

# Catch 22 Faith

13 - The Mystery of God: The Gospel of John  
Church on the Park | Palm Sunday, 13 April 2014

**Text:** John 3:16-21

**Theme:** Genuine faith connects you to God, but it is possible to have an appearance of faith without power.

*Mobile Phone Charger Illustration (Macbook imitation charger)*

**Intro:** Last week we saw Jesus explain the way into the Kingdom of God to Nicodemus. Nicodemus, however, still struggled to understand and was left in the dark. “How can someone be born again?” This week the Gospel of John goes deeper into making clear the way to be born again. The road into this new life is FAITH. But how is faith possible and what is genuine faith?

## 1) Faith is both strangely mysterious and miraculously simple (John 3:9-21)

- One of the ways to understand a passage is to **count** how many times the writer uses a specific **word**. If they use a word **repeatedly**, you know this is a concept they want to emphasise. In John 3:9-21, John **rhythmically** uses the word **‘believe’ seven** times.
- **‘Believe’** is a word we often take for **granted** in the church. We **lose** the **weight** and **value** of the word because we use it too much.
- One of John’s **main purposes** in his Gospel is to call us to **believe**. We see this in his introduction in **John 1:3-13** and in his conclusion in **John 20:30-31**.
- And yet faith is a mystery—how does it happen? It comes natural to a child, but is a stumbling block to adults.
- For an **adult** (the wise and learned) it is like a **Catch 22**
- The Novel **Catch 22** and the rule of Catch 22 in the Airforce - Yossarian, Doc Daneeka and Orr (pp 53-54)
  - The Rule: “I have to ground anyone that is crazy”
  - The Question: “Is Orr Crazy?”
  - The Provision: “I can ground him, but he has to ask me to. That’s part of the rule.”
  - The Catch: “Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn’t really crazy.”
- The **same type** of thing can happen with the issue of **faith**
  - I need to believe. But how can I believe unless I understand? And then, how can I understand if I don’t believe? “So real faith is impossible...”
  - What comes first, **faith** or **understanding**? To John they go together. You need understanding to have faith and you need faith to understand.
- **Nicodemus** is in the darkness, not understanding the light of Jesus. Jesus then tells him to believe in him.
- The **answer**: Faith is not of yourself. It is a **miraculous** thing that God does in you. You need to be like a child and let the Father do his work in you (**Eph. 2:8-9**). Faith comes from **hearing** God’s Word; hearing **God’s Word** imparts faith (Rom. 10:17). God’s Word is the vehicle that brings you the gift of faith.
- **Our bread bin** - stores everything, but bread
- The Greek word *pisteuo* means “to believe, have faith in, trust...to believe something to be true, hence worthy of being trusted.”

## 2) Faith is real when you realise you are sick and dying—it’s for those who know they are condemned. (John 3:15-18).

- In order to understand **John 3:16** we have to put it into **context**. It’s one verse in the whole book of John, and must be read with the whole in mind. John 3:16 divorced of its context leads to a **cheap believism**—**faith** that is **plastic** rather than **gold**.
- Moses in the wilderness and the **bronze snake** (Num. 21:4-9 cf. John 3:14-15)

- In the wilderness they said, “**We** have **sinned** by speaking against the Lord and you.”
- The **sinner’s prayer**: “Lord, have **mercy** on me a sinner” (Matt. 9:13; Luke 18:13; 1 Tim. 1:16)
  - Faith is what connects us to God. If our faith is wrong we may look connected, but there is no real power flowing. Much like a mobile phone that we have put on the charger all night. When we wake up we find the phone never really charged because it only looked connected, the charger was not in correctly.
- The more I heard the Gospel the more I **realized** that I was a **sinner** needing forgiveness. At first I **fought**, but I was only fighting against the Holy Spirit. God knows what’s in your heart.
- Most people think they are alright, they think they are **good**. They don’t see their need for salvation. The Scripture gives us a different picture. We are standing before the **judge** and he **examines** our lives. His **verdict: condemned!** It’s a life sentence for **eternity**.
- “This is the **verdict**: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:20).
- Real faith begins **listening** to God’s Word and **realizing** you are condemned before God, a sinner who deserves God’s wrath and hell. Your heart is **sick** and needs **healing**. The **disease of sin** is in your blood and you need a **cure**.

### 3) Genuine faith means stepping into and walking in God’s light (John 3:20-21)

- John 3:20-21
- One of the functions of light is that it **illuminates** and **exposes**.
- (My grandmother’s mirror. Why did it make me look better?)
- A romantic dinner is often by candlelight. The **soft light** in the dark makes us look better. The **full sun exposes** all the cracks, crevices and weaknesses.
- The Holy Spirit **convicts**. John 3:20 uses the word *elengcho*, meaning “to convict, to prove in the wrong and thus to shame him” (WSNTDICT) (cf. John 16:8)
- The reason why people don’t like the church is because the light is shining and people prefer darkness.
- **1 John 1:5-2:6**
- God’s light brings **healing** and **warmth**. God’s light brings joy, protection and peace.
- The devil hates the light and when you are in the light the devil is scared away.

### 4) Genuine faith is not abstract, but its a concrete trusting in the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ (John 3:16-17)

- Many people **believe many things**, but we are called to believe in **Jesus**, the Son of God.
- Not a **Stage** persons kind of faith. But, “believes in him”
- **Abraham and Isaac** (Gen. 22)
- “not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”
- Faith in the **Death** and **Resurrection** of Jesus.
- Why was Jesus’ death needed? It was a **sacrifice** for our **sins**. Jesus died as our **substitute**.
- Faith is based on **fact**, not **fiction**. It’s based on **truth**, not **fantasy**. It’s based on **evidence**, not **wishful thinking**.

**Conclusion:** John 3:16 is a popular and foundational Bible verse that calls us to believe. However, we cannot understand it unless we put it into context. Make sure your faith is real and not fake; make sure it is a response to God’s Word not Hollywood.

## END NOTES

Photographers need to study the effects of light.

Jesus makes it clear that believing is the way to eternal life. But what kind of believing? Many people believe many different kinds of faith? What kind of faith saves us? What type of faith is worth more than pure refined gold? What kind of faith has substance and will enable you to persevere to the end? Is faith blind or based on fact?

“Joseph Heller coined the term in his 1961 novel *Catch-22*, which describes absurd bureaucratic constraints on soldiers in World War II. The term is introduced by the character Doc Daneeka, an army psychiatrist who invokes “Catch 22” to explain why any pilot requesting mental evaluation for insanity—hoping to be found not sane enough to fly and thereby escape dangerous missions—demonstrates his own sanity in making the request and thus cannot be declared insane.[3]

“You mean there's a catch?”

“Sure there's a catch”, Doc Daneeka replied. “Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy.”

There was only one catch and that was *Catch-22*, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane, he had to fly them. If he flew them, he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to, he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of *Catch-22* and let out a respectful whistle. (pg 53-54)

4100. πιστεύω pisteúō; fut. pisteúsō, from πίστις (4102), faith. To believe, have faith in, trust. NT meanings:

(I) Particularly, to be firmly persuaded as to something, to believe, followed by the inf. (Rom. 14:2); by hóti (3754), that (Mark 11:23; Rom. 6:8; 10:9). With the idea of hope and certain expectation (Acts 18:8).

(A) More commonly used of words spoken and things, followed by the dat. of the person whose words one believes and trusts in (Mark 16:13; John 5:46; Acts 8:12; 1 John 4:1); by hóti (John 4:21).

(B) With an adjunct of the words or thing spoken, followed by the dat. (Luke 1:20; John 4:50; Acts 24:14; 2 Thess. 2:11; Acts 13:41); by epí (1909), upon, and the dat. (Luke 24:25); by en (1722), in, and the dat. (Mark 1:15, “in the glad tidings” [a.t.], meaning to believe and embrace the glad tidings announced; Sept.: Ps. 78:22; Jer. 12:6).

(C) With an adjunct of the thing believed, followed by the acc. of thing (1 Cor. 13:7; 1 John 4:16). In the pass. (2 Thess. 1:10). Followed by eis (1519), unto, with the acc. (John 11:26; 1 John 5:10); by hóti, that (John 14:10; Rom. 10:9); by perí (4012), about, concerning, and the gen. (John 9:18).

(D) Used in an absolute sense where the case of person or thing is implied from the context (Matt. 24:23; Mark 13:21; John 12:47; Acts 8:13 [cf. Acts 8:12, 15:7]).

(II) Of God, to believe in God, to trust in Him as able and willing to help and answer prayer. Followed by the dat. of person with hóti, that (Acts 27:25); by eis, in (John 14:1). Used in an absolute sense with the pres. part. pisteúontes, meaning if you believe (Rom. 4:17, 18; Heb. 4:3). Generally, to believe in the declarations and character of God as made known in the gospel, with the dat. (John 5:24; Acts 16:34; 1 John 5:10). Followed by eis, in, with the acc., meaning to believe and rest upon, to believe in and profess (1 Pet. 1:21); by epí, on, with the acc. (Rom. 4:24).

(III) Of a messenger from God, to believe on and trust in him (rather, when applied to a merely human messenger of God, to credit and trust him, as coming from God and acting under divine authority).

(A) Of John the Baptist, with the dat. (Matt. 21:25, 32; Mark 11:31; Luke 20:5).

(B) Of Jesus as the Messiah, able and ready to help His followers, followed by eis, in (John 14:1); to heal the sick and comfort the afflicted, with hóti, that (Matt. 9:28); used in an absolute sense (Matt. 8:13; Mark 5:36; John 4:48). (1) Generally of Jesus as a teacher and the Messiah sent from God. Followed by the dat. of person (John 5:38; 8:31; 10:37, 38; Acts 5:14; 2 Tim. 1:12); by hóti, that (John 8:24; 11:27; 13:19; 16:27, 30; 17:8, 21; 20:31); by ginóskō (1097), to know (John 6:69; 10:38); by eis, in, with the acc. of person meaning to believe and rest upon (Matt. 18:6; Mark 9:42; John 2:11; 3:15, 16; 4:39; 6:35; 7:5, 38; 8:30; 17:20; Acts 10:43; 19:4; Rom. 10:14; Gal. 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:8); figuratively, with tó phōs (tó, neut. def. art.; phōs [5457], light), the light (John 12:36); tó ónoma (ónoma [3686], name), the name, as to who Jesus is and what He has done (John 1:12; 2:23; 1 John 5:13); in the dat. (1 John 3:23). Followed by epí, upon, with the acc. of person (Acts 9:42; 11:17 [cf. 11:21]); with the dat. (Matt. 27:42; 1 Tim. 1:16); figuratively (Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6, quoted from Is. 28:16); in the pass. (1 Tim. 3:16). (2) Used in an absolute sense, to believe, meaning to become a Christian (Mark 15:32; Luke 22:67; John 1:7; 12:39; Acts 4:4; 14:1; 17:12, 34). In the pres. part. pl. (hoi pisteúontes) or aor. part. pl. (hoi pisteúsantes), those who have believed, believers, Christians (Acts 2:44; 4:32; 19:18; Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 1:21; Gal. 3:22; 1 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:7).

(IV) Trans., to entrust, commit in trust to someone (Luke 16:11; John 2:24). In the pass., pisteúomai, with the acc. of thing, to be entrusted with something, to have something committed to one's trust or charge (Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 9:17; Gal. 2:7; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:11; Titus 1:3).

(V) Used in connection with the relationship between believing and miracle working.

(A) "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17:20). This was what Jesus said to the disciples on His descent from the Mount of Transfiguration upon finding that they were unable to exorcise a boy's demon. This incident is given also in Mark 9:14–29 and Luke 9:37–43.

In Matthew 17:17, when He said, ". . . O faithless and perverse generation," He did not include the disciples as unbelievers and perverse. The word for "faithless" is ápistos (571), unbelieving, with the meaning of not trusting God to perform this and other miracles as opportunity and need arose.

What the father of the child said to Jesus explains how it is possible for him and the disciples to believe and, at the same time, to be beset by unbelief in accomplishing the task at hand. The father said, "I believe, Lord, help me in my unbelief" (a.t.).

Belief creates complete dependence upon the Lord and not independence. "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21; see also Mark 9:29). The end result of this whole incident was "And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God" (Luke 9:43).

(B) "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22). "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). This latter assurance of the Lord also expresses dependence on the Lord through two words: proseuchómenoi (the pres. part. of proseúchomai [4336], to pray to God) and aiteísthe (the subjunctive mid. of aitéomai [154], to request as an inferior from a superior). It is not a desire at all but a humble request. This speaks not of the omnipotence of the believer's faith but of its full dependence upon God. "Believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them," and, one could add, if the Lord consents to grant them.

(VI) The pres. part. ho pisteúōn (John 3:15, 16, 36; 5:24; 6:35, 40, 47; 7:38; 11:25, 26; 12:44, 46; 14:12) should not be taken as the one holding on to God constantly lest he would let loose and fall. It rather indicates that, once one believes, he continues to believe, for he has eternal life in him (John 3:15). The assurance Christ gave in John 10:28 is this: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Once a believer places himself in Jesus, it is He who holds him firmly without someone being able to snatch him away, for if this could happen then there would be the acknowledgement that someone is mightier than Christ, which cannot be.

Syn.: peíthomai (3982), to be convinced; hēgéomai (2233), to deem, consider, think; epiginóskō (1921), to perceive, recognize.

Ant.: aporéō (639), to be at a loss; diaporéō (1280), to be much perplexed; distázō (1365), to doubt, hesitate; apistéō (569), to disbelieve; diakrínomai (1252), to doubt, hesitate.

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31.35 πιστεύω<sup>a</sup>: to believe something to be true and, hence, worthy of being trusted—‘to believe, to think to be true, to regard as trustworthy.’ ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν, καὶ μέρος τι πιστεύω ‘I have been told that there are opposing groups among you, and this I believe is partly true’ 1 Cor 11:18; ἀνθ’ ὧν οὐκ ἐπίστευσας τοῖς λόγοις μου ‘but you have not believed my message’ Lk 1:20; ἐάν τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ, Ἴδοὺ ὧδε ὁ Χριστός, ... μὴ πιστεύσητε ‘if anyone says to you, Here is the Christ, ... do not believe them’ Mt 24:23; σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός; ‘do you believe that there is only one God?’ Jas 2:19.

In a number of languages the equivalent of πιστεύω<sup>a</sup> is simply ‘to think to be true’ or ‘to regard as true,’ but in some languages an idiomatic expression is employed, for example, ‘to think in the heart’ or ‘to think in the liver’ or ‘to hold in the heart.’