To Believe is to Obey

When working in basic math we can check our answers pretty quickly. If 3+2=5 is true, then 5-3=2 is also true. Working in basic math it is a delight to know there is a way of quickly checking our answers. With Jesus it is the same way. If I believe him, I obey him. If I don’t obey him, then I have proven I don’t believe him. Consider John’s use of the two words believe and obey in the following verse. “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36).

A person may want to say they believe Jesus, but then disobey him. It is really easy to check your answer. The person who disobeys Jesus proves he didn’t believe, and “…he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” The person who obeys shows that he truly did believe because his actions complete his belief. So please read the passage one more time, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36).

In this same chapter of the gospel of John, Nicodemus said he believed in Jesus (John 3:2). Jesus then tells him to obey, “Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5). Jesus had been out-baptizing John the Baptist in this chapter (3:22-26 & Jn. 4:1-3), so when Jesus says to be born of the water, Nicodemus knew what he meant. So when Nicodemus refuses to be baptized in water, Jesus told him he didn’t really believe. “If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” (John 3:12). So Jesus seeing Nicodemus in disobedience, says he didn’t “believe”. Poor Nicodemus thought he could believe and disobey. Jesus called him out on it (3:12).

Many others wanted to believe without obeying Jesus, for they feared the consequences. Did they receive God’s approval? “*Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God*.” (John 12:41-42). So believing without obeying you get man’s approval. But believing and obeying you get God’s approval. Have I obeyed him? That’s how I check if I believe. Have I confessed him? Have I repented of my sins as commanded (Luke 13:3)? Have I been baptized for the forgiveness of my sins (Acts 2:38)? Am I living faithful to him in loving obedience?

Dan Peters