# Signs of BeliefJohn 4:43-5:16

On December 19, 1918 Robert started drawing a cartoon for the New York Globe. Calling the comic “Champs and Chumps”, he illustrated the amazing sports feats and bloopers that had been described on the radio or the news wire systems. He illustrated the sports moments that make people say you have to see it to believe it. Some people believed, others thought he was exaggerating, so he invited people to decide for themselves if believed it as the last panel of the comic.

Within a year, Robert didn’t have enough sports successes and failures to keep the comic interesting, so he added amazing events unrelated to sports. By October 1919 Robert renamed the comic after the phrase that was at the end of each comic which was so popular that it was syndicated nation-wide, and became the basis of books, comic books, radio programs, and tv programs.

Starting in 1933, Robert displayed some of his collection in a traveling exhibition that traveled the nation until Roberts death in 1949. In 1950 his family opened the first permanent Odditorium. There are now permanent Odditorium museums in about 35 locations with a collection of over 20,000 photographs and 30,000 artifacts.

In brief, that is the legacy of Robert Ripley’s, Believe It or Not.

Belief is an important factor in every aspect of our walk with Christ. In John 4:43-5:16 we see two more of the seven sign miracles in the Gospel of John that demonstrate Jesus was the promised Jewish Messiah. The first was changing water into wine, the second here in John 4 is the healing of the noble man’s son and the third is the healing of the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda. In these miracles we see the power of God over sickness, time and space, but we also learn about 8 types of belief that you are likely to encounter: missing belief, expectant belief, misplaced belief, active belief, tested belief, disciplined belief and persecuted belief. You will experience each of these seven types of belief at some point in your life and maybe experience more than one at a time.

## Missing Belief John 4:43-46a,48

“**43** ¶ After the two days he left for Galilee. **44** (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) **45** When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there. **46** Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine.

**48** "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

Familiarity breeds contempt. Being raised in the Galilean town of Nazareth, people were familiar with Jesus. He was the kid who never got in trouble or did anything wrong. He was the Child who was wise enough to have discussions with the rabbis and priests. He was the young man who worked as a carpenter. He couldn’t be the messiah. He was special to them, but he wasn’t special enough to be the messiah. Even though they had seen him turn the water into wine, they still did not believe.

Jesus talks to the nobleman, but he talks about the people all around him, “Unless you see miracles you will never believe.” They don’t need the miracles in order to believe but they stubbornly choose not to believe unless they see a miracle.

All of us have times of disbelief. God has promised “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” (Hebrews 13:5, Joshua 1:5), yet how many times have we felt alone in our hour of need. Lack of belief an emotional reaction, but is not due to a lack of evidence. God has given us all ample evidence to believe (Romans 1:19-22).

When you have missing belief, take the attitude of the father in Mark 9:24 who cried out, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.”

## Desperate Belief John 4:46-49

**46** Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. **47** When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. **48** "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." **49** The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

When the royal official comes to Jesus, he is desperate. His son is on the verge of death. There is nothing anyone can do to save him, but the official has heard stories about this Jesus doing miracles and so he comes to Jesus. Ultimately the official is acting out of desperation, he embodied the phrase, “when all else fails, pray”. This type of belief is not ideal, it does not show full trust in God, but even so it is a type of belief. A desperate belief is far better than no belief.

When you are desperate will you show your belief by seeking God? Will you join King David who said, ““Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me.” (Psalm 142:6)

## Expectant Belief John 4:50-54

**50** Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. **51** While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. **52** When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." **53** Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed. **54** This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.

As Jesus sent him away, the man “took Jesus at His word and departed.” This is expectant belief. He didn’t know how Jesus would heal, but He expected that he would. Belief demonstrates trust in God, knowing that He is going to do something, even if we don’t know how. Expectant belief is not fully realized until we look back and realize that God acted. Belief even before God acts is blessed. Jesus told Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."” (John 20:29)

When you ask God for help, will you trust Him in expectant belief? Will you agree with Peter who says, “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.” (1 Peter 1:8-9)

## Misplaced Belief John 5:1-5

**5:1** ¶ Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. **2** Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. **3** Here a great number of disabled people used to lie— the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. **4** **5** One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

This man was waiting at the pool to be healed, but his belief was misplaced. Other texts tell us he was waiting to be healed by an angel who would come move the water and heal the first person who got into the water. The rich fool in Luke 12:16-20 also had misplaced belief, said,

"The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

Relying on angels or wealth for your salvation is misplaced. The paralyzed man’s belief had kept him from truly living life for 38 years. When we place our faith on anything other than God, we often stall our lives and fail to do what God has called us to do.

Will you turn from misplaced belief and instead put your trust in God?

## Active Belief John 5:6-9a

**6** When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" **7** "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." **8** Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." **9** At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

Of course, he wanted to get well, who wouldn’t? But in reality, many people do not want to be well, there is something they value more than healing. Have you ever been turned down when you offered work or food to someone with a sign that said, “will work for food?” When someone claims they don’t want to be homeless, but refuses to take help to get out of their predicament, they don’t really want to escape their homelessness.

Jesus orders him to stand, pick up his bed and walk. If he had not truly wanted to be healed, he would have made an excuse not to move, instead he acted. When our belief is genuine, we act in confidence that God has a plan. If you are praying for rain, active belief brings an umbrella to the prayer meeting.

Will you act to demonstrate your belief and trust in God’s provision? Will you do what God has asked instead of waiting for what you think is ideal?

## Tested Belief John 5:9b-13

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, **10** and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." **11** But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’" **12** So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?" **13** The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

This man was challenged because he had violated the cultural norms. When you act in faith, some will question you. When I quit a high paying IT job to move from Colorado Springs to Kansas City for seminary, people questioned my sanity. Why would I leave a good job to become a starving student? Many times, when we act in faith, people will challenge those actions.

Will you continue to act out your belief even when challenged. Will you survive the tests that challenge your faith?

## Unstable Belief John 5:14

 **14** Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

All sickness is a result of sin in the world, but not all sickness is a result of that individual’s sin. In this case, however, Jesus directly links illness to sin in this man’s life. There is a phenomenon in warfare called the “foxhole Christian”. This is the person who repents and asks God to save them while the battle is raging, but then denies Jesus when the battle is done. Here Jesus tells the man that, “I saved you from your illness, but if you deny me, worse may happen.” When God has rescued, our belief is often unstable, we are glad He has saved, but are we willing to keep serving now that the crisis has passed?

Will you deny Jesus after He has rescued you, or will you remain faithful?

## Persecuted Belief John 5:15-16

**15** The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. **16** So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.” (Joh 4:43-5:16 NIVUS)

I don’t know if this man told the Jews because he was betraying Jesus or because he thought they would want to follow him as well, but either way, he went and told the Jews. The Jews react by persecuting Jesus. We can be sure that if this man was still following Jesus they would persecute him as well. He is the symbol of Jesus healing. In the best traditions of politics they would dig up all the dirt they could to make people not believe his testimony of Jesus healing. In the same way, as we stand firm in our faith for Jesus, we will likewise experience persecution.

There are those in our society who are going to persecute you for following Christ. There are even more in our society who will claim to be fine with you following Christ but will persecute you for not conforming to their social constructs. You can believe Jesus as long as you support homosexual marriage. You can worship Jesus as long as you bow to their political and cultural demands. You can believe in Jesus as long as your faith is kept private.

In the coming months and years, you will likely be persecuted. Will you maintain your belief even when persecuted? Will you publicly live out your faith even when persecuted?

# Signs of BeliefJohn 4:43-5:16

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Belief John 4:43-46a,48

All of us have times of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

God has given us all ample evidence to believe Romans 1:19-22

“Lord, I believe, help my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” Mark 9:24

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Belief John 4:46-49

This type of belief does not show full trust in God

A desperate belief is far \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ than no belief.

When you are desperate will you show your belief by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God? Psalm 142:6

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Belief John 4:50-54

Blessed are those who have not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and yet have believed
 John 20:29

When you ask God for help, will you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Him in expectant belief?

“even though you do not see Him now, you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in Him”
 1 Peter 1:8-9

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Belief John 5:1-5

When we place our faith on anything other than God, we often \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ our lives.

Will you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from misplaced belief and instead put your trust in God?

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Belief John 5:6-9a

Many people \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ want to be well

When our belief is genuine, we \_\_\_\_\_\_ in confidence.

If you are praying for rain, active belief brings an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the prayer meeting.

Will you act to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your belief and trust in God’s provision?

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Belief John 5:9b-13

When you act in faith, some will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ you.

Will you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to act out your belief even when challenged. Will you survive the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that challenge your faith?

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Belief John 5:14

Are we willing to keep serving now that the crisis has \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

Will you deny Jesus after He has rescued you, or will you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ faithful?

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Belief John 5:15-16

As we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in our faith for Jesus, we will experience persecution.

Will you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your belief even when persecuted? Will you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ live out your faith even when persecuted?