



## **WEEK 1 - BELIEVE**

### **CHECK-IN**

**How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... who are you? If you had to describe yourself to a complete stranger, what would you say? Would you list your accomplishments? Maybe you'd talk about the organizations you're in or what your job is? Maybe you'd start with your family roles or physical appearance? As Dr. Seuss said, "there is no one more youer than you." Ready, go!**

### **OPENING PRAYER**

**Ever-present God, remind us that we do not need to fear, as you have promised to go before us, fighting our battles.**

# INTRODUCTION

Well folks, we spent the entire summer learning what it means to be a follower of Christ, exploring three characteristics that make up a Christian: to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. But here's the thing, no one is forcing you to do this. There is no Methodist Tribunal of Inquisitors wearing cloaks and torches holding your feet to the fire, asking you if you're living these things out. (Wouldn't work... Methodists are way too chill. "Are you serving joyfully?!?" "Well, not as joyfully as I should be." "Oh, okay, well, umm... try to do better. Here, have a donut.") No one is forcing you to follow Christ. So, even now that you know what you *should* be doing, you are left with a choice: who will you BE? Through this series, we'll tackle four common roadblocks that prevent us from fully committing to following Christ and explore four answers to those questions that will encourage your faith journey as a Christian. Begin considering that question now... will you choose to fully follow Christ? Who will you be?

**Setup Question: What makes following Christ difficult? When you think about your faith journey, what have been (or are) the biggest road blocks? What have been the biggest challenges to your faith?**

# SETUP

Throughout this series, hopefully we'll address those concerns. But to start, we're going to look at a question that sits at the heart of all of them. It's not a concern that pops into your head straight away when asked that question, however, if you sort out this issue, many of your other roadblocks fade away. So, when asked, what stands in the way of fully committing to following Christ, the issue that sits at the heart of many of our struggle is this,

## CAN I TRUST GOD?

This is a difficult question because, most of us would readily and rapidly respond, "yes, of course I do." But, when it comes down to brass tacks, though we may *say* we trust God, we don't *live* like we trust God. We pray for God to handle a situation, then do everything we can to take back the control ourselves. We let Jesus take the wheel, then worry and complain the entire ride about how he's driving. We have an emotional moment in worship and lay our burdens at the foot of the cross, then, when the worship is over, pack them all back up and take them home with us. We may *say* we trust God, but we rarely *live* like it. If we're going to fully commit to being a follower of Christ, we must come to grips with whether or not we truly trust God with our lives.

**Question 1: All right, number time... on a scale of 1 to 10, how do you do trusting God? In what areas do you trust the most? What areas do you have trouble giving over to Him?**

# SCRIPTURE

What's the answer here? If the question is, "can I trust God?" Just responding, "yup, you can... now go do it" isn't sufficient. It's not that simple, or we'd all do it. So, let's look at a Scripture that can give us a better answer. Here's your setup. The Israelites have left Egypt and wandered the desert for 40 years. It's time for Moses to retire, (at the spring-chicken age of 120,) and appoint a successor. So, in front of the entire assembly of the nation, (a few hundred thousand people,) he brings Joshua up and announces to them and to Joshua's surprise, that Joshua would be the next leader of Israel. And not only that, Joshua would be the one to lead them into the Promised Land. He must have seen a flash of fear cross Joshua's face at this monumental task, because he then says this...

**Read Deuteronomy, chapter 31, verse 8.**

Here's the thing... it must have worked. These words trigger something in Joshua, because he does exactly what Moses prophesied he would do. He lives out these exact words, leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, doing everything without doubt, without fear, fully trusting God.

**Question 2: Put yourself in Joshua's shoes... how would you have handle the situation? Would you have taken on the challenge or run the other way? Would these words have made a difference?**

# REFLECTION

So, what was it about these words that turned Joshua into the epitome of one who trusted God? It's one thing to simply tell someone not to fear or be discouraged, but it helps to give them a good reason *why*. Moses does this. Look at the middle of verse 8. He gives Joshua a good reason to trust God, "for the LORD will *personally* go ahead of you." The word *personally* in there changes the game. Joshua knew he had the Almighty going ahead of him to fight his battles before he ever even got there. When it comes to our faith and the question, "can I trust God?" we receive the same response: you can trust because you have a *personal* God.

It's easy for us to think God will help others, we pray for that all the time. It's easy for us to think that God will help us as a faith community, we ask for that every week. We talk about how God loves all of humanity, that doesn't scare us. But when we make it personal, when we consider a personal God, we somehow get uncomfortable. When we change it from "God loves us" to "God loves me" it's too personal and we get commitment-phobia. But this is the incredible thing about the God we serve. The Almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of the Universe has you on His mind. Your God, your Creator, has chosen to be fully present and involved in your life. You have a *personal* God, and if that doesn't blow your mind a little bit, you're not paying attention.

**Question 3: Let's do a little experiment. Close your eyes, consider God's presence near you, and say to yourself, "God loves me." Pause, then say it again. One more time, repeat "God loves *me*." Take a deep breath and come back to the group. How did that make you feel? Was it uncomfortable or was it comforting? Why?**

But there's one more definition of the word *personally* here that should drive the point home and help us remove this roadblock to our faith. Have you ever had the owner of a business or a restaurant take care of you? You probably felt a little special when THE boss handled your situation. "Yeah, I know the owner," you say with a slight puff of the chest. When this scripture says that God will *personally* go ahead of you, it means you have THE Boss of all Creation handling your situation. You should be able to trust your future because you can puff up your chest a bit and say, "Yeah, I know THE Owner... of the Universe." The God of Everything goes ahead of you to fight your battles, working for your good in ways you may never even know. Now, does this mean life will be all sunshine and rainbows? No, Joshua still had struggles and failures. He still had battles to fight. But he trusted God with the outcome, because of this verse. He knew he had a personal God. These words from Moses gave him the answer to the question, "can I trust God?" To which Joshua responded, "God will go before me, so all I have to do is..."

**BELIEVE**

If the stumbling block that is holding you back from fully following Christ is this question, "can I truly trust God with my life?" believe

that you have been given the same promise that Joshua was. You have a *personal* God, a God that loves *you*, a God that wants to be personally involved in *your* life. Your God is personally out there fighting battles for you, and no thing, no one, no problem, no struggle, no hurdle can defeat our God. **BElieve** that.

**Question 4: Identify a “battle” in your life that you need to let God fight? What would it look like to let go of the outcome of that situation? What prevents you from doing so?**

## CLOSING

You can trust God because you have a personal God. So, who will you be? Will you choose to fully follow Christ, or will you let the hurdle of whether or not you can trust God get in the way? You first BE is BElieve. Believe that God loves *you*, just as you are, no caveats, no qualifications, no hesitation, just as you are right now, reading this. God loves you. And then, believe that you will never be abandoned nor forsaken. The God of the Universe is out there, going ahead of you, to *personally* fight for you. BElieve that.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations  
and close in prayer.**