEVE IN ME
LIVING

- Jesus did not hold his unbelief against Thomas
- Jesus met him where he was.
- Jesus led him to believe!!

Thomas Believes - Thomas is often given a bad rep for not believing what the other disciples had told him. However, it is perfectly reasonable to not believe that a dead man has risen from the dead. To believe also presents a certain vulnerability. If one believes that a deepest desire is true, that person opens himself/herself up to a happiness that could be taken away if proven not to be true. It is understandable. However, Thomas robbed himself of a week of joy because he refused to believe the testimony of his trusted friends. Jesus did not hold it against Thomas. Instead Jesus gave Thomas what he needed so he could believe. Jesus gives make-up tests. We don't miss out because we don't believe when others believe. **Jesus meets us where we are.** Jesus also spoke to Thomas in a way that did not focus on his doubt, but that was meant to move Thomas to belief. And Thomas believed. This belief then moved him to make a strong confession. To say "My Lord and my God" is to recognize the divinity of Christ and to recognize that Jesus is one with God. Thomas' belief moved him to make a powerful confession of who Jesus is.

Blessed are those
who have not seen
but have come to believe!



“Blessed are those who have not seen but have come to believe.”

I have never seen the human, historical Jesus. Yet, it does not mean that my belief hasn't been helped by seeing and believing. I saw the work and life of other Christian believers. Seeing them helped me believe in a historical Jesus whose form I do not see. But I do see Jesus in other ways. May we be blessed because we believe, though we do not see!

- **What event or series of events made you a believer? How can you connect to those moments in difficult times of unbelief?**
- **Now that we have the peace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, what action(s) are we being called to do?**
- **In what ways can you live your life as proof to others that Christ is alive?**

To Live for Jesus is to Believe in Him



BELIEVE IN ME
LIVING

- To Believe is to Live in Peace
- To Believe is to have Power
- To Believe is to be Responsible

To summarize:

God's purpose in raising Jesus from the dead is not to condemn and destroy, but instead to grant the gift of repentance and forgiveness. What God promises and accomplishes is life rather than death, freedom rather than confinement, mercy rather than revenge. That is the Kingdom to which the church is still called to bear witness in words and in actions.

To Believe is to Live in Peace

To Believe is to have Power

To Believe is to be Responsible

