**How Doe One Come to Faith**

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| **Slide #** | **Sermon** |
| 1 | The Lord says –  My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words.  **21**Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;  **22**for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body.  (Proverbs 4:20-22, NIV) |
| 2 | Title Slide- How Does one Come to faith? |
| 3 | During the Sundays of Easter, we find lots of resurrection stories and how different disciples came to believe Jesus rose from the dead. Sometimes we yearn to have been back there, when Jesus appeared because there would be no doubt in us. We could believe unquestionably. But I wonder how true this yearning is? |
| 4 | Luke seems to teach us that faith is not, I repeat, not generated primarily by overwhelming, cosmic demonstrations of Jesus’ resurrection. Luke seems to say to us it is in and through what one has at his or her disposal that Jesus meets us and convinces us to believe.  Recall how various people came to faith: |
| 5 | John: The Beloved Disciple – Saw the absence of Jesus’ body and believed. |
| 6 | Mary: Heard with her ear and heart Jesus calling her name and believed. |
| 7 | Peter: Saw the physical presence of Jesus and believed |
| 8 | Thomas: Saw and touched Jesus and believed. |
| 9 | Two followers of Jesus on the Emmaus Road – ate with Jesus and broke bread with him and in their table fellowship believed. |
| 10 | Today, we look at another of Jesus’ appearances to his followers. Here we find Jesus suddenly in the room. He sees that they are troubled and confused. He shows them his hands and feet and offers himself to be touched. They still did not believe because of joy and amazement”. If anything, this overwhelming, ghostly appearance of Jesus was blocking their belief. So, Jesus seeks to calm them by eating fish and talking to them. |
| 11 | Then Jesus does a most important thing. He recalls his teaching of the scripture to them. “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. In other words, Jesus refers the disciples back to what they had and would always have at their disposal – The Scripture. |
| 12 | And it is through the scripture they came to faith. Nothing is more clear in Luke: “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone shall rise from the dead. (Luke 16:31) It is not the miraculous, the sensational, that generates faith, but it is the true meaning of scripture about the works of God that causes them to believe. A primary means of coming to faith is through the scripture.  The hold of the disciples’ ignorance was broken, and they realized the truth of the last two weeks of his life – then his death and now his resurrection. |
| 13 | Jesus interpreted the Old Testament in light of the events of his life. This is our key to understand the Old Testament scripture. It can only be properly understood when we see through the lens of the crucified and risen Savior. In other words, the Old Testament (Old Covenant) is preparation for the New Testament (New Covenant) and is the fulfillment of God’s plan for the world’s salvation. When the disciples realized this truth about Christ, then the events of Holy Week and Easter fall into place. |
| 14 | Their faith and lives jelled and the result was a faith that propelled them out into the world by the Pentecost Holy Spirit power. The scripture broke open that way to faith. |
| 15 | Rom 10:17 “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” |
| 16 | Question: How can this happen for us?  Scripture can have the same power to generate, renew, and deepen our faith in much the same way if we will open ourselves to it. |
| 17 | My former brother-in-law, Tommy, lives in Myrtle Beach, S.C> and we were down visiting after Easter one year. He’s a successful trial lawyer, a bit of a celebrity in lower South Carolina. He also teaches a Sunday School class in his UM church. The senior highs; grades 9-12  He took the class many years ago with 3 or 4 students – and within 3 years there was 30-40 in his class each week!  Every year when the new high school group comes in, he gives the same welcoming lecture. Point of it goes something like this:  Folks have been making you feel all your life that being a Christian and going to heaven is easy! No matter what your answers were to questions in S.S. classes, the teacher tried to make you feel good then.  That’s over! I’m here to tell you that it’s not easy to be a Christian and getting to heaven is tough! In fact, I want you to know that the minimum requirement for getting into heaven is that you thoroughly read the whole Bible. Now, I know most of you are smart enough to realize that if our faith is based on One book, that God will expect us to have read that one book very carefully and I’m sure you have! But I suspect a couple of you have not yet done so. (By this time the seniors and juniors who have been there a couple of years have little smiles on their faces) Yet, you’ve watched 468 hours of Bill Cosby; 832 hours of MTV, etc. etc.  And in our Christian faith we really have this one volume of 66 books to shape and strengthen our faith. And many adults in our church haven’t read it. I believe when we stand before St. peter at those Pearly gates of heaven, one questions we’ll be asked – Have we read God’s Word? The Bible? Reading the whole Bible cover to cover is a minimum requirement for being a Christian! |
| 18 | He’s not far off! The word of God – this Bible – can’t do a thing for us unless we read it, study it, allow its stories to permeate our very being! There’s so much of God’s teaching and presence in our lives we’ll miss if we don’t read this Book.  EX: Some of you recall what has been called Bible Sword Drills. Memorizing Bible verses and facts and having contest to see who knew the most verses. Now memorization has been proven to be a less than desirable method of learning because knowing without making it applicable to life has little value. But such memory work is not to be totally disregarded! |
| 19 | Reading and knowing the Scripture, even when understanding is absent, prepares each of us for God’s spirit to teach us truth. Those who read scripture regularly put themselves at God’s disposal, so that at anytime and anyplace and with anybody; life can be used to teach them what the scripture says. Even if regular reading of the Bible doesn’t seem to make much sense or speak to you right now, it puts you in a position for God to teach you. Scripture can and does interrupt us and our lives. Our experience can clarify its meaning for us. |
| 20 | If we don’t read and know scripture – even if its confusing and contradictory – then how can it ever speak to us?  EX: I was talking to one of my church members in a former appointment the other day. During Lent and Easter, this member had decided to read through the Gospels several chapters each night. She admitted that it doesn’t all make sense but that’s okay. In God’s time and wisdom this Scripture can and will speak to her day to day living. |
| 21 | The disciples could never have been persuaded to believe that Jesus had risen from the grave if they had not believed his Word, the Scripture. Only after Jesus opened the scripture to them did the scales fall from their eyes. |
| 22 | While in England, I visited many of the grand Anglican cathedrals. Always, when walked up to them, they were the same in one respect – the stained-glass windows from the outside were dark. There words were reversed, the ribs of lead were thick, the pictures of the glass were obscured. But once you entered, looking from the inside, the stained-glass burst into color. The pictures sprang to life, words could be read, the stories could be seen and felt and understood.  The Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit can take the opaque, gray, meaningless aspect of Christianity and turn them into brilliant, colorful invitation to life. The whole of our ignorance can be broken if we allow scripture to permeate our lives. The Holy Spirit can use it to give and add meaning to our personal lives, our church lives. |
| 23 | One of the adult SS classes just started a study on Anxiousness led by Max Lucado. In his first session he uses Paul's words in Philippians 4:4-7  **4**Rejoice[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+4%3A4-7&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-29430a)] in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+4%3A4-7&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-29430b)] **5**Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. **6**Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.  Now it seems impossible to follow these words of scripture if you don't know the Savior. But delving into the Bible understanding about Paul's life you begin to see the truth of these words. Paul was in prison, had been beaten many times, and was just a nod from Emperor Nero's of his death. But these words from scripture share how he still rejoiced. WE will never understand and come to that state in our lives if we don't read and let the scripture into our lives! |
| 24 | We might get into heaven without reading the Bible from cover to cover – but how much more deeply rooted our faith can be,  How much richer our lives,  how much more God can do in and through our lives  if we read and learn the story of faith in our Bible?  Now I have room for improvement in this area, as I suspect most of you do. So, during this stay at home, pull down you Bible and read, or open up you audio Bible and listen. Maybe even end the day with your family by reading a portion of the Bible! |

I want to finish my sermon by showing a video clip about one person's conviction about how important reading the Bible was to him and his work as an actor and later as the President of the United States. Now be clear I am not endorsing a political party nor did I always agree with President Reagan's decisions. But he was a man of faith and he gives us a stirring account of how important it is for all of us to be Biblically literate. Please watch.

[**http://www.youtube.com/embed/OvN1jTkzXbY?rel=0**](http://www.youtube.com/embed/OvN1jTkzXbY?rel=0)