

## A Crisis of Faith

### Mark 6

Charles Darwin said that *belief* was “the most complete of all distinctions between man and the lower animals.” If we conclude that this observation is true, I suppose we are left with accepting as fact that the lack of faith or absence of faith on man’s part puts him on the same level as an animal.

In contrast, it is true that one of the distinctives of man *is* belief, but more importantly, belief totally distinguishes and separates man from animals. Period. It is man (and not animal) who is created in the very image of God, and that gives man, all men, the capacity to think, reason, and believe in something or someone. Although *some* would argue there is no Pavlov’s “man” with habits simply formed out of rewards. We are unique and defined as people, human beings, with a faith that motivates us to something other than survival. The object of our faith defines who we are.

The most important question is not *are* we people of faith but rather what is the object of our belief that **influences** not only who we are but also what we do. Dogs don’t think about God and whether they should believe in Him or not. Man does.

For today, we will focus on those of us who are distinguished by our belief, not only in God but specifically in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

In today’s culture of diversity and inclusiveness, belief in Jesus—in such a way that our belief dictates all that we think, reason, and do—often leaves us alone and isolated.

How are we to face those times when our belief (which defines who we are) is rejected by our family and friends and we find ourselves rejected? What are we to do when those around us (whose belief is in themselves or their work or another god) reject us for Who we believe in, and we find ourselves “ostracized, hated, insulted, or spurned” as Jesus taught? Even more challenging and painful, how are we to continue when even our spiritual partners or those we influence as spiritual leaders fail to share our faith, confidence, and vision for ministry?

It can be discouraging, can’t it? It can be painful at times when you feel you’re alone in your faith. It can be a very real test of just how strong our faith truly is, can’t it? It could be called a *crisis of faith*.

### **Life Response**

1. This week MEMORIZE and MEDITATE on Hebrews 3:12-13, “*Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*”
  - (a) Why is encouragement so necessary within the family of *believers*?
  - (b) What responsibility do you have toward another believer?
2. How would you describe the rejection Jesus felt among His family and hometown friends? In what way can you relate to Him? What do you think His response was? How did He handle it?

3. Compare Mark 6:7, from today's passage, with Matthew 29:19-20 and Acts 1:8. What relevance do these passages have for you as they speak of your responsibility, confidence, belief, and impact on others?
4. What does God want you to trust or believe Him for as it relates to sharing your faith or belief in Him? Is that belief strong enough to persevere when rejected by Christians or non-Christians? Do you need encouragement? If so, where would you go? How would you go about it?
5. Are you recognized as an encourager or are you like the disciples in Mark 6:52? Who can you encourage today?

*"Belief is not merely an idea the mind possesses; it is an idea that possesses the mind."*  
- Robert Bolton

### **The Critical Element for Facing a Crisis of Faith:** Hebrews 3:12-13

*"Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, **unbelieving heart** that falls away from the living God. But **encourage one another** day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**"*

#### **Unbelief Among Family & Friends**

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus Returns to His Hometown

- As a Rabbi & mentor
- Insulted & rejected by His own

What was HE to do among His family & friends with unbelief?

- Persisted, stayed on mission

#### **Unbelief Among our Social/Work Environment/Enemies**

Mark 6:7-29

Jesus Proceeds into the Surrounding Communities

- Mentored His disciples in the culture
  - in encouragement
  - in confidence
  - in dependence
  - in simplicity

What were THEY to do among a culture of unbelief?

- Persisted, stayed on mission
- Allows the Holy Spirit to convict

#### **Unbelief Among our Other Brothers & Sisters**

Mark 6:30-56

Jesus Focuses on His Disciples

- vs 30-32 "Now what did we learn?"
- vs 33-36 A lesson on motivation
  - Compassion
- vs 37-44 A lesson on provision
  - Use what you have
- vs 47-52 A lesson on protection

- The Object of faith

What was HE (what are WE) to do now with brothers/sisters of unbelief?

- Pray
- Encourage
- Persist, stay on mission

Prayer:

Father, Thank You for the power of Your name.

Thank You for the confidence we have in Your name.

Thank You for the security that comes from Your name.

Father, We thank You for Jesus and our identification in Him.

We thank You for the privilege of being partakers of Christ as the object of our faith.

We confess our weakness of faith and the need we each have for encouragement in a world of unbelief.

We ask that You will make each of us sensitive to the need to encourage those around us as we persist in the purpose for which you have called us.

In the name of Jesus

Amen