

20 Things I Believeⁱ

(You can believe these too if you want, but it's fine if you don't. If not, what do you believe?)

1. God is God and created everything.

(If you don't believe in God, read footnote¹.)

2. No one else is God.

(Not politicians, nor parents, nor clergy, nor people called Doctors, nor the government, nor you, and especially not me.)

3. God made everyone in His image and likeness.

(There are no exceptions, and no one is better than anyone else intrinsically. Hierarchies are the consequences of choices and circumstances, not creation.)

4. We are ALL the same. When you see anyone, you see God.

(I choose not to see color, or gender, or age, or race, or ethnic origin, or life experience, or education, or status, or income, or any kind of label or identity other than "child of God.")

5. Character counts.

(Dr. King said it best by dreaming his children would "...not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." AMEN!)

6. Your character is your choice. It's not my choice or my fault.

(I can't always change what happens to me. But I can always change how I react to what happens to me and what I do about it.)

7. Money is nice. But it doesn't define you.

(At different points in my life I had no money and then plenty of money. Who I was as a person never changed. So, money is definitely not the thing that defines you. It doesn't define me or anyone else either. It is merely a stewardship tool to be used wisely during our life, because none of us are taking it with us when we die. You never see a hearse followed by a UHAUL trailer.)

8. Education is good. But it doesn't mean you are wise.

(I know many highly educated fools, and many undeclared geniuses. I bet you do too.)

9. Titles don't define you. You define you.

(Reverend Billy Graham was once told by Mr. Albert Einstein that he was not a Dr. and did not have a PhD because "no one was qualified to give me one." Mother Teresa² did not have a PhD, or MD, or JD, or MBA, or MDiv, or ThD, or... And yet they both changed the world.)

¹ If you don't believe in God you have two choices now: (1) stop reading and miss out in case there are any useful insights; or (2) replace the word God with whoever/whatever you believe created everything or is in charge and keep reading and see.

² Mother Mary Teresa Bojaxhiu, honored in the Catholic Church as Saint Teresa of Calcutta, was an Albanian-Indian Roman Catholic nun and missionary. In 1950, Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic religious congregation that had over 4,500 nuns and was active in 133 countries in 2012. The congregation manages homes for people who are dying of HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis. It also runs soup kitchens, dispensaries, mobile clinics, children's and family counselling programs, as well as orphanages and schools. Members take vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and also profess a fourth vow – to give "wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor."

20 Things I Believe

10. God loves all people. You, and even me and the other sinners who fall short.

(I can think of no greater act of love than to sacrifice His Son for all of us. Can you?)

11. The only thing constant every time I have fallen short is me.

(I am the only person who was present at 100% of my failures. God was there too, but thankfully He didn't judge me by that failure alone. Though I do worry about it when I repeat one of those failures. Change is good! It, and the love of God, are the only constants in our lives.)

12. Every full day of your life, God gives you 2 special gifts:

#1 the gift of 24 hours; and

#2 the free will to decide with what you will do with gift #1.

(Today, many fell asleep permanently. They cannot change what they did not do with their previous days. If you are reading this, you can! So, what will you do today with your free will?)

13. Jesus Christ was who He said He was³.

(It's hard to deny the thousands of witnesses who testified, under penalty of death, to His thousands of miracles, including that pretty big last one of dying and then coming back to life!)

14. Christ gave us ONE commandment. LOVE! Love God and each other.

(Indeed, He defined what it means to be His Disciple: "having love for one another."⁴ Imagine what the world would be like if we actually did what He commanded. Imagine how you and I would be different if we did just that one thing.)

15. Christ gave us TWO clear instructions:

#1 "Go and do likewise"⁵ and help others in need; and

#2 "Go and make Disciples" (see the definition of Disciples in #14 above).

(If the "hated" Samaritan could personally stop and show love by helping the Jewish man who was the enemy of his people who had something bad happen to him not of his choosing, who am I to judge who "deserves" to be loved and helped. I know I have received love and help when I didn't "deserve" it. Paying it forward is a real thing.)

16. Until I learn to love and serve everyone, I have work to do.

(When in doubt, work harder. Grit is more important than intellect, education or luck.⁶ Nothing is even close.)

³ Like footnote #2, if you don't believe Christ is who He said He was, you have two choices now: (1) stop reading and miss out in case there are any useful insights; or (2) think of Him however you think of Him, and keep reading and see.

⁴ John 13:34-35

⁵ Luke 10:25-37 (The Parable of the Good Samaritan) and specifically Luke 10:37

⁶ Watch: Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth's TED Talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passionand_perseverance?language=en

20 Things I Believe

17. One day, I will stand before my Lord and be asked to account for my life.⁷

(The question He might ask that I focus on is: “*What did you do with My church and people under your watch given all of the gifts I gave you.*” I’m still working on that one.)

18. My faith, family and friends are what I value most.

(I am so blessed and deserve none of them. I am constantly grateful for their unconditional love and forgiveness of my many failings. As Don Vito Corleone famously said: “*Because a man who doesn’t spend time with his family can never be a real man...*” and “*Friendship is everything. Friendship is more than talent. It is more than the government. It is almost the equal of family.*” There’s a law somewhere requiring quotes from *The Godfather* in any statement of beliefs. 😊)

19. Until you know and live your Stewardship Calling (your WHY) you’re just practicing.

(Practice is good. It’s the only way you get better. There was only one perfect “human” being and he was actually Divine. Making mistakes is human and also OK. Not correcting them, or making them again, well that’s just on you! It’s critical to learn and live your WHY / Stewardship Calling (i.e., what you should do with all of the many gifts given to you.)

20. Like me, you have the God-given, and U.S. Constitutionally-given, right to believe what you believe.

Believe something! Try and get others to believe what you believe. But you do not have the God-given, or U.S. Constitutionally-given, right to try and force anyone to believe what you believe.

As Socrates is once reported to have said: “*You cannot teach adults new things. You can merely create the environment where they discover the truth for themselves.*” What truth have you discovered that causes you to believe what you believe?

There is a lot more that I believe. However, perhaps this list of 20 beliefs is as good a place to start as any.

So, what do you believe?

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:10

⁸ Watch Simon Sinek’s TED Talk “Start With Why – How Great Leaders Inspire Action - https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action

ⁱ Bill Marianes is a Stewardship Calling evangelist whose WHY is to help people discover and live their Stewardship Callings (i.e., what they can do with all the gifts over which they are a steward.) See his always free website: www.stewardshipcalling.com. Before that, he was a partner and in management at two global law firms of over 1,100 lawyers each. That experience helped prepare him for his Stewardship Calling, but does not define him. You can reach him at Bill@stewardshipcalling.com.