

# “Red Letter Words: Belief”

Matthew 11:2-15

Ray Cortese, January 11/12, 2014

## Reflect on the Text

\*Note: Why do we do this first? We always want to start with the Bible itself. The goal is to meditate on the Word and read it with an ear sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s promptings. Look for words or phrases that stand out through logic, repetition, layout, etc.

- Read Matthew 11:2-15. What stood out to you? What did you find interesting and/or important? What was challenging or caused you to have questions?

## Reflect on the Sermon

### INTRODUCTION

- 1 Can you explain the reasoning behind the new series, “Red Letter Words”?
- 2 Ray told the stories of Indians, a Muslim, and Malcom Gladwell being dramatically converted. Do you know anyone whom God brought to belief in a surprising way?
- 3 Summarize the *Big Idea* of the sermon in **one phrase or sentence** (Note: this is not the same as listing the main points). In other words, if someone woke you up at 3am on Monday morning and asked, “What was the sermon about on Sunday?” what would you say in the midst of your sleepy haze?

### BELIEVING REQUIRES ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION

- 4 What are the wrong kinds of questions people ask when they first consider a relationship with God? What was wrong with the thief on the cross who said, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” What is wrong with the bumper sticker, “God and Guns”?
- 5 Believing in Jesus means relinquishing control over everything: your health, your security, your future, your desires. Which of these is, or has been, most difficult for you?

- 6 Ray said, “If you don’t settle the question, ‘Are you the one?’, you will keep searching for the answer in other places. What idols/false gods do we often turn to and ask, “Are you the one?”

#### BELIEVING REQUIRES GRAPING WITH JESUS’ OFFENSIVENESS

- 7 In your own words, why is Christianity offensive? Why do those who are poor get it better than those who are rich? Is it really about money and wealth, or is it about something deeper?
- 8 We say the gospel is good news, but it’s even more exciting than that. How would you define the gospel to someone who’s never heard it? Discuss the following quote by Dan Allender.

The Christian faith and the grace at its heart is so radical that most congregations can’t deal with it. So you have to parcel it out little bits at a time...until you get the kids through college.

#### BELIEVING REQUIRES VIOLENCE

- 9 How is it that the kingdom of God is established through violence when Jesus came preaching peace?
- 10 The kingdom of God advances through violence. Tertullian said, “The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.” What did you think of the story Ray read of Christians killed in Africa? What transforms people into followers of Jesus who are willing to sacrifice everything?

## Final Reflections

- How has your understanding, appreciation, and love for God and the gospel grown as a result of this study?
- In what areas of faith and practice are you feeling convicted by the Holy Spirit to act as a result of this study?