

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Johannine Epistles

Session 8, 1 John Sec 6 (4:15-5:15) & Sec 7 (5:16-21),

6-min. Video Overview

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Have you ever stopped to think, is my faith just a belief in my head? Well, today we're going to tear into that idea. We're diving deep into the book of 1 John to unpack what Dr. Robert Yarbrough calls full-scale faith. And trust me, it's a vision for a balanced Christian life that is way bigger than just saying, I believe.

So here's the game plan. First, we'll nail down what full-scale faith actually is. Then we're going to see how a specific kind of love can literally kick fear to the curb.

We'll explore the two kinds of secret sides of belief. And then we'll get super practical about what to do when we, you know, mess up. And we'll wrap it all up with a really sharp warning about the hidden idols of our time.

All right, let's jump right into the deep end. We're about to challenge that whole idea that faith is just this passive, one-and-done kind of thing. I mean, seriously, is that all there is to it? The book of 1 John basically grabs us by the hand and makes us ask this question.

Is faith just nodding along with a list of facts? Or is there something way more active, more alive going on here? And here is the answer in a nutshell. According to Dr. Yarbrough's work, full-scale faith is the whole package. It's not just one thing.

It's this dynamic mix of three crucial parts: your personal faith, your actual actions or works, and a real, living, loving relationship with God. So what that really means is this: this kind of faith is not a decoration you hang on your wall. It's an ongoing, total transformation.

It completely reorients your entire life, shifting your focus away from what you want and pointing it toward what God wants. Your world starts to revolve around his kingdom, not your own. Okay, building on that, we hit the next absolutely critical piece of the puzzle: love.

But listen, this isn't some sentimental, flimsy kind of love. This is a love so powerful, it can completely change how we experience our faith. So the source makes it clear that the starting line is a genuine confession of who Jesus is.

When you truly say and believe that Jesus is the Son of God, it's like you're opening a door. And through that door, God himself, who literally is love, comes to live inside you. That's where the direct personal relationship kicks off.

And that relationship leads to one of the most incredible promises in the whole letter. As this love from God grows in us, as it gets perfected, it literally throws fear out the window. The fear of judgment specifically.

Why? Because you become more and more confident that you belong to him, and he's not going to condemn you. Now, John lays out this logic that is just airtight. He basically says, look, your ability to love anyone comes from God loving you first.

So it makes zero sense; it's a total contradiction to say you love a God you've never even seen, but then you turn around and hate the person, the fellow believer, standing right in front of you. You just can't separate the two. Okay, you're going to want to lean in for this next part because it's, well, it's fascinating.

It's a distinction that is absolutely key to getting a mature grasp on faith. Think of it like two sides of the very same coin. So first up, we have what the old theologians called *fides qua*.

This is the faith by which you believe. It's your personal act of trust, your commitment. Dr. Yarborough calls it *faithing*, which is perfect.

It's a verb. It's an action. It's you actively trusting in Christ.

But that action needs a target, right? You have to believe in something. That's where *fides qua* comes in. The faith that is believed.

This is the content, the actual stuff, the objective truth about who Jesus is and what he did for us. The Apostles' Creed is a fantastic summary of what we believe. And this really makes it click.

You see, you have to have both. Your personal action of believing, your *faithing*, has to be aimed squarely at the objective content of the faith. One without the other just falls apart.

Believing in belief itself is useless. It has to be belief in the truth about Christ. So if faith is this active, ongoing thing, what happens when we inevitably stumble, when we mess up? Well, the source gives some incredibly practical and maybe even surprising advice on how a community is supposed to deal with sin.

John actually makes a really interesting distinction here. He talks about sins not leading to death. These are the kinds of stumbles that, yeah, they're wrong, but they can be confessed and forgiven.

But then there are sins leading to death. The source suggests these are things like a stubborn, persistent unbelief or an open, defiant rebellion against God. It's a much more dangerous path.

So what do we do? When you see a fellow believer stumble, your first move shouldn't be to judge or condemn. It should be to pray for them for their restoration. But with those more serious terminal sins, John says to be careful.

He actually doesn't command prayer, which suggests we need to be really wise and discerning before jumping into a situation that might be spiritually toxic. And that leads us to our final stop, a powerful warning from John that feels like it could have been written this morning. He takes this ancient idea of idolatry and completely reframes it for our world today.

I mean, really think about that for a second. When you hear the word idol, what pops into your head? Probably something old and dusty, right? But John's warning is for us right here, right now. What does an idol look like in the 21st century? First, let's get clear on what we are not talking about.

This is not about little stone statues or golden calves. The problem with idolatry didn't just vanish with ancient history. Oh no, it just got a makeover.

And this right here is the key. The Greek word for idol, eidolon, is where we get our word idea. The source defines a modern idol as a fantasy.

It's a spiritual concept that we cook up in our own heads, something manufactured by human imagination instead of being based on what God has actually revealed about himself. And here is a perfect modern-day example of one of these spiritual fantasies. You've heard it a million times.

Oh, I'm spiritual but not religious. It sounds deep, it feels good, but it's often a totally self-created spirituality cut off from the actual revealed truths of the faith. So at the end of the day, having a real, vibrant, full-scale faith means you have to stay awake.

It means being vigilant and guarding yourself against these really appealing, half-true, or totally counterfeit ideas about God that can so easily pull us off course. And that leaves us with one last thing to chew on. Thinking about everything we've unpacked from 1 John, what are the modern fantasies, the counterfeit spiritual ideas that pose the biggest threat to a true, full-scale faith in our own lives, in our culture, right now?