

# Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2023.02.12

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## Sermon recordings

Click or type the short URL, or visit oakgrovecofc.org/Recordings/.

**Speaker-AM:** Steve Helterbrand

**Title:** Perceptions Of Jesus

**Recording:**

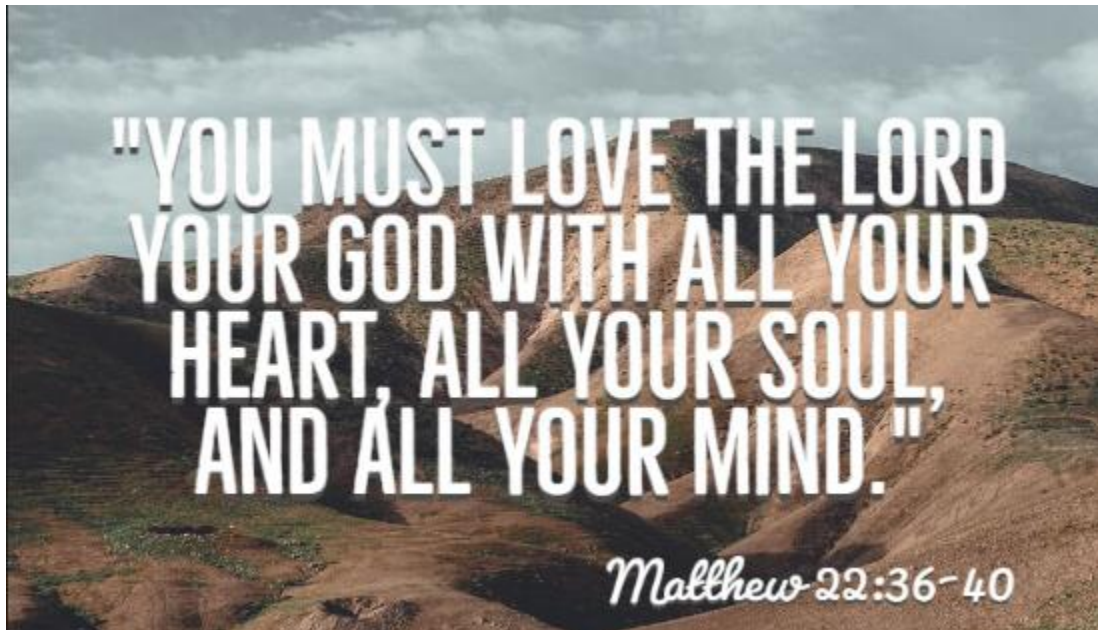
[tinyurl.com/StevePerception](https://tinyurl.com/StevePerception)

**Speaker-PM:** Brad Bunyard

**Title:** Slaves Of Righteousness

**Recording:**

[tinyurl.com/BradSlaves](https://tinyurl.com/BradSlaves)



**What is your faith based on? 2/12/2023, by Nate Vick**

What is your faith based on?

It's surprising to me that I hear Christians utter such wildly varying proclamations of faith. Some (usually those raised in Christian homes) speak to the importance of "just believing," almost to the point of sounding like they are preaching blind faith. Others (usually those who did not become Christians until later in life) proclaim the importance of believing the evidence presented that backs up what the Bible says.

Who's right? Well, both really.

But neither by itself is enough to make our faith as strong as it needs to be.

I would warn those who have been Christians their whole life not to dismiss the importance of evidence. Just because we have heard evidence and come to a conclusion early on in our life doesn't mean it's not important for others at whatever point they may be in their life now. We need to meet people where they are in life and lead them to Christ. If they need evidence, then we should give it to them. There is plenty of archaeological evidence backing the Bible's story.

However, we shouldn't focus completely on evidence, either.

John 20:26–29 (NKJV)

26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

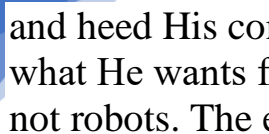
29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Thomas was able to see Jesus and the miracles He performed. He saw Him after He was resurrected from the dead! And yet, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." The implication is that their faith is greater, having believed with less firsthand evidence available to them.

That's us today!

Yet, the Bible tells us many things we need to know to have faith. We have the testimony of firsthand witnesses. Romans says the creation itself bears witness to God. There is evidence all around!

When we place more emphasis either on blind faith or evidence we show disrespect to the other, but God requires some of both from us. He has provided evidence and we would be wise to appreciate it. There are times where we must be more trusting of God



and heed His commands to us, understanding that our best interests (salvation) are always what He wants for us. He allows us free will to disobey and to make bad decisions. We're not robots. The evidence is there, if we choose to look for it.

What is your faith built on? 80% evidence, 20% blind faith?

Grow your faith and trust in Him so that you're not as reliant just on evidence. There will be things in this world, in your life, that you do not understand and can't explain. You will need to trust in Him more (read the Psalms).

80% blind faith, 20% evidence?

How will you convince someone who doesn't know God why they should be a Christian? They will not understand without evidence being presented, and it is available. God made it so. Your faith needs to be undergirded by facts so that when your faith is tested, it can hold up.

Christians, let us take care to have faith balanced with trust in God and evidence He has graciously provided us. We ought not question the sincerity of someone who arrived at their faith differently than us; we ought to simply be thankful and support one another.

### **Boastful or Faithful works? 2/12/2023, by Sam Bunyard**

Paul wrote to the Philippians, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Ph. 2:12). Yet, he also penned that salvation is "not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ep. 2:8-9). Many say that works can have nothing to do with salvation. Can this be true? After all, "faith without works is dead" (Js. 2:20)! A saving faith is not merely passive belief. "We are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul" (He. 10:39). "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (He. 11:6).

Biblical faith is an active belief that involves an obedient response. Some people say this is works-based salvation! However, there is a difference between boastful works and faithful works! The attempt to be justified by works is to try to earn a place in heaven by merit of how good I am. But baptism, for example, calls for an attitude totally opposite to this. Baptism is the recognition that because of my unrighteousness, I am required to die to self (Rm. 6). It requires faith, not in my ability to jump in a pond, but in God's ability to forgive me – "buried with Him in baptism ...raised with Him through faith in the working of God" (Cl. 2:12). This act is one of submission, allowing oneself to be buried in water, representative of the death of one's will in exchange for the will of One greater!

Truly, faith without works is dead, but we must be careful not to put our faith in our own works. Rather, we trust in the "working of God" when we make the decision to obey Him.