

God Is Always Challenging You

The God Experience Series- Part 5

Connect: Recount a time during your childhood when you fully expected a terrible outcome, only to discover it never materialized ...the expected outcome was only in your imagination!

Hook: It was 1980 and Carolyn and I (Danny) were experiencing the blessings of God with four young children, a good paying job, and great fellowship at our home church. Just a few weeks before, I had determined that God was calling me into the ministry as a pastor and that I needed to move my family 1000 miles from what was familiar and secure to a college and seminary in Texas. I didn't have a job lined out, the two-bedroom seminary apartment was insufficient, and we had no friends. To add to these concerns was the fact that our home in Illinois had not sold and we both wondered how we would provide for our family while going to school. It was a time when we could take a big leap of faith, or simply wait until we had more answers before we made the move. There were so many unknowns, yet we could not get this thought out of our minds: *God wants us to do this...now!*

Henry Blackaby in his book, "Experiencing God" writes, "*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.*"

We all face opportunities to increase our faith. The problem is that often those moments don't feel like opportunities at all because we see so many obstacles and potential for failure. They are times when we must grow, when we must believe, when we must step out and trust that God will go before us, and see His plan and purposes completed in and through us. It's a turning point that we can't afford to miss!

Today, in our small group discussion let's look at a potential "crisis of belief" which the nation Israel had faced before. They had missed the divine "turning point", and now had a second opportunity to grow in their faith.

Book:

1. After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. He said, 2. "Moses My servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. 3. I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you— 4. from the Negev wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, including all the land of the Hittites.' 5. No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you. 6. "Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. 7. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. 8. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. 9. This is My command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." 10. Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel, 11. "Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you." -Joshua 1:1-11 NLT

Look:

1. This is the second opportunity for Israel to enter the Promise Land. What had Israel experienced in their 40 years of wondering in the wilderness that could hinder them again in this second attempt?

What had they experienced that could help them to succeed?

2. The instructions in our text are given to Joshua to assure him that he can lead this nation. Perhaps this is a “crisis of belief” for Joshua. Discuss and make a list of ways God sought to encourage Joshua:

3. From the list your group created, which one has been used by God to be a great encouragement to you?

4. How do we respond when God’s plans are different than ours?

5. How can we determine that God is “with us” wherever we are going?

6. Joshua leads the people of Israel to face their “turning point” by telling them to pack their bags...in three days they would cross the Jordan River. How can you best prepare yourself for what God is asking you to do?

Making It Personal:

Recount a recent “crisis of faith” in your life. What would you do differently?

How might someone else see the greatness and power of God by your example of faith and obedience?