

- Let me recap the journey so far.
 - Every person can experience more of God. We can experience his joy, his working, his peace, his ongoing presence. He can work through us to change people, to heal, to comfort and encourage. Does this describe you? Do you really want this?
 - We experience God by joining him in his work – he is always at work. Where have you seen God working in the past month?
 - God is pursuing a love relationship with me that is real and personal. How would you describe your relationship with God right now?
 - God is inviting us to be involved with him in his work. Are you responding?
 - God is speaking. He is not trying to be mysterious. How have you heard from God recently?
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- So what do you do when God speaks and invites you into his work? What is your response?
 - In my life, one of the three things typically happen.
 - One, I do nothing. I question whether or not I should do something. I justify my behavior. I ignore what he says because it is so uncomfortable.
 - Two, I listen by do as little as possible. In college, there was a guy in one of my project classes. He was socially awkward. Lots of acne. The rest of the team hated him. They wanted to kick him out of our group. I agreed but felt God wanted me to reach out. I hated that feeling. So I did talk a little bit to him. I invited him out to a church meeting and dinner after. But I did as little as I could and still feel OK about my actions.
 - Three, I totally jump in. I say “yes” to God and run with it. I wish this was the majority of the time.
 - How we respond when God invites us to join him impacts our relationship with him and changes how we experience him. If we get it right, we experience God in amazing ways, we get to see him work, and our very lives are impacted. If we miss it, the reverse is true.
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- You see, **INVITATIONS FROM GOD LEAD TO A CRISIS OF BELIEF.**
 - When God is at work, when he speaks to us, when he invites us to go along with him, we will always face a moment of crisis. A moment when we have to decide what we really believe. A moment when we move ahead in faith or play it safe. A moment that shows what we believe and what we are about.
 - These moments determine the course of our lives, for good, or for bad.
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- To help us grab a hold of this, I want to look at an account of a person who encountered a crisis of belief and how he responded changed the course of his life and the lives of others.
 - Let me give you some background.
 - Israel was a nation that finally had their very first king – named Saul.
 - This new king and new nation was facing a problem. The Philistines were a people that lived in a nearby land that were aggressively going after Israel. They wanted to overpower them and turn Israel and their new king into a nothing kingdom, without influence, unable to govern themselves. They wanted to annex and take over Israel.
 - So they gathered for war. Israel also gathered and the two camps met on opposite sides of a valley.
 - For over a month they camped opposite each other. There was no battle, but everyone knew it was coming. Tension in the air. The Israelites were fearful because they were simply not equipped for battle like the Philistine army.
 - To make matters worse, the Philistines had a champion named Goliath. This guy was huge. 8-9 feet tall, but not spindly and skinny. The guy was powerful. His armor alone approached 100 lbs and the head of his spear was close to 15 lbs.

- He had been training on how to fight since he was a kid. He was a prodigy. He was scary. He was flat out intimidating.
- Twice a day he would come to the edge of the hill overlooking the valley and yell insults at the Israelites. He mocked them, defied their armies and presented a deal. Pick a champion to fight me. We'll go one on one. MMA style. Mano-a-mano. To the death. Rather than the entire armies fighting, the loser's side becomes the winner's slaves.
- Israel's champion, Saul, who was not a small guy in his own right, who stood head and shoulders above his men, responded to these daily insults by staying in his tent while his men were petrified and offered a reward to anyone brave enough to take this guy on.
- In the middle of this walked David. A teenager sent by his father to bring some food to his brothers who are in Saul's army.

1 Samuel 17:20 Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. 21 Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. 22 David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and asked his brothers how they were. 23 As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. 24 Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear. 25 Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel."

- David began to ask around some more. Does this happen often? Who is this guy? What is being done about it? Saul heard about his questions and brought him in to speak with him.
- 32 David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."*
- David saw something wrong. God began to speak to his heart. David responded.
- This is not "The Rock". This is more like " " .

I. Every crisis of belief requires faith.

- Israel was faced with a problem. They were outmanned, outgunned and fearful. The odds were not in their favor.
- The king and the men could not figure out how to make this go their way.
- Every time God brings you or me to a turning point, large or small, the issue of faith comes up.
- The kind of faith we are talking about never rests in a concept or an idea. It rests on a person.
- Faith by itself is pointless. People have faith in all kinds of things. Sometimes it is faith in the system. In themselves. In certain people. In money.
- I have heard people say you just gotta have more faith. Like faith is some kind of mysterious thing that will cause certain things to happen if we have enough of it.
- Faith is simply the confidence that what God has said will come to pass.
- The opposite of faith is living by what we can see, understand or handle.
- Example: You have been noticing the number of messed up children around you. You are praying for specific kids and it is on your mind. Suddenly a friend says to you one day, "Have you ever considered being a foster parent?" It rings deep in your heart but your first thought is, "There is no way I could do that. I am too busy. I have two kids of my own. I need my alone time. I don't have the energy."
- A major problem for us is self-centeredness. We think we have to accomplish the assignment on our own power and with our current resources. We think, "I can't do that. That is not possible."

- An encounter with God requires faith. Faith in a God who is working, faithful and more powerful than we can possibly imagine.
- **INVITATIONS FROM GOD LEAD TO A CRISIS OF BELIEF** that requires faith because:

II. Faith is necessary because God encounters are God-sized.

- Consider the ridiculousness of David's comment – "Don't worry about it. I got this. I'll go fight Goliath."

33 Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, 35 I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. 36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. [SLIDE] 37 The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine." Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you." 38 Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. 39 David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. 40 Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

- David could not do what God was asking him to do.
- Shepherd boy against a hardened warrior.
- No practice vs armed expert.
- Small vs large.
- Stones vs sword and spear.
- God wants the world to come to know him. The only way they will know him is if they see him at work. So God does not want the world to see you at work, but himself.
- As a result, his invitations are things only he can do.
- He wants to demonstrate to the world his strength, his provision, his kindness, his nature.
- That is the only way the world will come to know him.
- Yet this is the pattern – God does the work and then God gets the credit.
- When God asks us to speak up when we don't feel capable.
- When God wants us to serve where we aren't talented enough.
- When God leads us to give where the money isn't there.
- When God asks us to pray for someone to be healed or to talk about Jesus.
- When God asks us to forgive someone who has hurt us deeply.
- He is asking us to participate in what only he can do.
- **INVITATIONS FROM GOD LEAD TO A CRISIS OF BELIEF.** A crisis that requires faith because it is beyond us.

III. What you do in response to God reveals what you believe.

- When faced with a crisis of belief moment, you must actually decide what you believe about God.
- When God lets you know what he wants to do through you, what you believe about him will determine what you do.

41 Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. 42 He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. 43 He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with

sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 “Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!” 45 David said to the Philistine, “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. 46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47 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.”

- What did David actually believe about God?
- He believed in the power of God.
- He believed that God was with him and directing him.
- He believed that God desired Israel to have victory over their enemies.
- He believed that God had control of the battlefield.
- He believed that his ongoing relationship with God would direct him.
- What you do, rather than what you say you believe, reveals what you really believe about God. What you do in response to God’s revelation (invitation) reveals what you believe about God.
- Example: Levona has been privately praying that God would lead her to a place where she can serve. The CM leader has been looking for people to help and believes God wants him to ask Levona to serve in teaching kids. She responds, “I can’t do that. I don’t have the time or abilities. Besides, I’ve never done that before.” What does Levona believe about God?
- Example: George has been part of his church for several years. God is asking him to be more committed to generosity with his finances. He hears an invitation to give substantially more to help God’s work. He thinks, “I have too much debt. I can’t afford any more. I will do this when my life is more in order.” What does George believe about God?
- Example: Holly has been praying for her co-worker for some time. She wants to see her know Jesus. One day, over lunch, her co-worker breaks down as she shares about problems in her health and marriage. Holly senses an opportunity to pray out loud for her right then in the work cafeteria. She looks around and says to God, “I’m not sure now is the best time. I wouldn’t know what to say. I don’t like praying out loud any time. I will just tell her that I will pray for her.” What does Holly believe about God?
- **INVITATIONS FROM GOD LEAD TO A CRISIS OF BELIEF.** A crisis that requires faith because it is beyond us. What you do in that moment reveals what you believe.

IV. The crisis of belief requires action.

- What you believe and the level of your faith are shown in what you do. God’s invitation always invites us into some type of action.
- David did not simply preach a sermon about the amazingness of God.
- He did not give a pep talk to the army.
- He did not try to prove anything to anyone.
- He did not talk a big game and then say it was time to go home to his father.
- He acted on what he believed. What he did proved what he believed.

48 As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49 Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. 50 So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him. 51 David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine’s sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran.

- If David had not acted on everything he said he believed, nothing would have changed.

- The army would still be afraid.
- And God's name would not have been magnified to the entire nation of Israel and to the nation of the Philistines.
- James, the brother of Jesus, says it this way: *James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*
- I wonder, how alive is your faith?
- **INVITATIONS FROM GOD LEAD TO A CRISIS OF BELIEF.**
- It's a crisis of belief because we are faced with a God sized opportunity. It is something we cannot do alone. It is something we do not have the power to change. And so we have this amazing opportunity to step into it and when we do, God always, always responds.
- If everything you do for God is something you have the ability to accomplish on your own, then is it really an invitation from God.
- You can complete a job and never experience God at all. He is not interested just in getting a job done. He can get the job done anytime he wants.
- This crisis of belief is not a one-time experience – it is a daily experience. Some might be huge like David facing Goliath. Some might be small in the eyes of others.
- What you do, rather than what you say you believe, reveals what you really believe about God.
- The outward appearance of success does not always indicate faith, and the outward appearance of failure does not always indicate that faith is lacking.
- I wonder . . .
- If our world is not attracted to the Jesus we serve because they cannot see him at work.
- How you live your life is a testimony of what you believe about God.
- When God speaks, we come to a fork in the road that demands that we make a decision. We must decide what you believe about God.