

The Crisis of Belief

A FAITH BUDGET FOR OUR CHURCH

One year the members of our finance committee said, "Pastor, you have taught us to walk by faith in every area in the life of our church except the budget." I asked them to explain. They said, "We develop the budget on the basis of what we believe we can do. It does not reflect that we expect God to do anything."

"Then how do you feel we ought to produce the budget?" I asked.

They said, "First, we ought to determine all God wants to do through us in the coming year. Second, we need to estimate what that will cost. Then we need to divide the budget revenue into three categories: (1) what we plan to do through our own giving, (2) what others have promised to do to help us, and (3) what we must depend on God to do."

As a church we prayed and decided God wanted us to use this approach to budgeting. We did not try to dream our own dreams for God. We had to be absolutely sure God was leading us to do the things we put in the budget. Then we listed what that would cost. We estimated what we thought our people would give and what others (the mission board, partnership churches, and individuals) had said they would contribute. The difference between what we could reasonably expect to receive and the total was what we asked God to provide.

The big question was, What would our operating budget be? By faith we adopted the grand total as our operating budget. At this point we reached a crisis of belief. Did we really believe the God who had led us to do these things would really provide the resources to bring them to pass? Anytime God leads you to do something that has God-sized dimensions, you will face a crisis of belief. At that point what you do next reveals what you believe about God.

That year we set our budget at more than twice the amount we would normally have planned. Yet at year end God had exceeded even that amount by providing us with revenue we could not have anticipated. God taught our church a lesson in faith that radically changed us all.

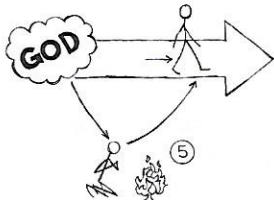
DAY
I

A Turning Point

WHEN GOD TELLS ME WHAT HE WANTS TO DO THROUGH ME, I WILL FACE A CRISIS OF BELIEF.

This unit focuses on a major turning point in following God's will. When God invites you to join Him in His work, He has a God-sized assignment for you. You will quickly realize you cannot do what He is asking on your own. If God doesn't help you, you will fail. This is the crisis of belief when you must decide whether to believe God for what He wants to do through you. At this point many people decide not to follow what they sense God is leading them to do. Then they wonder why they do not experience God's presence and activity the way other Christians do. Let's review in order to see the relationship between the crisis of belief and what you have already studied.

REALITY 5



CRISIS OF BELIEF

- 1** We have been studying seven realities of the sequence in which God works with His people. Using the following hints, see if you can write the first four realities in your own words. Then check yourself by referring to the inside back cover of your book.

Reality 1—God's work: _____

Reality 2—relationship: _____

Reality 3—invites: _____

Reality 4—speaks: _____

- 2** Now see if you can fill in the blanks in the fifth reality. You can peek if you need to.

Reality 5: God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a _____ of _____ that requires _____ and _____.

The word *crisis* comes from a Greek word that means *decision* or *judgment*. A crisis of belief is not a calamity in your life but a turning point where you must make a decision. You must decide what you truly believe about God. The way you respond at this turning point will determine whether you become involved with God in something God-sized that only He can do or whether you will continue to go your own way and miss what He has purposed for your life. This is not a one-time experience. It is a regular occurrence. The way you live your life is a testimony of what you believe about God.



The way you live your life is a testimony of what you believe about God.

- 3** You read about our church-budgeting process (p. 133). In that experience what was the crisis of belief? Check your response.

- a. When the committee decided to change the way we developed the budget
- b. When the church had to decide what God was leading us to do in the coming year
- c. When the committee had to decide whether to recommend the grand total as the operating budget or what it knew the church could do

In a sense every one of these choices could have been checked. In each case we had to decide what we believed about God. The greatest crisis came, however, when we decided to operate on the grand total rather than what we knew we could do. Operating on our projected revenue would not require much faith. We were sure we could do that. But operating on a budget incorporating everything God had told us to do required faith. We could not see any way to get that much money unless God provided it. Do you see the turning point—the crisis of belief? We could have decided on the lesser amount, met our budget, and never known anything more about God. People in the community watching our church would have seen merely what people could do. They would not have seen God at work.

Another crisis of belief came in the middle of our church's building program. We had a unique **opportunity to buy a building** on Main Street in Allan, Saskatchewan, Canada, for use as a church building for our mission. Len Koster, our mission pastor, talked with the owner, who said, "I bought this for \$15,000, and I put \$7,000 into it. But we will sell this building to you and the property on Main Street for \$15,000." He asked us for \$9,000 down and said he would give us a loan of \$6,000 at 8 percent interest.

Len said, "Give us two weeks, and we will get back to you."

We were a small group of people ourselves, and we were already sponsoring four missions. At that point we were \$100,000 short in our own building program. God had called us to start the mission, but we didn't have nine cents, let alone \$9,000. We asked the church family, "What do you suppose God wants us to do?"

With one heart the church said, "Let's earnestly pray that God will provide for our mission." We began to pray. We decided that any unexpected money that came in during the next two weeks would be God's provision for Allan in answer to our prayer.

Almost a week later I received a phone call from a church in Halfway, Texas. The caller said, "Someone came by our church and told us that you are doing mission work. Would you describe it to us over the phone?" I did. He said, "We are thinking of sending you \$5,000 and then \$200 a month for two years to support a mission pastor. Do you know where that might be used?"

"Oh, yes," I said. "We would use it in Allan. We have been praying for Allan."

The next day another pastor called and said, "Someone has told our church about the mission work you are doing. A woman in our church whose husband was an evangelist would like to give \$1,000 to mission work. Do you know a place that could use the money?"

I said, "Oh, yes! We are praying for our mission in Allan." Now we had \$6,000 for the building and \$200 for a pastor. We kept praying. At the end of the two weeks we were short \$3,000. Len went back to see the owner.

Before Len could say anything, this man said, "By the way, since you were last here, I've been thinking about income tax. It would be much better for me if you put \$6,000 down, and I will carry the \$9,000 at 8 percent. How would that be?"

"Oh," Len said. "That is exactly what I was going to suggest." We got the clear deed to the property and built that church. That church has since bought other property, built another building, and sponsored several other missions.

If we had looked at what we had in the bank, would we have proceeded? Not at all. If we had looked at all of the circumstances, would we have moved forward? No. But what you believe about God will determine what you do. When God tells you what He wants to do through you, you will face a crisis of belief. What you do next reveals what you believe.



When God
tells you what
He wants to do
through you,
you will face a
crisis of belief.

4 In your own words define *crisis of belief*. Write in the margin.

5 Read each passage of Scripture and describe the crisis of belief.

Joshua 6:1-5: _____

Judges 6:33; 7:1-8: _____

1 Chronicles 14:8-16: _____

Matthew 17:24-27: _____

6 Have you or your church ever faced a crisis of belief when you sensed God wanted you to do something beyond what you could do?

Yes No If so, briefly describe one situation and how you or your church responded. _____

7 What did your response demonstrate about your belief in God? Did it reveal faith or a lack of faith? _____

Would you tell an army to follow you in walking around a city expecting the walls to fall down when you blew some trumpets? That was a crisis of belief for **Joshua** and for all Israel. They had to decide if they believed God could do what He said. Though they had just seen God dam up the Jordan River for them to cross, this next step required faith. In fact, every assignment God gave Israel required a new measure of faith.

Gideon must have struggled with his crisis. Joint forces of the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples were prepared to attack his people. Gideon started with 32,000 men, but God had Gideon send 31,700 of them home. He was going to give victory with only 300 soldiers. Do you see what a difference it made from God's perspective? When the battle was won, everyone knew God did it!

David, a faithful servant of the Lord, refused to rely on human wisdom for guidance. He asked for God's direction. Even though God said He would give David victory over the Philistines, was this a crisis of belief for David? Yes! David still had to decide what he believed about God, and he had to trust God to do what He said He would do.

An important characteristic of David's walk with the Lord is that he stayed in a close relationship with God. He didn't rely on yesterday's guidance for today, and he didn't use human wisdom to decide whether to attack this second time. This is a good example of how God wants you to depend on Him—through an ongoing relationship with Him, not a method or a program. What worked yesterday or in another church may not be what God wants to use today. Only He has a right to tell you what to do next.

Peter was a fisherman. Never before had he found coins in the mouth of a fish. Great faith was required to go and catch one fish to find the exact amount of money needed to pay their taxes. When he acted in faith, God provided.

As we continue our study of the crisis of belief, we will examine four truths.

8 In the following list underline a key word or phrase in each truth.

The Crisis of Belief

1. An encounter with God requires faith.
2. Encounters with God are God-sized.
3. What you do in response to God's revelation (invitation) reveals what you believe about God.
4. True faith requires action.

9 Write your Scripture-memory verse for this unit on the following lines and review your verses from previous units.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

When God invites me to join Him in His work, He has a God-sized assignment for me.

The way I live my life is a testimony of what I believe about God.

When God tells me what He wants to do through me, I will face a crisis of belief.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?

AIDS RESEARCHER CALLED TO UGANDA

We were leading a weekend conference for couples in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. Many individuals wanted to speak with me, for God had touched their lives with truth. One man shared, "Henry, when you were speaking, God reminded me of a time when I was a boy. He asked me to get a medical degree, go to a part of the world that needed medical care, and share the gospel as I practiced medicine. I got my medical degree, did postdoctoral work on the immune system, and specialized in AIDS. I am now a research professor at a highly respected medical-research university. What should I do?" I replied, "Because God reminded you of a vow you made to Him, I have only two words for you—obey immediately!" He replied, "I thought you would say that." We talked and prayed together, and I did not hear from him for a year.

Then one day a friend told me, "At a recent international-missionary commissioning service, a wonderful couple was appointed as career missionaries. The husband has been a research professor where the national AIDS research is housed. They've been appointed to Uganda." I knew who it was! Facing a crisis of belief, this doctor had said, "Yes, Lord!" and was on his way to doing God's will. He now has a wonderful, growing ministry in Africa.

DAY 2

FAITH IS
CONFIDENCE THAT
WHAT GOD HAS
PROMISED OR SAID
WILL COME TO PASS.

Encounters with God Require Faith

When God speaks, your response requires faith. Throughout Scripture when God revealed Himself, His purposes, and His ways, the response to Him required faith.

1 Read the following Scriptures and respond to the questions.

- a. "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb. 11:1). What is faith? _____

- b. "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). What is the opposite of faith? _____
- c. "A prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say ... must be put to death. If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously" (Deut. 18:20,22). How important is it for your faith to be in God and what He says rather than in what you or someone else declares ought to happen? _____
- d. Jesus said, "Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). What is the potential of faith? _____

- e. "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20-21). How much faith is required for God to do through you what is humanly impossible? _____

- f. Paul said, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor. 2:4-5). On what should we base our faith? _____
On what should we not base our faith? _____
- g. "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all" (Isa. 7:9). What is one danger of a lack of faith? _____

Faith is confidence that what God promised or said will come to pass. Sight is the opposite of faith. If you can clearly see how something can be accomplished, more than likely, faith is not required. Remember the illustration about our church budget? If we had chosen to operate on what we knew we could do, faith would not have been

necessary. Faith was believing that the God who called us to the assignments was the One who would provide for their accomplishment.

Your faith does not rest on a concept or an idea. Faith must be in a Person—God Himself. Faith is not drawing up a grandiose idea and then asking God to make it come to pass. If you or someone else decides something would be good to do and then leads people to “believe” or “have faith,” you are in a dangerous position. Faith is valid only in God and in what He says He is purposing to do. If what you want to happen is from you and not from God, you must depend on your own resources to bring it about. Before you call yourself, your family, or your church to exercise faith, be sure you have heard a word from God.

With only mustard-seed-size faith in God, anything is possible. Jesus said His followers would do greater things than He had done. Our faith, however, must be based on God’s power and not on human wisdom. Without firm faith you will stumble and fall.

Something Only God Can Do

Moses could not deliver the children of Israel from Pharaoh’s army, cross the Red Sea on dry land, produce water from a rock, or provide bread and meat for food. Moses had to have faith that the God who called him would do what He said He would do. **Joshua** could not take the Israelites across the Jordan River on dry land, bring down walled cities, defeat enemies, or make the sun stand still. Only God could accomplish these things. Joshua had to have faith in God.

In the New Testament this was also true for **the disciples**. On their own they could not feed the multitudes, heal the sick, calm a storm, or raise the dead. Only God could do these things. But God called servants to let Him do those things through them.

When God lets you know what He wants to do through you, it will be something only He can do. What you believe about Him will determine what you do next. If you have faith in the God who called you, you will obey Him, and He will bring to pass what He purposed to do. If you lack faith, you will not do what He asks. That is disobedience. Jesus asked those around Him, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). He frequently rebuked His disciples for their unbelief. Their lack of faith revealed they did not know who He was. Thus, they did not know what He could do.

2 Answer the following questions.

a. What is one thing God wanted to do through Moses that only God could do?

b. What is one thing Jesus wanted to do through the disciples that only God could do? _____

c. When God asks someone to join Him in doing something only He can do, what is required for the person to respond? _____

d. If the person disobeys, what does that indicate? _____

e. If the person obeys, what does that demonstrate? _____

f. Hebrews 11:6, tells why faith is important. Circle the correct word in parentheses: “Without faith it is (possible impossible) to please God.”



Faith is valid
only in God
and in what
He says He is
purposing to do.



Obedience indicates faith in God.

Mark 10:27

“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.’”

Faith was required of Moses and the disciples. When God calls a person to join Him in a God-sized task, faith is always required. Obedience indicates faith in God. Disobedience often reveals a lack of faith. Without faith a person cannot please God. Without faith a church cannot please God.

We face the same crisis Bible characters dealt with. When God speaks, what He asks of us requires faith. Our major problem, however, is self-centeredness. We assume we have to accomplish the assignment in our own strength and with our current resources. We think, *I can't do that. That is impossible.*

We forget that when God speaks, He always reveals what *He* is going to do—not what He wants us to do for Him. We join Him so He can do His work through us. We don't have to be able to accomplish the task with our limited ability or resources. With faith we can confidently proceed to obey Him because we know *He* is going to bring to pass what *He* purposes. Jesus indicated that what is impossible with man is possible with God (see **Mark 10:27**). The Scriptures continually bear witness that this is true.

The church I pastored sensed we needed God to use us to reach people for Christ throughout our province. The province contained more than two hundred cities, towns, and villages. This meant we would have to start new churches. To do that, we felt God was leading us to call **Len Koster** to become our minister of mission outreach. He would equip the church to start churches.

For 14 years Len had pastored small churches. Len was so committed to the Lord that he worked as a service-station attendant for 14 years in order to pastor bivocationally. Without a part-time pastor these churches would have had no pastor at all. In that time Len and his wife, Ruth, had saved seven thousand dollars, hoping one day they would have enough money to buy their own home. When Len felt absolutely convinced he ought to come help us start churches, I said, “Len, we have no money to move you and no money to pay you.”

He said, “Henry, the God who has called me will help me. We will take the money from our savings, and we will move.” Later Len came into my office and said, “Henry, my wife and I prayed and talked all night. I have worked bivocationally for 14 years, and I have no problem working to provide for my family. But the need here is so great and God's direction is so clear I believe I need to work full-time. My wife and I realized last night that the seven thousand dollars we have in the bank is God's, and He wants us to use that for our living expenses. When we have exhausted that, He will show us what to do next. So Henry, don't worry about my support.”

When Len left the room, I fell on my face and wept before the Father. I said, “Father, I don't understand why such a faithful couple must make this kind of sacrifice.” I saw in Len and Ruth a great faith that was demonstrated by their actions.

Two days later I received a letter from a Presbyterian layman in Kamloops, British Columbia. It simply said, “I understand a man named Len Koster has come to work with you. God has laid it on my heart to help support his ministry. Enclosed find a check for seven thousand dollars to be used for his support.” When I opened that letter, I got back on my knees and wept before the Father again. This time I asked Him to forgive me for not trusting Him when He told me I could.

I called Len and said, “Len, you have placed your life savings on the altar of sacrifice, but God has something else in the bushes. The God who says, ‘I am your Provider’ has just provided!” Then I told him the news. Do you know what that did in Len's life? Can you imagine what it did in our church's life? We all grew in our faith to believe God. After that we stepped out in faith time and time again, and we saw God do amazing things. We never could have experienced God that way if we had not stepped out in faith to call Len. That experience helped us learn how to trust God.

When you encounter God, it will bring a crisis of belief. That crisis will require faith. Without that faith you will not be able to please God.

3 Describe a time in your life that required faith, but you did not respond because you lacked faith. _____

4 Describe a time in your life that required faith in God, and you responded in faith—a time when you could see no way to accomplish the task unless God did it through you or in you. _____

5 What, if anything, do you know God wants you to do that you are not doing? _____

6 Why do you think you are hesitating? _____

7 Have you ever wanted to pray like the disciples when they asked the Lord, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5)? Yes No When and why? _____

8 Take time now to pray about your faith and what God wants to do through your life. Write a prayer to Him.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

When God speaks, my response requires faith.

Faith is confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass.

Sight is the opposite of faith.

Faith must be in a Person.

Before I call myself, my family, or my church to exercise faith, I must be sure I have heard a word from God.

When God lets me know what He wants to do through me, it will be something only He can do.

What I believe about God will determine what I do.

Review today’s lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today’s study?

DAY 3

GOD IS INTERESTED
IN THE WORLD'S
COMING TO
KNOW HIM.

Encounters with God Are God-Sized

God is interested in the world's coming to know Him. The only way people will know what God is like is to see Him at work in their world. They will know His nature when they see it expressed in His activity. Whenever God involves you in His activity, the assignment will have Godlike dimensions to it.

Some people say, "God will never ask me to do something that's impossible." On the contrary, if the assignment I sense God is giving me is something I know I can handle on my own, I assume it probably is *not* from God. The assignments God gave in the Bible were always God-sized. They were always beyond what people could do in their strength because He wanted to demonstrate His nature, His strength, His provision, and His love to His people and to a watching world. That is the only way the world will come to know Him.

- 1 From memory list some assignments God (either the Father or Jesus) gave to people in the Bible that were God-sized assignments—things that were humanly impossible.** _____

You could name many God-sized assignments in Scripture. God told Abraham to father a nation when Abraham had no son and Sarah was past childbearing age. He told Moses to deliver the children of Israel, to cross the Red Sea, and to provide water from a rock. He told Gideon to defeat the giant Midianite army with only three hundred men. Jesus told the disciples to feed the multitudes and to make disciples of all nations. None of these things were humanly possible. When people see something happen that only God can do, they come to know God.

- 2 Read the following biblical accounts of God's activity through His servants. Underline statements that indicate how people responded to God's activity when they observed it. I have underlined one for you.**

God told **Moses** to lead the Israelites to camp beside the Red Sea. God knew He was going to deliver them by dividing the sea and letting them cross on dry ground. He said, "I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord" (Ex. 14:4). What was the result? "When the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him" (Ex. 14:31).

God commanded **Joshua** to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River at flood stage. Why? "He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you [Israel] might always fear the Lord your God" (Josh. 4:24).

A vast army came to attack **Israel**. **King Jehoshaphat** proclaimed a fast and led the people to seek God's counsel. He prayed, "O our God ... we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (2 Chron. 20:12).

God responded, “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. . . . You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you” (2 Chron. 20:15,17). Jehoshaphat sent a choir in front of the army singing praise to God for His enduring love. God destroyed the invading army before Jehoshaphat and Israel got to the battlefield. Then “the fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel” (2 Chron. 20:29).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to obey God rather than King Nebuchadnezzar. Before being thrown into a blazing furnace, they said, “The God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand” (Dan. 3:17). The soldiers holding them captive died, but God delivered these three faithful men.

King Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants. . . . Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way” (Dan. 3:28–29). This pagan king wrote to the whole nation, “It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders!” (Dan. 4:2–3).

When Christians in **the early church** followed the directions of the Holy Spirit, God impacted their world. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in foreign languages they had not learned. Then Peter preached. “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41).

God used **Peter and John** to heal a crippled beggar in the name of Jesus. They preached, and “many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand” (Acts 4:4).

God used Peter to raise Dorcas from the dead. “This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord” (Acts 9:42).

3 Answer the following questions.

- When people saw God at work through His servants, who received the credit—God or the servants? _____
- What difference or impact do you see in the lives of people who saw or heard about God’s activity? _____

- How would you describe the response of the people in your community to what they see of God’s activity in your church? _____

What our world often witnesses today is a devoted, committed Christian or church serving God. But they are not seeing God. They don’t see anything happening that can be explained only in terms of God’s activity. Why? Because we are not attempting anything that only God can do.

Our world is not being attracted to the Christ we serve because they are not seeing Him at work in our lives. They see us doing good things for God and comment, “That’s nice, but it’s not my thing.” The world is passing us by because they do not want to get involved in what they see in our lives. We are not giving them opportunities



Our world is
not seeing God
because we are
not attempting
anything that
only God
can do.



Let the world
watch God at
work, and He
will attract
people to
Himself.

to encounter God. They are seeing only us. Let the world watch God at work, and He will attract people to Himself. Let Christ be lifted up, not in words but in life. Let people see the difference the living Christ makes in a life, a family, or a church; that will affect how they respond to the gospel. When the world sees things happening through God's people that cannot be explained except that God Himself has done them, the world will be drawn to such a God.

4 Answer the following questions.

- a. How will the world come to know God? _____

- b. Why are people in our world not being attracted to Christ and His church?

- c. What kind of assignments does God give His people? _____
- d. Why does God give God-sized assignments that an individual or a church cannot accomplish? _____

- e. What are you attempting to do that will happen only if God brings it to pass?

- f. What is your church attempting to do that will happen only if God brings it to pass? _____

- g. Which of the following *best* describes the things you listed in the previous two questions? Check your response.
 They are things God led me/us to attempt.
 They are things I/we decided to ask God to do.
- h. How are non-Christians responding to what they see God doing in your life and church?
 We are not attempting many God-sized tasks, and few people are responding to the gospel.
 We are not attempting many God-sized tasks, but many are responding to the gospel.
 We are seeing God do great things in and through our church, but few people are responding to the gospel.
 We are seeing God do great things in and through our church, and many people are responding to the gospel.

People come to know God when they see His nature expressed through His activity. When God does a work, He accomplishes something only He can do. When He does that, God's people and the world come to know Him in ways they have never experienced Him. That is why He gives God-sized assignments. The reason much of the

world is not being attracted to Christ and to His church is that God's people lack the faith to attempt things only God can do. If you or your church is not responding to God and attempting God-sized tasks, you are not exercising faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). If people in your community are not responding to the gospel the way people responded in the New Testament, one possible reason is that they are not recognizing God in what you are doing as a church.

God is far more concerned with your walking with Him than He is interested in getting a job done for Him. You can complete an assignment but never experience God. He can accomplish His work anytime He wants. What is He concerned about? You and the world knowing Him and experiencing Him. So God will come to you and give you a God-sized assignment. When you start to do what He tells you to do, He brings to pass what He purposed. Then you and the people with you will rejoice that you have experienced Him. You and the people around you will know more of Him than you have ever known before.

Our church in Saskatoon was growing and needed more space. We sensed God leading us to enlarge our facility even though we had only \$749 in the building fund. The building was going to cost \$220,000. We didn't have the foggiest notion how to do it.

We did much of the work to save labor costs. Still, halfway through the building program we were \$100,000 short. Those dear people looked to their pastor to see if I believed God would accomplish what He called us to do. God put confidence in my heart that the God who was leading us would show us how to do it.

God began providing the necessary funds, but we were about \$60,000 short toward the end. We had expected some money from a Texas foundation. Delay after delay occurred that we could not understand. Then one day for two hours the **currency-exchange rate** for the Canadian dollar hit the lowest point in history. That was exactly the time the Texas foundation wired the money to Canada. That gave us \$60,000 more than we would have received otherwise. After that the Canadian dollar went back up in value.

Does the Heavenly Father look after the economy in order to help His children? Nobody in the world would believe God did that for one church, but I can show you a church that believes God did it! When that happened, I magnified what the Lord had done in the eyes of the people. I made sure we gave Him the credit. God revealed Himself to us, and we came to know Him in a new way through that experience.

5 **Talk to the Lord about the level of your faith and that of your church. Ask for forgiveness for unbelief and for increased faith.**

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?



God is far more concerned with your walking with Him than He is interested in getting a job done for Him.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

When God's people and the world see something only God can do, they come to know God.

Let people see the difference a living Christ makes in a life, a family, or a church; that will make a difference in how they respond to the gospel.

DAY 4

WHAT YOU DO
REVEALS WHAT YOU
BELIEVE ABOUT GOD,
REGARDLESS OF
WHAT YOU SAY.

What You Do Reveals What You Believe

When God speaks to a person, revealing His plans and purpose, it will always cause a crisis of belief.

1 As a review, complete the first two statements about this crisis of belief.

The Crisis of Belief

1. An encounter with God requires _____.
2. Encounters with God are _____.
3. What you do in response to God's revelation (invitation) reveals what you believe about God.
4. True faith requires action.

2 In each of the last two statements, circle one or two key words that might help you remember the points.

What you do reveals what you believe about God, regardless of what you say. When God reveals what He is purposing to do, you face a crisis—a decision time. God and the world can tell from your response what you really believe about God. Your trust in God will determine what you do and how you live.

3 In the following paragraphs, underline what David seems to have believed about God, based on what he said. I have underlined one for you.

In 1 Samuel 16:12-13 God chose **David** and had Samuel anoint him to become the next king over Israel. In 1 Samuel 17 God brought David into the middle of His activity. While Saul was still the king, the Israelites were at war with the Philistines. Still a young boy, David was sent by his father to visit his brothers in the army. When David arrived, Goliath, a giant soldier nine feet tall, challenged Israel to send one man to fight him. The losing nation would become the slaves of the winner. Israel's army was terrified. David asked in amazement, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (v. 26). David faced a crisis of belief. He may have realized that God had brought him to the battlefield and had prepared him for this assignment.

David said he would fight this giant. He stated his belief: "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (v. 37). David refused to take the normal weapons of war. Instead, he chose a sling and five smooth stones. He said to Goliath, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me ... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (vv. 45-47). David killed Goliath, and Israel went on to victory.

4 What did David say he believed about God? _____

5 Based on David's response to Goliath, what do you think David believed about God? _____

David's statements indicate he believed God was the living God and a Deliverer. He said God was almighty and would defend Israel's armies. David's actions verified that he really believed these things about God. Many thought David was a foolish young boy, and even Goliath laughed at him. However, God delivered the Israelites. He gave a mighty victory through David so the world would know there was a God in Israel!

God called Abram and promised to make his offspring as numerous as the stars. Abram questioned God about this promise since he remained childless in his old age. God reaffirmed, "A son coming from your own body will be your heir. Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:4,6).

Abram's wife, **Sarai**, was in her mid-70s at this time. Knowing she was past child-bearing years, she decided she would have to build a family in a different way. She gave her maid to Abram as a wife and asked for a child through her. Ishmael was born to Hagar a year later. Sarai's actions indicated what she believed about God.

6 Which of the following more closely indicates what Sarai seemed to believe about God? Check your response.

- a. Sarai believed God was almighty and could do anything, including giving her a child of her own even though she was advanced in years.
- b. Sarai believed God could not possibly give her a child at her age and needed her help in finding a way for Abram to become a father.

Sarai's actions revealed what she really believed about God. She did not have the faith to believe God could do the impossible and give her a child in her own age. Her belief about God was limited by her human reason. This act of unbelief was extremely costly. Ishmael caused Abram and Sarai much grief in their old age. Ishmael and his descendants have lived in hostility toward Isaac and his descendants from that time until today. What you do in response to God's invitation clearly indicates what you believe about God.

7 Read the following case studies. Evaluate the responses of the individuals and churches to determine what they believe about God. Check your response or write your own response to each situation.

1. **Bill and Kathy**, having just heard a missionary speaker, believe God wants them to go as missionaries to Africa. Kathy reminds Bill that her parents would never agree to let them move so far away with her parents' only grandchildren. They decide not to pursue that sense of calling to be missionaries but to seek to support missions where they live. What do you think Bill and Kathy believe about God?
 - a. God is Sovereign Lord and has the right to do anything in their lives that He pleases.
 - b. God is able to convince Kathy's parents that this is His purpose so they will accept her decision.



Unbelief was
extremely costly.

- c. God may have been able to convince Pharaoh to let Israel go, but He would never be able to convince Kathy's parents to let Kathy, Bill, and the children go to Africa.
- d. Other _____

2. **Levona** has privately been praying that God would lead her to a place of service in the church. The Sunday School director, who has been praying for an adult Bible teacher, believes God is leading him to ask Levona to serve in that position. Levona responds, "I cannot accept that job. I don't have the abilities required. Besides, I have never done that before." What do you think Levona believes about God?

- a. The Holy Spirit will equip and enable me to do anything He calls me to do.
- b. God can't do anything through me that lies outside my giftedness.
- c. Other _____

3. A group of adults has been meeting together for six months and praying God would provide a church for their community, where there are currently no churches. As they pray, they sense God wants them to approach **Calvary Church** with an urgent plea to come and start the new church. Calvary's members say, "We are still paying off a debt on our building. We can't afford to sponsor a new church right now. Why don't you try First Church downtown." What do you think Calvary Church believes about God?

- a. God's resources for work through our church are limited to what our people already give.
- b. God owns everything in the world. He can provide resources to do whatever He purposes to do.
- c. Other _____

4. **First Church's** budget committee prays together for a month prior to talking with leaders about next year's budget, and it asks the leaders to pray as well. They develop a challenging budget, based on what they believe God wants their church to do next year. The church prayerfully considers the budget and unanimously votes to adopt it. The deacons lead a pledge campaign that comes up with 10 percent less than the adopted budget. The church then requires the budget committee to trim the budget by 10 percent so the church will not overspend its income. What do you think First Church believes about God?

- a. God is faithful. He will provide for all He leads our church to do.
- b. God is uncaring. He leads us to agree to do many things, but then He won't give us what we need to get the job done.
- c. God won't do anything we as a church can't afford.
- d. Other _____

Bill, Kathy, Levona, Calvary Church, and First Church may have been dealing with many other variables, but one thing is sure: actions indicate what we believe and do not believe about God. When Bill and Kathy made a decision at their crisis of belief, they said far more about their belief in God than about Kathy's parents. Levona said far more about her belief in God's power than she did about her abilities. Calvary Church and First Church said far more about what they believed about God than they did about their own resources.

Actions Speak

When God invites you to join Him and you face a crisis of belief, what you do next reveals what you believe about God. Your actions speak louder than your words.

8 Read the following Scriptures and answer the questions.

- a. Read Matthew 8:5-13. What did the centurion do to demonstrate his faith?

- b. What do you think the centurion believed about Jesus' authority and healing power? _____
- c. Read Matthew 8:23-27. What did the disciples do to demonstrate their lack of faith in the middle of this storm? _____
- d. Read Matthew 9:20-22. What did the woman do to demonstrate her faith?

- e. What do you think the woman believed about Jesus' power to heal?

- f. Read Matthew 9:27-31. What trait of God (Jesus) did these two blind men appeal to (v. 27)? _____
- g. On what basis did Jesus heal these two men (v. 29)? _____

9 Complete in your own words the third statement about the crisis of belief.

The Crisis of Belief

1. An encounter with God requires faith.
2. Encounters with God are God-sized.
3. What I do in response to God's revelation (invitation) ... _____
4. True faith requires action.

When the two blind men demonstrated that they believed Jesus was merciful and was the Messiah (Son of David), Jesus healed them according to their faith. The woman believed that touching Jesus' garment would allow His healing power to flow to her. She was willing to risk public ridicule to experience a miracle! When the storms of life overtake us as this tempest overtook the disciples, we often respond as if God does not exist or does not care about us. Jesus rebuked them, not for their human tendency to fear but for their failure to recognize His presence, protection, and power. "Just say the word, and my servant will be healed," the centurion claimed. Jesus commended the centurion's faith in His authority and power. What each of these people did indicated to Jesus what kind of faith they had.

10 Practice quoting your Scripture-memory verses aloud or write them on separate paper.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

What I do reveals what I believe about God, regardless of what I say.

What I believe about God will determine what I do and how I live.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

DAY
5

True Faith Requires Action

FAITH WITHOUT ACTION IS DEAD!

James 2:26 says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." When you face a crisis of belief, what you do demonstrates what you believe. Faith without action is dead! Hebrews 11 is sometimes called the roll call of faith. Let's take a look at the actions of these individuals who demonstrated their faith.

1 Turn to Hebrews 11. The following list on the left includes people commended for their faith in Hebrews 11. The verses of the chapter are in parentheses beside the name. Match the person on the left with the action on the right that demonstrated faith. Write the correct letters in the blanks. Some of the names will have more than one letter.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Abel (v. 4) | a. Chose to be mistreated along with God's people |
| ___ 2. Enoch (vv. 5-6) | b. Offered a righteous sacrifice to God |
| ___ 3. Noah (v. 7) | c. Left Egypt |
| ___ 4. Abraham (vv. 8-19) | d. Made his home in a foreign country |
| ___ 5. Joseph (v. 22) | e. Marched around the walls of Jericho |
| ___ 6. Moses (vv. 24-28) | f. Pleas'd God by earnestly seeking Him |
| ___ 7. Israelites (vv. 29-30) | g. Gave instructions to bury his bones in the promised land |
| ___ 8. Rahab (v. 31) | h. Followed God without knowing where he was going |
| | i. Kept the Passover |
| | j. Passed through the Red Sea on dry ground |
| | k. Welcomed and hid the Israelite spies |
| | l. Considered God faithful to keep His promise |
| | m. Built an ark to save his family |
| | n. Offered Isaac as a sacrifice |

Answers to activity 1 are: 1-b; 2-f; 3-m; 4-d, h, l, n; 5-g; 6-a, c, i; 7-e, j; 8-k.

2 In the previous list of actions, circle the word (the verb) in each lettered item that indicates an action taken as a demonstration of faith.

3 Based on Hebrews 11, is the following statement true or false? Circle one. Genuine faith is demonstrated by action. True False

Genuine faith is demonstrated by action. While you are studying Hebrews 11, you may notice that a faithful life does not always bring the same results in human terms.

4 Read Hebrews 11:32-38. Based on your own criteria, list the “good” outcomes of a faithful life on the left and the “bad” outcomes on the right. I have listed two to get you started.

“Good” Outcomes

Routed enemies

“Bad” Outcomes

Stoned to death

Verses 33-35a describe the victory and deliverance some people of faith experienced. Verses 35b-38 describe the torture, mockery, and death other people of faith endured. Were some more faithful than others? No. “These were all commended for their faith” (Heb. 11:39). They decided a “Well done!” from their Master was more important than life itself. Verse 40 explains God has planned something far better for people of faith than the world has to offer. Therefore, “Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb. 12:1-3).

Outward appearances of success do not always indicate faith, and outward appearances of failure do not always reflect a lack of faith. A faithful servant is one who does what his Master tells him, whatever the outcome may be. Consider Jesus: He endured the cross, but now He is seated next to the throne of God! What a reward for faithfulness! Don’t grow weary in being faithful. A reward awaits faithful servants.



God has
planned some-
thing far better
for people of
faith than
the world has
to offer.

5 Take a moment to review by filling in the blanks in the following four statements.

The Crisis of Belief

1. An encounter with God requires _____.
2. Encounters with God are God-_____.
3. What I do in response to God's _____ (invitation) reveals what I _____ about God.
4. True faith requires _____.

6 Write your Scripture-memory verse for this unit. _____

I pray that you are trying to please God by earnestly seeking Him (see Heb. 11:6). In the next unit we will look more carefully at the cost of following God's will. Part of the action required to demonstrate your faith will be the adjustment you must make to God. Following God's will always requires adjustments that are costly to you and even to those around you.

7 Take time to review some of your responses at the end of each day in units 1–7. Has God asked you to do something you have not done because you lacked faith? Yes No If so, describe what you may need to do to demonstrate your faith in Him, His purposes, and His ways. _____

8 Pray about your faithfulness. Ask God to increase your faith.

9 Review your Scripture-memory verses and be prepared to recite them to a partner in your small-group session this week.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Faith without action is dead!

Genuine faith is demonstrated by action.

God has planned something far better for people of faith.

Don't grow weary in being faithful. A reward awaits faithful servants.

Review today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more statements or Scriptures He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Underline them. Then respond to the following.

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today?

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God.

What does God want you to do in response to today's study?



THE CRISIS OF BELIEF

SESSION 7

DVD Message Notes

1. Your life becomes radically oriented to God.
2. Whenever God speaks to you, whatever you do next reveals what you believe about God, regardless of what you say.
3. What should be your response? An immediate "Yes, Lord."
4. When God speaks, it will create a crisis of belief.
5. When God speaks, it always has eternal dimensions about it. Your life response to God is going to affect eternity.
6. One word from God has the potential of an open-ended experience with God.
7. The smallest encounter with God has incredible dimensions about it.
8. No storm where the Master is present will ever overcome you.
9. Jesus never has sympathy with our unbelief.
10. Unbelief shuts down the activity of God.
11. "Nothing is impossible with God."
12. Do you have a mustard-seed faith?
13. God can do anything that's on His heart through the one who believes.
The key is belief.
14. What has God been asking of you?
15. The key is obedience.
16. Your church will be as excited as you're willing to step out and believe God.
17. Most Christians are just one prayer away from God doing a mighty work.

Your Notes

Unit Review

In your own words write a statement of the fifth reality of experiencing God using the hint below (inside back cover).

Crisis: _____

Fill in the blanks in the following four statements (activity 5, p. 152).

1. An encounter with God requires _____.
2. Encounters with God are God-_____.
3. What I do in response to God's _____
(invitation) reveals what I _____ about God.
4. True faith requires _____.

Check your answers, using the pages cited in parentheses.

Scriptures Referenced

- John 3:5
 Matthew 13:11,16,31
 Luke 8:22-25
 Mark 9:17-24,28
 Matthew 10:1
 Matthew 17:19-21

Testimony

Bob Dixon

Sharing Time

- Activities 4-7, page 136. Compare your answers in activities 4-5 and discuss your responses to activities 6-7.
- Times in your life when faith was required and how you responded (activities 3-4, p. 141).
- Activity 4, page 144. Compare your answers to items a-d. Share, compare, and discuss your responses to items e-h.
- One of the most meaningful statements or Scriptures from this unit's lessons and your prayer responses to God. Choose one from pages 137, 141, 145, 150, and 152.

For Makeup or Review

Audio and video downloads are available at www.lifeway.com.