

Introduction

Today, I'm preaching the second sermon in a four-sermon series titled *The Mind of Christ*. The mind of Christ has four essential characteristics. I preached about the first last week. It's informed. I'm preaching about the second today.

I begin with six questions. Please answer them by raising your hands. #1 – Should you stop going to movies if your doing so offends another Christian? Yes. No. #2 - Is it better to vote straight ticket Republican or Democrat? Yes. No. #3 – Are followers of Jesus better off dead? Yes. No. #4 – Should you pray and ask God to do or give something once and no more? Yes. No. #5 - Does God require you to give at least 10% of your income to Him no matter how little or much you make? Yes. No. And #6 – Is it better to follow your heart rather than your head in deciding whom to marry? Yes. No.

Those answers you gave reveal something significant – beliefs you have. Almost all of you, for instance, believe that followers of Jesus are better off dead. Those answers you gave raise an issue. Do you believe what Jesus does about those things? That introduces us to the second essential characteristic of a mind that's like that of Jesus. It shares His beliefs and that's what I'm going to preach about today.

What Beliefs Are

I start with belief and what it is. According to *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, it's the conviction of the truth of something. "Conviction" is the operative word here. We're convinced in our mind that something is so. That something that we're convinced is so is a belief.

We see two such beliefs in Genesis 22:1-14. Verse 1 says that God "tempted" Abraham. The better translation of the Hebrew word is "tested" or "proved." That means that He did something to reveal what Abraham truly believed. Verse 2 records what that was. He commanded him to take his Isaac to Mount Moriah, kill him, and offer him as a

sacrifice to Him. That's what He commanded and Abraham set out to do it. He left for Moriah in verse 3 and arrived in verse 4. He then told his servant in verse 5: **"Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."**

What a revealing statement that is. He truly intended to kill his son. So why did he say that they'd both be back? Hebrews 11:17-19 tells us. It's because of what he believed, two things: that God would do what he promised in Genesis 21:12, give him descendants through Isaac, and that God would resurrect Isaac after he killed him. The comment he made to his servant shows it. He was fully convinced in his mind that both of those things were so. Both, therefore, were beliefs of his.

But what about us? What are our beliefs? What are the things that we're convinced are so? There are thousands of them of course about a whole range of issues and topics, big and small. A mother and daughter, for instance, were arguing over the daughter getting her nosed pierced. The daughter stated her case and said that nose piercings and ear piercings, which her mother had, are fundamentally the same. What do you believe? Are nose piercings and ear piercings fundamentally the same? My point in asking is this. All of us have thousands of beliefs about a whole range of issues and topics, big and small.

What Beliefs Do

And you know what? Those beliefs govern our lives. I like the way Dallas Willard says it. They're the rails upon which our lives run.

We see that in Genesis 22. The opening phrases of verse 2 show us who this one was that God commanded Abraham to kill – his son, his only son, whom he loved. Those phrases highlight the tension he must have felt when God gave him the command. But as contrary to morality, good sense, and love as it was, notice what he did in verse 9, **"stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son."** And he would have slain him if God hadn't stopped him in verses 11-14. Let me ask you a question about that. Why did Abraham do what he did? It's because he

believed what he believed – the two things I discussed before.

That teaches us one of the fundamental truths of our existence. Our beliefs govern our lives. They are the rails upon which our lives run. They determine what we think, feel, say, and do. We always live consistently with what we truly believe.

Take how we feel, for instance. Suppose that I find out that I have only three months to live. How will I feel about that? It depends on what I believe. If I'm convinced I'm better off dead, I'll feel destined. But if I'm not convinced I'm better off dead, I'll feel doomed.

Or take how we act. My wife believes that parents yelling at their children is destructive and ineffective – that it harms their psyche and makes them less likely to obey. That's her belief and she acts consistently with it. I've never even once heard her yell at our sons.

It's true. Our beliefs govern our lives.

Share the Beliefs of Jesus

So, have the faith **of** Jesus. I say faith because that's what belief is. It's faith. To have the faith **of** Jesus means to have the beliefs of Jesus. We talk all the time about having faith **in** Jesus and we must to be saved. We must believe in Him. But once we do, we must then seek to have the faith **of** Jesus. We must seek to share His beliefs. Abraham certainly did. He believed two things that Jesus does - Father God always keeps His promises and has the power to raise people from the dead. He had faith **of** Jesus, in other words, and so must we.

I say "must" because our living abundantly and well depends on it. When our beliefs are like those of Jesus, we live **up** to them. They increase love, peace, and joy. But when they're unlike those of Jesus, we live **down** to them. They decrease love, peace, and joy. So, once again, let's have the faith **of** Jesus. Let's share His beliefs.

Now, having the faith **of** Jesus is first and foremost the work of the Holy Spirit. He Himself creates and sustains the beliefs of Jesus in us. But, as with most things in our lives with God, we have a part to play in

that. Our part is to do two things.

Identify Our Beliefs

First, we have to identify our beliefs. That is not “a given” believe me. There’s something we need to understand. We don’t always know what we believe. Almost all of us profess to believe things that we really don’t. It isn’t usually that we’re lying. It’s that we’re mistaken. We ourselves don’t realize that we don’t believe them. But we don’t have to be in that boat and, if we identify our beliefs, won’t be.

There is a practical way to identify our beliefs. It’s by carefully examining what we feel and do. Recall what I said earlier. We always live consistently with what we truly believe. Our beliefs create and sustain our feelings and actions. It’s in those very feelings and actions, therefore, that we discover our beliefs. We determine the beliefs that are necessary to create and sustain what we’re feeling or doing. We then conclude that we possess those beliefs.

Suppose that I’m unattractive and embarrassed that I am. I can determine the primary belief that creates and sustains that feeling. It’s that physical beauty, not beauty of character, is supreme. My feeling, therefore, shows me what I believe – that physical beauty is supreme. Or suppose that I don’t study the Bible. I can determine at least three beliefs that create and sustain that action: (1) God didn’t write the Bible; (2) It doesn’t give the best information about the most important matters in human life; and (3) Even with the Holy Spirit’s help, I’m not able to understand it. My action, therefore, shows me what I believe - one or more of those three.

You can see from what I’ve said that identifying our beliefs can be a painful thing. It does require an honesty and objectivity that probably most people aren’t willing to give. But give it we must. Why? It’s because identifying our beliefs is the first thing we have to do in order to have the faith **of** Jesus.

Inform Our Beliefs

The second thing we have to do is inform our beliefs. Once we know what they are, we have to inform them.

The truth is that many of our most critical beliefs aren't informed. I once counseled a Christian who had a hard hearted and horribly abusive husband. She wouldn't divorce him though because, she said, the only Biblical grounds for divorce is adultery. I asked her why she believed that and she told me. It's because that's what she was taught. I ask you what I asked her. Why do you believe the things you do? Maybe it's because that's what you were taught or that's what your personal community or peer group believe and so on.

Those, however, are not legitimate bases of belief. Last week, I talked about lack of information and misinformation. Sadly, many of our beliefs, including life-defining ones, are uninformed or misinformed. They're based on insufficient or incorrect information. That's a problem though. It makes them far more likely to be invalid and untrue.

The beliefs of Jesus are valid and true. To have the mind of Jesus, therefore, ours must be valid and true as well. And the only way they can be that is if we inform them. We inform them by doing two things.

First, we examine the strengths and weaknesses of our beliefs. We do that in two ways. #1 - bring facts to bear on a belief. We study and learn facts that are relevant to it. We then analyze how it stands up under those facts. #2 - determine the belief's implications. We ask and answer questions like the following. If this belief is true, what must also be true or false? Or if it's false, what must also be true or false? Or if it's true, what are the practical results, good and bad, to which it leads? Or if it's false what are those results to which it leads?

We inform our beliefs by doing a second thing. We examine the the strengths and weakness of opposing beliefs. Objectivity and the pursuit of truth require it. We do that in the same two ways. #1 - bring facts to bear on the belief. And #2 - determine its implications.

Take my belief that God is triune, one being with three persons, as

an example of what I mean. Whether or not it's a triune universe is one of the most vital issues in human life. So, I did two things.

First, I examined the strengths and weakness of *my belief*. #1 - I brought facts to bear on it. When I read the Bible, for instance, and came across a verse that seems to teach the deity of the Son and Holy Spirit, I wrote it down and studied it. There are 25 such verses. #2 - I determined its implications. One is that sexual intercourse is a spiritual act. Another is that monogamous marriage between a man and woman is the foundational unit of society.

But I also did a second thing. I examined the strengths and weakness of *the opposing belief* – that God is one being with one person, Jesus a created being, and the Holy Spirit a force. #1 - I brought facts to bear on it. When I read the Bible, for instance, and came across a verse that seems to teach that, I wrote it down and studied it. There are eight such verses. #2 - I determined its implications. One is that God needs creatures to love, which means He isn't self-sufficient.

Stop and think about the issues in life that matter most to you: God, the Bible, divorce, politics, abortion, working, success, money, sports, raising children, and more. What are your beliefs about those things? Whatever they are, you need to examine them and their opposites. Two things will happen to your beliefs if you do. The ones that are valid and true, like God is triune, will be strengthened and affirmed. And the ones that are invalid and untrue will be challenged and hopefully replaced.

Conclusion

You'll then be certain of what you believe. Author Olin Miller wrote a little line about just that. It goes like this, "**To be absolutely certain about something, one must know everything or nothing about it.**" That is a profound insight and a fitting closing to this sermon. Are you certain about your beliefs? If so, it's because you know either everything or nothing about them? Make it everything by informing your beliefs. You'll have the beliefs and thus the mind of Jesus if you do.