

# Hanging Out With Jesus: What Can I Say That Will Make You Believe?

*John 12: 37-50*

Good morning, men! So every week we try to give a shout out to somebody who has a group of men meeting doing the online videos, and this morning we're going to give a shout out to a former attendee at this Bible Study who also then became a table leader, Pete Greenfield. For I guess over a decade now, he has been leading a group over at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church over on South 436. Their group is called Men in the Morning, Pete is the leader, and they meet on Monday mornings at 6:20am at the Family Life Center. So would you join me in giving a big shout out to the guys at Men in the Morning? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys! Pete, good morning, glad to have you with us!

So you should be at John 12 and we'll be starting at verse 37 this morning. Last week we talked about that it's the simple story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that always has and always will draw men to salvation. Jesus said when I am lifted up, I will draw everyone to myself, and so he's the one who is doing the drawing. But we talked about what we can do, and I said I'd tell you four things and I told you three. I'll tell you the fourth now. These things are in the text, that we can be a disciple, a servant, a witness, and then the fourth one I didn't get to was steward. I did that because Bob Shoemaker is part of our group. He works with *Compass*, and so you know you have to get stewardship in if Bob's in your group. *Compass* is this huge international ministry that has helped 50 million people get trained in how to handle money and finances.

So we had some Area Director candidates in the office this week. One of them told a cute story, he said that he and his son both lead *Man in the Mirror* Bible Study groups. They were texting back and forth one day, and the son texted the father: what's the next series you're going to teach? The father texted back, *Six Habits of Spiritually Happy Men*. He got a text immediately back from his son saying: do you have a lot of red faces in your group? The dad goes what do you mean? He replies look at what you texted me. He had used the voice to text feature of his phone, and so he had texted sex habits of spiritually happy men. I thought that would be a pretty cool series to have!

So this morning we're going to look at this thing that you can do called witnessing, and we're going to look at some of the witnessing habits that you can have and be spiritually successful with. The series is called *Hanging Out With Jesus*, today we're going to talk about *What Can I Say To Make You Believe?* We've all had this happen where you're talking to someone about the Christian faith, and you're just getting nowhere. In fact, they're just giving you grief about it, and you're wondering what do I have to say to get this person to see the truth and to believe? What do I have to do? What is it going to take? Well, that's what's going on in this text today, and you're going to be very surprised to learn that Jesus had that same experience that you had, but then there's also a very big upside to this as well.

## **No Matter What You Say, Some Won't Believe - But Some Will**

So here's the first thing we're going to look at today. No matter what you say, some people just won't believe, but some will. Let's take a look at the text, beginning at verse 37 it says:

Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs...

What are the miraculous signs? Some of the major ones that John has talked about. The feeding of the 5,000, walking on the water, the healing of the man born blind, and most recently the raising of Lazarus.

Even after all these miraculous signs done in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

One thing to note right away is that even in the presence of the one who did the miracles, a lot of people still couldn't bring themselves to believe. Verse 38:

This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

"Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

"He has blinded their eyes, and deadened their hearts, they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn - and I would heal them."

And so in verse 36 they could not believe. This is the word from *dunamis* from which we get power. They did not have the power, and so what can I say that will make you believe? We have it all wrong, they can't believe. They don't have the power. Somebody who does not believe in Jesus does not have within them the power to believe. They don't. We'll get into some of the implications of that in just a moment. Reading on, verse 41:

Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders did believe in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than praise from God.

So we see in this text two responses. We see there were people who couldn't believe, they didn't have the power to believe, they were not able to believe. Then we saw people who did believe, but they love the praise of men more than the praise of God, so they became closet Christians, or in the parlance that I like, cultural Christians. This is the story of every cultural Christian, they love the praise of men, they want success in the world and they fear that a confession of their belief in Jesus will somehow mitigate against their success in the world. So they become closet Christians, they become double minded, and let the yeast of culture work its way through the whole batch of dough. They exchange the truth of God for a lie, and they live the life of a closet Christian.

Then Jesus cried out in verse 44:

"When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me he sees the one who sent me."

Jesus also says elsewhere the father and I are one. Verse 46:

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

There's a metaphorical reference to the promise of eternal life. Verse 47:

"If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge them."

Did you get that? There will be more implications about that in a moment, but Jesus did not come to judge, in fact the next sentence, you've heard this said before and this is where it is found in the New Testament:

For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

Jesus said I did not come to judge you, I came to save the world. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words. That very word I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.

In other words, the word of his deity, the word of who he is, those words will condemn that person on the last day, but I'm not going to be doing that. Next verse:

For I did not speak on my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.

Did you catch that? What can I say that will make you believe? Everything Jesus said was designed to help you believe, and the father told him exactly what to say and how to say it. Then the next verse:

I know that his command leads to eternal life.

So the things that Jesus said, I did not come to judge I came to save, and the things that he said, all of these things we see in the Bible, these things were said to bring eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the father told me to say.

Here's the Big Idea this morning: **No matter what you say or how well you say it, some won't believe.**

That's what's going on in this text. They saw the miraculous signs, they could not believe, they would not believe, and then some believed, but they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, and so they became cultural Christians. They just did not believe. But there's more to the Big Idea: **But some will, so we speak.** No matter how well you say anything, no matter how well you speak about Jesus, some people won't believe, but others will, and so it's worth taking the risk, it's worth speaking out, it's worth taking the chance. Because some will believe, we just really don't know what God is doing in somebody's heart.

One of the major places I run into people is the gym, and I've had four major conversations this week alone. I think all four of them are with people I've already established a rapport. I'm not pushy, I just try to be who I am, try to be friendly, and then I wait. Actually, I had to stop waiting yesterday on one, because I said hello to a guy and he asked me if I wanted to buy some hollow spoke Porsche wheels for \$500, four of them, which I thought was a pretty good deal. I don't need them, but I almost wanted to buy them because it was such a good deal. Anyway, I said why are you selling them? He said I'm moving to Iowa. I said oops, I guess I better get busy here! So I went ahead and talked to him and gave him some Christian literature and so forth. But there's another guy earlier in the week, and he's a real animal, a beast. He's the kind of guy when I first saw him, he'll have his ear buds in, looks like Arnold

Schwarzenegger and before he lifts he gets very intense, growls, breathes fiercely and all that. Then he really lifts! I was kind of afraid him at first, then I worked up the courage to go say hi to him one day, and he didn't bite my head off, and so we built a relationship over the last six months. This last Sunday morning before church I went to work out, and he was there. He has a dog, and I told him about the Baldwin Dog Park. He didn't know about that and was happy for the information. Finally he says to me, you mind me asking you a question. I said no, and he asks how old are you? I try to stay in good shape because so much of my ministry is to younger guys, and I don't want to look old and dumpy to younger guys. That's just me. I don't want my appearance to interfere with testimony. When I was a younger guy and saw older guys who let themselves go, I didn't have respect for them, and I couldn't hear what they would say, because I would think what do they have to say to me, they aren't taking care of themselves.

So he wanted to know how old I was and I told him. I asked how old he was. He said 44, and he got to talking about how he never had many role models growing up and he's always looking for people he can look up to an emulate. So I'm thinking okay, here we go, this is what I've been waiting for. One thing lead to another, and finally he said what do you do? Are you retired? I said hardly retired, I'm at full tilt, but let me tell you I write books for men from a Christian perspective, and that just opened a flood gate. So he's dating a girl who apparently is a Christian, and she's been talking to him about God and wanting him to get more involved. I said, you know what I think this might be providence that we met today. I gave him a couple of pieces of Christian literature to start reading and we'll see where that goes.

So what's going on here? You speak, some believe, and some don't believe. I've got another guy that I've been talking to and actually been helping get a job, and he has zero interest in spiritual things. He's very interested in me helping him get a job, and that's okay. It's not conditional. My acceptance for him, my love and appreciation of him is not conditional upon him performing or believing in some way. So it looks like he won't believe at least for now. But it looks like this other guy might end up believing, and because of that, because when we speak people might actually become Christians, that's why we do it! That's why we do it, that's why we witness, because from time to time, even though you get a lot of grief in between, somebody will actually become a Christian, and then it sets a whole chain of events which we'll talk about here in a moment.

### **What If Someone Is Just Not Interested?**

What if someone is just not interested? I want to give you some suggestions. Number one, don't be angry. If someone is not interested, that means that for whatever reason they cannot because the spirit is not working in their heart to the point of opening the door. The spirit is always working in people's hearts, but they may not be at that stage where the person is open, and so how do you handle it? Why do they resist? Why are they so angry? Why do they hold me in such disdain? Don't be angry, instead, Ephesians 2 we once all by nature were objects of wrath, but God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love for us, he's the one who makes us alive in Christ. It is by grace that we are saved. He does it. So there's this operation of grace, and it's working, he's drawing all men to himself, it's just that some are further along than others. So when you have somebody that the world has a hold on them and they're at the stage where they love the praise of men more than God, don't be angry with them. Just understand right now the world has a hold on them.

Second, don't judge. Look at verse 47 again. As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. I did not come into the world to judge it, I came into the world to save it. Jesus doesn't judge. Judge not lest you be judged with the same measurement you used to judge others. We're not supposed to be judging people. I don't know about you, but I can't hear somebody when I feel

they disapprove of me, can you? When you have somebody who is self-righteous, thinks they're better than you, and they disapprove of you, you can tell that they have this judgmental thing going on, can you hear them? Absolutely not! And so what are the chances of you being a conduit for Jesus if somebody thinks you disapprove of them? Zero! Don't be angry, because that comes through. Don't judge because that comes through, and third, don't avoid them!

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 5:9. So don't be angry at people. Remember where you came from and that it was the operation of grace that saved you, and even if you wanted to be saved you couldn't save yourself until the spirit was ready to move on you and that's what's going on with them, so don't be angry. And then don't judge them because of this approval thing, and then thirdly don't avoid people! Let me tell you, avoiding people is just another form of judgment really, another form of disapproval. Verse 9 says:

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people - not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or greedy and swindlers or idolaters. In that case, you would have to leave the world. But now I am writing that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother and is all these things.

So it's inside the body of Christ that we have this accountability, but we don't avoid people because they are worldly because we expect them to be worldly. That's the third thing, don't get angry, don't judge, don't avoid. Finally, don't argue. Jesus never argued with anyone about whether or not they should believe in him. He simply told the story, he gave the facts, then he let his spirit do the work. I'm afraid a lot of guys use the Bible as a weapon. They use it as a hammer. They're going around and they beat on people with its words. Do you remember Jesus using the Bible as a hammer? Stop hammering people! I have two tools in my toolbox, a hammer and some WD-40. Every problem I have can be solved with one of these two things. I've got something that won't budge? I can beat the crap out of it, but it still doesn't work right. Or I can take a little WD-40 which is what? A solvent, a lubricant. I put a little spray on there and it goes down to the threads and loosens things up and then you can unscrew it with your hand. So the Bible is meant to be more like WD-40 than the hammer. There's no sense arguing with people because you can't lead anyone to Jesus. Some say I lead so and so to Jesus. No you didn't! Jesus leads someone to Jesus, the Holy Spirit leads someone to Jesus. What we are is unworthy servants who have only done our duty.

Now don't get me wrong, we are witnesses, we are conduits, but we are not providing the dunamis, all we're doing is passing along the message. Our job is to be faithful and not to produce a particular outcome. We don't argue, so what do we do? What did Jesus do? He simply did what the father told him to do, said what the father told him to say, exactly what the father wanted him to say exactly as the father wanted him to say it. So what do we do? We just repeat the words of Jesus. Think about it. All of these apologetics, and all of these theologies, all of these convoluted ideas, they don't convert. Jesus converts! So just repeat what Jesus said. **No matter what you say nor how you say it, some won't believe, but some will and so we speak.** Actually I said we're not going back to John and we're not, but I will read again that verse. For I did not speak of my own accord, but my father sent me and commanded me what to say and how to say it. Even though he did exactly that, some would not believe but some did! That was then, and that's why we do this now.

**Why It's Worth Taking The Grief**

Finally, why is it worth taking the grief? Well, the first reason is because there is a day. In our text, verse 48 there is a day of judgment coming. This is real folks, and I realize that if somebody finds Christianity to be ridiculous and a joke that the idea of a judgment is despicable to them, but there will be a day. It's worth taking the grief because there is a judgment day coming. Second reason we do this is because this is our mission, this our purpose. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 5:16. Why do we look at the scriptures when we do Bible Studies? Well, because it's a Bible Study, but we look at scriptures because the power to change our minds and our approach is not in something I'm going to say to you. It's what God says in his word. Jesus is the word, the power is the word. So 2 Corinthians 5:16 says:

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though once we regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, and the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

This is our mission. We take the grief because there is a judgment day, we take the grief because this is our mission. Turn to Romans 10:14. So this is our mission and we don't have to come up with some new words, the father has already commanded Jesus what to say and how to say it. All we have to do is just repeat the story of Jesus. If you're worried about being successful on your mission, don't worry about being trained in understanding all the intricacies of theology, the doctrine of apologetics and moral teaching, just be able to read the Bible to people. That will do it! Romans 10:14:

How, then, can they call the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are your feet when they bring the good news!"

You and me, this is our mission. Why is it worth taking the grief? Because there is a judgment, because this is our mission, and because when we do this, some will actually believe. What happens when somebody believes? The chains fall off, the prisoners are set free, the Stockholm Syndrome wears off and we stop identifying with the world as our captor, we exchange the lies back for the truth, we exchange the idols back for the glory of God. They work the yeast out of the dough, there's a restoration that takes place, our sins are forgiven, there's abundant life, we get the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we begin to display the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and then my command is eternal life! All of that is great, but there is heaven at the end of this! There is eternal life, and so we do this, we take all of this grief because there is a judgment, because it's our mission, and because of what happens when somebody believes. That's why we do this!

Final thought; this has been designated a safe zone, this Bible Study, by the leadership. We have set this place up to be a safe place where a man can come and simply investigate the truth and decide whether or not he wants to believe. We don't put pressure on people to perform or to behave in a particular way. We have lots of men who have been here for a long time just simply investigating this story of Jesus.

So, how do you acclimate a goldfish to an aquarium? Anybody ever bring home a goldfish as a kid? You bring it home in a little bag, then you put the bag in the aquarium to get the temperatures to match. Then you take a little of the water of the aquarium and put it into the bag so that all the pH levels make

the right adjustments. What do you never do? You never put any of the water from the bag in the aquarium. Why? Because you don't want to bring any potential disease into the larger aquarium. Here's the point, some of you have been here long enough now that you should be acclimated. So I would just encourage you to let this be the day of your salvation. Let this be the day where you say you know I've heard enough, and I believe. I make the decision to believe. Let's pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Our dearest Father, Lord, we want to be good witnesses, and we know that the way to do that is to have a proper set of expectations, but also to know what we should do if somebody's not interested and then how to actually do it. So I pray father that you would help superintend that message to each of us. If you've been here for a while and you feel like you've probably heard everything that you're going to hear or need to hear and you are ready to receive Jesus, or you're online seeing this and you're ready to receive Jesus, or maybe it's a rededication of your life to Jesus, you realize that maybe you have been one of those cultural Christians. You have exchanged the truth of God for lie, the glory of God for an idol, you've been seeking the praise of men rather than of God, and you want to rededicate your life. Let me just invite you to pray with me now silently to yourself.

Lord Jesus, I know that you love me. I know that you died for my sins, I know you died so that I could have eternal life. Right now I as an act of my will choose to put my faith in you, to believe in you. I thank you for coming into my life right now as you promised you would, for giving me eternal life, forgiving me of my sins, and I now invite you to make me, or if I'm rededicating to continue to make me into the kind of man that you want me to be. In Jesus' name I pray, and everybody said amen!