

Listeners to the Whitestone podcast know we sometimes repeat jokes starting with these words: “there are two kinds of people in this world”—and then the punch line that follows. Let’s hear a couple of those.

- “There are two kinds of people in this world: some willing to work and the rest willing to let them.”
- “There are two kinds of people in this world: those who make it easy and those who make hard.”
- And Henry Ford said, “There are two types of people in this world. Those who think they can and those who think they can’t. They are both right.” Ford pretty much got that one correct! Fun!

Now, let’s talk about that kind of saying from the standpoint of serious, robust New Testament believers, because doing that can shed a whole lot of light on a thriving Christian walk. Here’s a framework. “There are two kinds of Christians, those who say ‘I have to see it to believe it’ and those who say ‘I believe it to see it.’ Well, that’s a can of worms I just opened, isn’t it? But that apparent paradox needn’t be a can of worms at all! That’s because the revealing thing is, those very issues are key as part of God’s toolbox!

Let’s tackle the famous story of Thomas—because it looks pretty straightforward at first...but then a thoughtful reflection reveals that Thomas’ story contains a really important weave. Here’s John 20:24-29.

“Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.’ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’” (ESV)

So, let’s outline six key points summarizing the events both before and during this Thomas-story.

1. As one of Jesus’s twelve disciples, Thomas had seen Jesus perform many miracles. And Thomas knew that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead.
2. Now, Thomas had just heard fresh, post-Resurrection testimony from the other disciples about seeing the Resurrected Jesus in person, the very Jesus who had died on the Cross!
3. But Thomas would not believe those testimonies without himself seeing Jesus and His wounds.
4. Eight days later, Jesus came through locked doors to join His disciples and showed His wounds to Thomas. In short, Jesus later answered Thomas’ sincere doubt with Jesus-delivered evidence.
5. Thomas immediately believed, calling Jesus His Lord and His God. So...Thomas saw, then believed.
6. Jesus then said, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” So, those who *believe before seeing* are blessed! But Thomas’s measure of blessing was self-delayed due to his sincere doubting.

Wow, there’s a truly amazing dimension captured in this story about Thomas. The key is, for the Christian, the issue of “seeing it to believe it” versus “believing it to see it” is *not always* an “either-or” proposition—it can be a “both-and” and that’s because when a Jesus-follower on the order of Thomas harbors an authentic doubt, God will clear it up. Isn’t that just like our loving Father? But still, a responsive blessing comes from the Father to those who *believe before seeing!* And that’s true well beyond this singular event of Thomas—because here’s the thing: eternal life through Christ our Savior is based on...you got it...*faith!*

And that’s not just the faith in the Savior that every person must exercise in order to be saved—it’s also the very fabric of *then* living a robust, ongoing life of faith in Christ. Hebrews 11:1 (ESV) says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” There you have it...faith is *conviction without seeing*...yeah, that’s the very essence of the Christian faith...conviction without seeing!

And that strain of authentic faith in God goes back to the Old Testament. The very next verse is Hebrews 11:2 which says, “For by it [faith] the people of old received their commendation.”...and the writer to the Hebrews then writes what’s often labeled the “roll call” of giants of faith in the Old Testament: “By faith, Abel...by faith, Enoch...by faith, Noah...by faith, Abraham...” Those amazing God-followers of old had *conviction without seeing!* And that is a very strong bridge of commonality between the Old Testament and the New—faith in God—and that’s why Abraham is considered to be our father in faith.

But we must be clear here. Just “seeing” doesn’t always bring correct belief! Indeed, God has revealed Himself in creation such that every person will be judged justly by God (Romans 1-2)...but many adamantly claim to be atheists. So, seeing doesn’t always yield correct believing! Likewise believing doesn’t always bring correct seeing—you see, there are cults and Christian sects who believe nonsensical stuff...or who add to or subtract from God’s Word...or who believe God limits His being as fully active in Christians’ lives today as He was in the early church. So, what results? False religions or God limited by willful unbelief, lack of faith. (Matthew 13:58) So, we must be careful about what our believing and our seeing are really all about, and who we are listening to—yes, we are warned of wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15).

Along those same lines, another New Testament story gives great insight about the realities of seeing and believing. Remember when Jesus anointed a blind man’s eyes with mud mixed with His saliva? The man then obediently journeyed to the Pool of Siloam and was healed! The Pharisees then challenged the man twice about his healing...they simply did not want to believe in Jesus! Revealingly, when the man asked them if they were looking to become disciples of Jesus, they “reviled him, saying, ‘You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses...’” Later, the healed man spoke with Jesus, and “he said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him. Jesus said, ‘For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.’ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, ‘Are we also blind?’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.’” That’s in John 9:38-41...and it’s profound! Look, the key to Christians’ fruitful walk is faith...believing without yet seeing. God responds to that faith!

And you know what else? Let’s shift gears here. Healthy workplaces harbor both viewpoints too! Some people, like accountants and auditors...well, their primary task is to see and only believe what they can justifiably see and attest to according to the standards of accounting and auditing. And we need that! But with entrepreneurs and innovators—well, their key role is to believe and “see” what others don’t. In fact, successful entrepreneurs and innovators are often considered crazy early on—even by their families!

Guy Kawasaki is a well-known influencer in Silicon Valley—he was hired by Steve Jobs in 1984 to market the Macintosh computer. Kawasaki has spoken on the 12 things that he learned about entrepreneurship from working with Jobs, and here is one of those: “some things need to be believed to be seen.” Yeah, Jobs believed in his iPod and his iPhone before anyone else did! And now iPhones are seen and used worldwide! That’s yet another example of highly successful business practices mimicking God’s principles!

Hey, in your workplace, your church, your family, your Christian walk, are you just tallying up things you *see*? Or are you tallying up what you *believe*, too, coupled with great expectation and faith that you will *see* it all soon? Oh, so you don’t know what I’m talking about? How about when you’re ill or in need of a career shift or your child is facing a great difficulty? Are you praying...*in faith...expectantly*? And do you routinely give God the credit after the prayers, knowing that your *seeing* results is due to His response?

One last reminder. Similar to Thomas, we all have a doubt creep in now and then when it comes to God’s response to our faith. And when our good God stills those doubts, then we can call on a Christian version of how Henry Ford couched it: “As to true believers in Christ, there are those for whom ‘seeing is believing’ and there are those for whom ‘believing is seeing.’ And whenever both credit God, they are both right.” No matter the path to faith, Hebrews 11:6 says: “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

A&A: Application & Action

1. How about you—are you more of a “see it to believe it” person or a “believing it to see it” person? How would your pastor, spouse, or best friend answer that? Are you brimming with so much faith that you project faith to everyone in the dailyness of your life? Be specific in answering each question.

2. Is your church a truly faith-filled church—consistently, joyfully expecting to see miraculous results such as new believers specifically coming into the Kingdom, healings in answer to prayer, and open doors for witness around the world...all in response to the persevering faith of its members? Discuss.

3. Are the people in your workplace enterprise joyfully looking ahead to its future due to its visionary leaders, its entrepreneurial spirit, its looking-around-the-corner innovation? Discuss.