

“Believing In God” vs. “Believing God”?

The difference between “believing in God” and “believing God” is significant. Here’s why. “Believing in God” means that one is convinced of His existence- that God is real and extant rather than a mere myth or legend. While this is certainly commendable, especially today when there is such a cacophony of dissenting views, it is only a first step. Alone, this conviction doesn’t really get you anywhere. In Rom.1:21, those who “knew God” still did “*not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*” This led to ‘down a rabbit hole’ to a litany of other despicable conclusions and depravity, cf. Rom.1:22-32. The conviction that “God is” must thus be further supplemented with additional information.

Being convinced that “God exists” needs to logically progress to “What does God expect/require of me?” to produce productive faith. Through observance of “*the creation*”- including but not limited to ourselves, one can discern the “*eternal power*” and “*divine nature*” of God (Rom.1:29-20), and thus conclude that He does indeed exist. This is known as “General” or “Natural Revelation.” However, “General/Natural Revelation” is necessarily limited- it only informs us of God’s existence, power, and goodness. It does not tell us how and in what ways we should respond to Him. For this information, “Specific Revelation” is needed... and summarily provided by God through “*the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to ever one who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek,*” Rom.1:16. Thus, “*the gospel*” supplies one who “believes in God” with the instructions necessary to live according this conviction. Such highlights the distinction between merely “believing in God”- *i.e.* His existence, and “believing God”- which is trusting His word/gospel sufficiently to obey Him. Consider 2Thess.2:10,12 in these regards where: those “*who did not receive the love truth*” perished, v.10; and those who similarly “*did not believe the truth*” of God’s words were condemned, v.12. These were/are lost, not because they failed to “believe in God,” but because they failed to “believe God” regarding the instructions and consequences of His word, the gospel.

Please note a couple of other passages that emphasize the importance of “believing God” enough to obey Him:

- “*Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to Him as righteousness,*” Gal.3:6. What does this mean? “*By faith...Abraham obeyed...*,” Heb.11:8. He didn’t just “believe in God,” he “believed God” sufficiently to obey the instructions God provided.
- Titus 3:8, “*This is a trustworthy statement, and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.*” Note again that “believing God” requires us to obey Him. While merely “believing in God” provided no substantial benefit to those in Rom.1:21-32 (because they did not “believe God” enough to obey Him), here in Titus 3:8 “*believing God*” (and thus doing what He says) is said to be both “*good and profitable.*”

We can look at the wonders of creation and discern the Creator- and thus “believe in God.” But only through “believing God” regarding the promises of His word (the gospel of Jesus Christ) sufficiently to obey them do we achieve eternal salvation. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)