

FUNDAMENTAL LIST – 2 of 7
Jesus Came to Illustrate and Demonstrate What God Is Like
August 11, 2024

INTRODUCTION Have you ever looked at a picture of something and then see it in reality, and the picture just didn't do the real thing justice. Right?

Maybe you've seen a pic of the Grand Canyon, then see it in reality, or read a description or somebody gives a description – It just doesn't do it justice.

The same is true when it comes to God. Whatever picture I have when it comes to God, it isn't big enough. The pictures and the words and the descriptions just aren't enough.

Today, we're in part two of the series, we began last week. Not all series build on each other, but this one does. The title of this series is **The Fundamental List**.

If you're going to follow this series, don't miss a single part because they build on each other, and the point of this series is we're asking the question,

WHAT MUST WE BELIEVE IN ORDER TO BE A FAITHFUL FOLLOWER OF JESUS?

Not what must a person do, we talk about that all the time. And we will always talk about that because doing is what makes the difference, not simply believing.

But it's important, especially with things going on in our culture, to ask the question, **"In order to be a faithful follower of Jesus, what do I have to believe?"**

What's essential and what's non-essential? One of the things that makes us so confusing is that Christianity is like a giant house made up of only living rooms, and all the giant living rooms have double doors to the outside world.

And each one of these living rooms are full of people who are inviting people into their particular expression of Christianity, and each one of these, have different living rooms of traditions of Christianity.

And the thing about each one of these, they all come with their own terms, conditions, traditions, interpretations, translations, they don't even all use the same Bible.

In fact, pretty much the only thing they have in common is that they're all absolutely confident that they're right, and everybody else is not right, and so they set themselves apart.

And the other thing that makes this confusing is that in every generation, new and novel ideas get intertwined or woven into Christian traditions.

Sometimes those new and novel things that get woven in, rise to the point where they're considered essential, they become part of a tradition's theology. They become doctrine and dogma.

When that happens, non-essentials become obstacles. Obstacles to a person's faith, leaning in and trying to figure out what is this all about, I want to follow Jesus, but now I've bumped into something that I'm not sure that's part of the equation.

And when that happens, thoughtful, mature people step back to reconsider.

And sometimes, their faith survives because they just go find another living room, but a lot of people just step out of the living room and say, **"You know what, I'm done with Christianity, I'm done with faith, I'm done with church."**

It was either so harmful or hurtful to someone they love, they decide, **"I just can't do that anymore."** And because you're thoughtful and mature, you begin to compare the teaching of a church, to what you see in Jesus and the Gospels.

And you realize something's just off, I'm no Bible scholar, I'm no preacher, I'm no theologian, but there... I just can't imagine that's what this is supposed to be like.

And it felt un-Christ-like, and these people knew the Bible verses, but you just wondered if they actually knew Jesus.

So what's merely cultural, familiar, comfortable, fashionable, what's essential? When novel ideas and harmful ideas get woven into the fabric of certain threads and expressions of Christianity, and are considered essential,

Christianity, or the Christian faith eventually becomes untenable and un-livable for someone.

It's no longer good news of great joy for all people. It becomes good news of great joy for a segment of people. And that's a problem, because when Jesus showed up on planet earth, the message was called the Gospel, the good news.

So in part one, as we make this list. We began with Peter's declaration of who Jesus is. Jesus said, **"Who do you say that I am?"**

Matthew 16:16 says, *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

And Jesus said, **"Correct. In fact, Peter, not only is it correct, you didn't come up with this on your own. My Father in Heaven revealed this to you."**

So we decided last week, it's essential to believe that Jesus is who Jesus claimed to be. God's final king.

NUMBER ONE: JESUS IS GOD'S SON AND OUR KING.

But Jesus, unlike other kings, did not come to draw attention to Himself. Jesus came to do something else, and that's what leads us to our second essential.

So during Jesus' final conversation with His apostles right before he would be arrested and crucified, they're celebrating Passover together. And he explains, we're about to have a major disruption.

The disciples are troubled by what He said. Here's what He said.

He says in John 14:1, ***"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me."***

What if I said that, **"Hey, things are tough in the world, but wait a minute don't be troubled, you trust God, don't you? Well, yeah, well just trust me."**

For just a moment, if you can just imagine that you are in this room. That you were sitting on the floor against the wall.

It's not lit very well. It's at night. It's oil lamps, a little smoky, smell the food, the sweat of the men, it's hot. And sitting at this table is a man in a robe with a beard.

He says the following things to the men in the room. I want you to put yourself there.

John 14:7 says, *⁷"If you really know me, you will know my Father as well."*

When the implications of this statement settle in on you, when they get from your head to your heart, this will redefine your view of God.

When you hear God, and when you hear Jesus, is there a tension? Do these two words, God and the name Jesus do they conjure up, if you're honest, different emotions?

There is a tension that Jesus came to resolve. And as long as many of us have been in church, and as many times as we've heard the Bible stories, there's still a tension. There's God, and there's Jesus.

And Jesus smiles at them in the room and he smiles at you. And he says, there should be no tension. He doubles down, look at this.

Jesus says in John 14:7-10, *⁸"From now on, you do know him and have seen him."*

And they respond just like they should. Wait a minute. And Philip, who's sitting there finally says what the rest of them are thinking, and I love this. He's trying not to be impolite. He's trying not to be offensive.

John 14:8 says, *⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."*

Just look, I'm not disputing you, I'm not arguing with you. We're just confused, and we do want to know what God is like. We do want to know what God is like, right? Well, we want to know exactly what God is like.

Just show us the Father, and that will be enough for us. Because hey, we have Torah and that helps, and we have the prophets and that helps.

We have the Psalms and that helps. We have the temple, we have the priests, we have our history but there's so much mystery.

And God seems so far away at times, and the Romans are here and none of this makes sense. But we do believe you've come from God. Would you just show us the Father? Would you just make it clear for us?

Jesus is thinking, show you the Father? Guys, what do you think I've been doing for the last three years? Why do you think I stuck around? Why is it that I made sure you were there with me?

Guys, I didn't come to provide more Bible stories. The reason I came is so that you could know what the Father is like.

John 14:9 says, *⁹Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?"*

Think of how many miles we've walked together, how many campfires we've built together, how many conversations we've had, how many things you've seen me do,

how many questions I've answered and answered and answered and answered, how many boneheaded ideas you guys had.

And I'm like, no, we're not going to call down fire and burn up the Samaritans. That's not what we're here for. Why do you think I have been among you for so long?

He continues, *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?*

What if he's right? What if Jesus is as close as you will ever get, and as close as I will ever get to knowing what God is like?

He goes on, *¹⁰The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.*

If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father. If you've heard Me, you've heard the Father. If you've watched Me, you've been watching the Father at work.

He would later say, I don't do anything on my own initiative. The reason I'm here is so that you can know what God is like. I came to remove some of the mystery. I came to add some personality.

I came to do what God wants me to do so that you can know what he's like. I'm the king, but I'm not even here on my own behalf. I'm here on his behalf, because he wants to be known.

He has come to dwell among you to reduce the distance. You want to know what God is like?

You want to know what God likes? You want to know what God has to say? Would you like to know how God would respond? Jesus says, it's simple. Just watch me, listen to me. Jesus is as good as it gets. Jesus is as close as we get.

If you're going to be a faithful follower of Jesus, this is essential. The Gospels are not additional Bible stories. The old Gospels are not Bible stories about Jesus. The Gospels document Jesus' explanation of what God is like.

And as obvious as that should be, it is so difficult for us modern Christians to wrap our minds around that.

Think about this. If Jesus was telling them the truth, then when you open your New Testament, and if you have a red letter Bible, you see those red letters, when you read the words of Jesus, you are reading literally the words of God, your Father.

It's one thing for God to inspire a prophet to write something, but Jesus is speaking directly on behalf of God, because he's God's son and God's spokesman to the world.

And he didn't just come to teach us cool things. He came to reveal what and who the Father values, and how the Father responds to sinners, and repenting sinners, and prodigal sons and prodigal daughters and prodigal everybody.

But here's the interesting thing. This is another reason we should take this seriously. In the first century, there was a Pharisee who was absolutely committed to Torah, God's covenant with Israel, because he was a Hebrew.

He then becomes a Jesus follower and abandons the old covenant, and embraces the new covenant.

In fact, he's the one who gives us the law of Christ. I'm abandoning all those laws to embrace the law of Christ.

And Saul of Tarsus who becomes the apostle Paul, who was a Pharisee, tells us, **“Look, I've been on that side and now I'm on this side.**

And this side wasn't wrong it was just inadequate. But the reality of what that pointed to has come and all of you need to join this side.”

And so he preaches to first century Jews, **“Hey, what God promised to do in the past, he has done. He has shown up in the person of Jesus, Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.**

And you need to join me in following him, that everything that came before was fine, but it was a sign that pointed to something.

What has happened in our midst, in our generation is far superior to any of that.”

He writes in Colossians 2:17, *These are a shadow of the things that were to come;...*

And then he says, *the reality, however, is found in Christ.*

When John, who spent all those years with Jesus, sat down to begin his Gospel. He's an old man, he's dictating this, he's trying to figure out how do I start this story?

And other people have written about it. Luke says a lot of people tried to write about it, because it was such a big deal. And John begins his Gospel.

What came before wasn't wrong, it was just incomplete. The author of Hebrews echoes this. Listen, this is what the author of Hebrews, we don't know who wrote the New Testament document we call Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:1, *¹The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.*

Since the beginning of the world, men and women have been searching for God. The pagan world was extraordinarily religious.

Everybody believed in the gods, and they would add gods and subtract gods and your gods are bigger than my gods.

But everybody had gods, everybody was constantly looking up, trying to figure out what is it like, what's going on, what's behind all of this?

And until the arrival of Jesus, even the Jews, wondered and tried to figure this out. And then with the arrival of Jesus, God made it as clear as it could possibly be made clear to mortal people. He sends God in the flesh to dwell among us.

And so many people recorded the words and the works of Jesus, that four survived antiquity. He came to show us what God is like. And he came to show us who God loves.

Jesus didn't simply have the best explanation for God. Like some of the Old Testament writers had explanations for God. Jesus, this is the bottom line. Jesus is the best explanation of God.

So the second thing that we must believe in order to be a faithful follower of Jesus is,

NUMBER TWO: JESUS CAME TO ILLUSTRATE AND TO DEMONSTRATE WHAT GOD IS LIKE.

That we are not left to draw conclusions about God based on our personal experience, our emotions, or even nature. If you want to know what God is like, it's this simple. This is why it's so brilliant.

If you want to know what God is like, God is like Jesus. And that's good news, because that means God loves you personally, and God has forgiven you, because Jesus was given the authority to forgive sin at will.

So I want to end with the question: Does your view of God the Father align with your view of Jesus the Son? When you think God, and when you think the name Jesus, is there a tension?

According to Jesus, you will not know what the Father is like until you take the time to discover what Jesus is like. And you get the clearest picture of Jesus in the Gospels by following him through the Gospels.

So fundamental number one, Jesus is God's son and our king. Fundamental number two, Jesus came to illustrate and to demonstrate what God is like.

But Jesus came to do something else as well within the context of this. And we're going to pick it up right there next time in part three of **The Fundamental List**.

THE END