

Puppyness Be Like a Puppy

Question: Do you believe? Do you really, really believe?

Answer: Yes, I believe. I am a believer.

Question: What do you believe?

Answer: Well...I believe in God and in Jesus Christ. I believe Jesus was a real historic person and lived 2,000 years ago. I believe in heaven and hell.



Question: Excellent, but do you believe the really difficult things?

Do you believe that Jesus is God come in the flesh?

Answer: Yes

Question: Well then, do you believe in the virgin birth?

Answer: Well, I'm not sure about that, but I do believe...etc.



This hypothetical exchange is familiar to most Christians, a typical discussion about believing. Many Christians are of the opinion that believing is about doctrine, that the subject of belief is a doctrinal statement consisting of a long litany of truths, and within that list of truths are certain critical core doctrines that determine your stature as a “true believer,” a Christian.

In the New Testament, *believe* (πιστευω, or *pisteuo* in the Greek) is a very important word, used more than 90 times in the Gospel of John alone! But in the New Testament, the object of the verb *pisteuo* is a person, not a doctrine. The sense of the word in the Greek is reliance upon, not mere credence or mental assent. Here, *believe* points to a trusting relationship with a person—Jesus Christ—rather than just an understanding or an agreement about something.

I have a small puppy named Obadiah, a golden-white cockapoo. My puppy doesn't know anything about me; he doesn't know any of my history, who I am, what I have done, where I came from, what I do for a living, where I go to church, who my parents are, how I voted in the last elections, etc. In fact, my puppy doesn't know any “doctrine” about me. But he has an attitude about me. Whenever we are in the same room, I am the center of his attention—his eyes follow me wherever I go. He follows me from room to room just to be in my presence. When I sit down in my chair, he comes to me, sits at my feet, and begs to be allowed up onto my lap. When given permission, he leaps up onto my lap and actively presents himself for my attention. Then, after I rub him behind the ears and speak to him softly, assuring him that I really care about him, he circles around once and then twice, and then his little bottom goes down, and then his front. As he settles down on my lap and is resting there, he gives a big sigh. The message is clear, “OK, I'm available...love me.”

Obadiah
Fang



He is perfectly content to just rest in my presence. This attitude is not based on a litany of doctrine or a list of principles, but on a relationship, on trust. He knows that I am trustworthy, that I love him and enjoy having a

relationship with him. My puppy actively seeks out that relationship and actively presents himself to be loved. He makes himself available for that relationship. This is what I call Puppyness.

Next to my big recliner chair is a long couch. Sometimes, when I am sitting in my chair working, puppy will jump onto the couch and rest there. I love having him there, and he loves to be in my presence. But simply being in my presence is not the same as Puppyness—it is not the same as resting on my lap. Likewise, having God’s presence in your life is not the same as resting on Him.



Believe, or *pisteuo* in the Greek, is Puppyness; it is based on the trustworthiness of God and His delight in our being related to Him. *Believe* has a precise focus in the Bible: its object is God manifested in the person of Jesus Christ.

God’s heart is that we be related to Him—that we come to Him, present ourselves, and say, “OK, I’m available...love me.” We need to learn to snuggle down into His presence, resting on Him, allowing Him to cuddle us in His loving arms, and actively giving Him permission to love us.

Now would be a good time; seek Him in prayer and ask Him to teach you the simple skill of Puppyness.

Prayer: Engage your heart and pray: “Father, lead me in the way of Puppyness. Teach me the simple skill of resting in your presence and presenting myself for your loving care.”