

# The Faith Files

## The Book of Acts Part One

### 1. Acts 3:16

By **faith** in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the **faith** that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. (NIV)

- It is amazing to me that one of the most common Jewish names, Jesus, would be the source of tremendous power and blessing. God uses the simple things. What do you have that is simple that God can use? It doesn't have to be sophisticated; it just has to be available for God to activate through your faith. A simple testimony, spiritual gift, or act can be the source of tremendous blessing.
- Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. He starts and ends it all for His glory. The apostles' faith came through Jesus. (see Hebrews 12:1-2) Ours does, too.
- I don't think this man had the faith for a healing; he only had faith for alms. The apostles had the faith and his healing happened according to what they had, not according to what the man didn't have.
- It was a complete healing; what God does, He does well. (see Mark 7:37).

### 2. Acts 6:5-7

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the **faith**. (NIV)

- It seems that “the faith” became a way of life and not just a set of doctrinal beliefs (see Romans 16:25-26). The followers of Jesus were defined by their faith. Those who were the most involved in Judaism—the priests—were won to the faith.
- It is interesting that after this first generation, very Jews have come to faith in Christ. Were they so disappointed that their faith didn't “restore Israel,” that future generations found faith to be a true stumbling block? Even the apostles had a great debate over the issue of the law and faith and barely won the day over the legalists.

### 3. Acts 13:8

But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the **faith**. (NIV)

- People will try to turn you from faith in God. They will use whatever power necessary to have you walk by sight and not by faith. It is interesting that this sorcerer was deprived of his sight, the very thing he was attempting to have the proconsul walk by.
- The proconsul had just turned to Jesus, but was already described as being in the faith. Faith is a walk, but whenever you start it, you are in the faith. You will grow in faith, but you are in faith today, right where you are. What can you do today with the faith that you have?
- Faith is not magic or sorcery; it is the means by which the world comes into contact with the power of God! The world is always looking for shortcuts to get things from God without doing it God's way. But faith is the only way—"the just shall live by faith."

#### 4. Acts 14:9-10

He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had **faith** to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. (NIV)

- Remember when the men dug the hole in the roof and lowered the paralytic down to Jesus? It said that Jesus saw their faith. Here Paul saw this man's faith to be healed. What did he see? Was it obvious or did the Holy Spirit show it to him supernaturally? It is my opinion that the man had an eager look that just needed a word from Paul for his faith to be activated.
- What do people see when they look at you? Faith? Doubt? Neither?
- Be watching. Perhaps God will show you people today who have faith to receive something from God and your word will set them free.

#### 5. Acts 14:21-22

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the **faith**. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. (NIV)

- This seems like strange "encouragement." But people will know the truth and the truth will set them free. You do not lack faith when you encounter hardships; these hardships are because you are in faith. (see James 1:2)

- You must remain true to the faith in spite of these hardships, for they teach us how to relate to God's kingdom, God's government, in our lives. Hardships may cause us to question or examine our faith, perhaps wondering if we actually have faith because of what we are going through. But these hardships can confirm God's will in our lives if we let them.
- All of us need strengthened and encouraged in our faith from time to time. That is why we need to read, listen and attend a church.

## 6. Acts 14:27

On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of **faith** to the Gentiles. (NIV)

- God opens doors and no one can close them when He does (see 1 Corinthians 16:8-9).
- Paul and Barnabas testified to what God was doing. They were also accountable to the church to report their faith results. Faith is more than wishful thinking; it is getting things done in the power of God. Who are you accountable to for your faith results?
- What doors of faith has God opened for you? Write them down. At this point in my life, mine are to write The Monday Memo and The Faith Files, my website, my work in Africa, a board position with a local college in an urban setting, and the classes I am teaching at that school. What are yours?

## 7. Acts 15:7-9

After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and **believe**. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by **faith**. (NIV)

- Faith is the great equalizer. You may not have as much money or talent as someone else, but if you have faith, you have equal access to God, and your faith activates God. Any knowledge of or history with God must increase our faith or they are useless.
- God purifies hearts by faith. You must trust God that He will cleanse you as you confess your sins. How regularly do you confess your sins and allow God to purify you?
- The focus here is the heart; God knows the heart and purifies it. Therefore faith does a work inside us, or rather God does an inside work through faith.

- That is why we cannot judge one another accurately. Only God knows the heart. Have you judged someone according to outward appearances?

### **8. Acts 16:4-5**

As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the **faith** and grew daily in numbers. (NIV)

- The decision of the Jerusalem council was a good one, because it encouraged and strengthened the disciples in faith. It should be our goal to do strengthen one another's faith. That is why we give testimonies, if only to angels and principalities. Give a testimony, out loud, right now. What has God done for you through faith?
- Only God can give faith, but we can encourage, strengthen, and stir it up. And we can choose to have it or not have it.

### **9. Acts 20:20-21**

You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have **faith** in our Lord Jesus. (NIV)

- It is helpful to people that we teach them to have faith in the Lord Jesus. Faith is a learning process.
- Notice Jesus is "our" Lord Jesus. Faith brings us into right relationship with Jesus, so that we can call Him our own.
- Everyone must have faith, both Jews and Greeks. No one is exempt.
- Repentance without faith is only half the picture of walking with God. Repentance and faith go hand in hand even for those who already put their trust in Jesus.

### **10. Acts 24:24**

Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about **faith** in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

- Paul's message was simple: faith in Jesus! Our message should be simple, too.
- God will bring people to you so that you can talk about faith in Him. When they come, don't talk about your church or doctrine. Talk about faith in Jesus.

### **11. Acts 26:17-18**

“I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by **faith** in me.”(NIV)

- Sanctified means to be made holy. Our faith makes us holy, not our deeds. That is certainly good news. Sanctification is a process we cooperate with; our faith activates the process and ensures that God can finish the work He began in us.
- The deeds that we do are deeds of faith that God prepared beforehand for us to do. (see Ephesians 2:9-10)
- Not only will people come to you, but God will send you to people to talk about faith. When you arrive, make sure you talk about faith in Jesus. Whether people come to you or you go to people, the agenda is faith.

### **12. Acts 27:25**

So keep up your courage, men, for I have **faith** in God that it will happen just as he told me. (NIV)

- God spoke to Paul about the situation on the ship he was traveling on. God will speak to you about your ship as well. You can put your faith in what he says. Faith comes by hearing something (see Romans 10:17).
- God will tell His people about the future, so that we can face it with faith in Him. If He knows what is going to happen, then He truly is in charge. Our faith is not in government, the past, or our experience; our faith is in God. The sailors on the ship had faith in their sailing experience and they lost their ship. Paul had faith in God and saved their lives.
- You need courage to act on God’s word and not focus on the circumstances. Courage is not the absence of fear but acting in the midst of it at times. Do you have courage? Look up the word and see where it comes from. You may be surprised.

### **13. Acts 13:38-41**

"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who **believes** is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never **believe**, even if someone told you." (NIV)

- Justified means “just as if I’d never sinned.” That’s what faith does for you, not just at the point of salvation, but at the point of any sin.
- Forgiveness of sins only happens through faith in Jesus.
- Faith is more powerful than law.
- Scoffers will perish for lack of faith. If you scoff, you won’t believe even if someone tells you the truth.

#### **14. Acts 14:2**

But the Jews who refused to **believe** stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. (NIV)

- The Jews refused to believe; if faith is a gift from God, then they rejected God’s gift. It was offered to them and they turned it down. God is always offering people faith, but many think they have a better idea.
- Usually a person of unfaith will try to convert people to his or her point of view.
- The parable of the sower is relevant in the life of faith (see Matthew 13:3-16). Some believe but it is stolen from them. What has been stolen from you? What did you once have faith for that you now find is a struggle to believe? Do you want it back?
- Do you want the simplicity of faith or the poison of unbelief? Poison kills what is living. If you have lost something of faith, you have experienced a death of sorts.

#### **15. Acts 15:11**

Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We **believe** it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." (NIV)

- While we have faith, it is still the grace of God that provides the answer.

#### **16. Acts 16:30-31**

He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-- you and your household." (NIV)

- The Macedonian jailer was commanded to have faith—“believe.” Faith is not an option, and it is not just faith that Jesus was a person who actually lived. He is alive and has the power and desire to save us from our sins. There is no other way to obtain salvation. Therefore, faith is a command.

- His faith was the introduction to his household; they had to have faith for themselves. This verse is not a promise that your whole family will be saved when you are, as many have interpreted this to mean. But his faith led them to their own faith, for it is only by faith that anyone can be saved.
- We do not lead people to doctrine who are asking questions; we should lead them to faith in Jesus.

### 17. Acts 16:34

The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to **believe** in God-- he and his whole family. (NIV)

- Faith, and the answers that it brings, all lead to joy. The jailer and his household had a living, active faith. If you lack joy at this point in your life, is it an indication that your faith level is low? What can you do to get your joy back?
- Seeing God do things in your life in response to your faith is a special thing. It is exciting. I have seen God do things in my life the last six months that have led me to worship and praise from a heart of pure joy.
- God offers the faith, but we must make a decision to accept or reject it.

### 18. Acts 19:4-9

Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to **believe** in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all. Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to **believe** and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. (NIV)

- Here is another refusal to believe. The choice is ours. We can walk in faith or walk in the memory of the faith we once had and savor those moments. Which is it for you?
- The Jews were obstinate; that means they stubbornly refused over a period of time to believe.
- You can persuade people to have faith because, while it is a gift from God that originates with God, you can choose to accept it or reject it. So faith is a partnership

between man and God. Like Mary accepting the word of the Lord that she would bear a Son. God initiated it, Mary chose to accept it, and Jesus was born!

- Paul had to separate from those who refused to believe. It is hard to walk with those who have refused to believe. Faith is a fragile entity; it can easily be damaged by those who don't believe. Be careful what you listen to!

### **19. Acts 22:19**

"Lord," I replied, "these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who **believe** in you. (NIV)

- Faith lets you know who your enemies are. You can argue doctrine all day with someone and it is just a debate. But when you choose to have faith, the forces of evil align themselves against you. They use people to carry out their persecution. All those that wish to live godly lives will be persecuted. (see 2 Timothy 3:10-12).
- If you are mocked and persecuted for your faith in God, you are in a good place. They did the same to Jesus. (see Galatians 4:29)

### **1. Acts 24:14-15**

However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I **believe** everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (NIV)

- If Paul believed everything that is in the Old Testament, we should as well.
- Believing in God is believing what He said and basing your life's actions upon that truth.

### **2. Acts 26:27**

"King Agrippa, do you **believe** the prophets? I know you do." (NIV)

- That is the question that God poses to every man: Do you believe My prophets? Jesus was a prophet.
- Having faith in the prophets is a matter of faith in God, not in the prophets themselves. I trust God's ability to speak through the prophets. I don't even put my faith in prophecy, but in the God of prophecy.
- Modern prophets can be wrong (not in the Bible, of course); that is why I put my faith in God. You and I should judge prophecy and evaluate it, often with the help of others who know us.

- When we deem the prophetic word to be accurate, it should have a prominent place in our walk.
- Paul’s question here pertains to the prophets of the Old Testament. Do you have faith that God can speak to you today through his prophets in the Church?

### 3. Acts 28:23-24

They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not **believe**. (NIV)

- Paul evangelized his Roman associates using the Old Testament. How much more should I be able to accomplish since I have the New Testament as well.
- Paul worked hard. Your faith requires you to work while you are trusting God. Paul “explained, declared and tried to convince” from morning until evening. He had faith that the Lord had brought him to Rome for a reason. I am working hard, day and night, to make the most of the faith opportunity the Lord has given me through my company. Are you working hard, or as hard as you can, with the opportunity the Lord has given you?
- Waiting for God to do what only you can do will cause you to wait a long time.
- Praying about what God has told you to do is often a delay tactic.

### 4. Acts 1:15

In those days Peter stood up among the **believers** (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) (NIV)

- The “church” had 120 people then. Today you cannot count the number of believers. Abraham’s faith has been rewarded, for today his descendants are more numerous than the sands on the seashore and the stars in the heavens. (read all of Romans 4)
- Even among the believers, someone needs to stand up every now and then and speak in faith to encourage everyone. What insight or testimony do you have that can inspire the saints of God? Who are you supposed to share it with? Should you write it out? Copy and distribute it?
- Stop feeling like doing this is arrogant or drawing attention to you. It is drawing attention to God. Remember, we must “magnify” Him. That means taking the smallest thing He’s done and enlarging it for all to see.

## 5. Acts 2:44-47

All the **believers** were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (NIV)

## 6. Acts 4:32

All the **believers** were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. (NIV)

## 7. Acts 5:12

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the **believers** used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. (NIV)

- The three passages above show us faith in action. They weren't believers in doctrine but in deeds.
- Do you have too much "stuff?" What do you have that you can give away that will bless someone else? My wife and I gave a car away on two different occasions. Do you own your stuff or does your stuff own you? How ready are you to believe God for your provision?
- Their faith led the believers to sell their possessions and give away the proceeds, share everything they had, meet and eat together, praise God and enjoy life. Their faith lifestyle was so infectious that people wanted to get in on it. They stood out from everyone else because of their faith.
- The believers met in the meeting place (the Temple) built by the Law. The Law was given to eventually house the people of faith.

## 8. Acts 9:41-42

He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the **believers** and the widows and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people **believed** in the Lord. (NIV)

- Peter brought Dorcas back from the dead. Whose faith was responsible? Peter's? The widows'? I don't know, but someone had faith for Dorcas to come back to life.

- People everywhere heard about what happened. They didn't hear about the great sermon or church program. They heard about faith in action, in every day life.

### 9. Acts 10:45

The circumcised **believers** who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. (NIV)

- Even when you believe, you can still be astonished by what God does.
- Faith does not overrule your humanity. These Jewish believers didn't believe that God wanted to save Gentiles. They were still Jewish believers and their culture affected their faith. Is your culture affecting your faith? How?
- For instance, our western culture tells us that in order to have money, we must work. The kingdom culture says that the Lord provides and can do so outside of a job situation. Is your faith for money tied only to your job and salary? Is this a proper faith perspective? Is your faith in your company or in God?

### 10. Acts 11:2

So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised **believers** criticized him (NIV)

- People of faith are not perfect. They still criticize, misunderstand, and are subject to their own limited perspectives. They needed to have God's ways explained even though they had seen God raise the dead!
- You may be criticized for doing what God wants you to do. Are you any better than Jesus? He was severely criticized and continued to walk in faith.
- Faith does not always lead to maturity of understanding. We must grow in faith and understanding of who God is and what He will and will not do.
- It requires more faith to walk with God today than yesterday. Is that a true statement? When your children are born, you need diaper faith. When they go off to university, you need diploma faith. Diploma faith needs to be bigger and deeper than diaper faith. Do you agree?
- You are never finished growing in faith or you are finished.

### 11. Acts 15:2

This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other **believers**, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. (NIV)

- Doctrinal disputes and debates are not a sign of unbelief. Everyone agreeing on everything is not the goal. If we are growing in faith, we will have to hear from others who are a little further along who will push and pull us into a better understanding of who God is.
- Our faith will never enable us to understand God. Our faith will only allow us to obey God more completely and readily.

## **12. Acts 15:2-5**

This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other **believers**, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. Then some of the **believers** who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." (NIV)

- Believers can still fall into various denominational categories or focus on various aspects of the faith walk. Notice these were circumcised believers of the party of the Pharisees. This doesn't make them less of a believer; nor should they judge others of different "parties" or emphasis.
- Notice how authoritatively the believers spoke about circumcision and the law. Faith doesn't make you infallible. We see and understand in part; no one knows it all or has it all. Therefore we need to be more gracious in our dealings with one another. (see 1 Corinthians 13:8-12).

## **13. Acts 15:23**

With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile **believers** in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. (NIV)

- We can be brothers in faith but live in different places and have different faith cultures.
- We need to read and learn from what God is doing among other believers.
- We need to allow God to work in the lives of other believers without judging what they are doing.

#### 14. Acts 21:25

As for the Gentile **believers**, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality." (NIV)

- If the Gentiles were to live by faith, why did the apostles put some rules on them? I think the apostles still were not free from their cultural bias when they made their ruling. We cannot get free totally from our culture. If we do, we tend to set up a counterculture that can be just as binding as the one we left.
- Only death or the Second Coming will free us to be the person that God wants us to be. Perfection in this lifetime is a goal that we strive for, but cannot quite achieve. Do you agree or disagree?
- The apostles continued the time-honored tradition of writing down what they felt the Lord was doing. Isn't it time you did the same? No one can read what is written on your heart. You must transfer it to the written page.

#### 15. Acts 4:4

But many who heard the message **believed**, and the number of men grew to about five thousand. (NIV)

#### 16. Acts 5:14

Nevertheless, more and more men and women **believed** in the Lord and were added to their number. (NIV)

- The church grew because faith was the requirement for being "added to their number." Of course, from there the believers encountered a radical lifestyle adjustment. Faith should be the requirement for salvation and church membership today as well.

#### 17. Acts 8:12-13

But when they **believed** Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself **believed** and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. (NIV)

- Simon the magician believed and was baptized. No one is too "far gone" that faith cannot change his or her life.
- Men and women had equal access to God through faith. This was radical for Roman times. The Lord came to set women free from the Law, under which they had

become third-class citizens. How did the world steal the church's "feminist" agenda of equality and freedom in Christ?

- New believers should be astonished by what they see as they follow us, especially if they have no church background, as was the case with Simon. Are any new believers following you?

### **18. Acts 11:17-21**

So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who **believed** in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life." Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people **believed** and turned to the Lord. (NIV)

- Faith without action is dead. These Greek-speaking Jews ventured where few had gone before them—to the Gentile world. And God honored their faith and Gentiles/Greeks came to know the Lord! Where is your "Greek" world? What represents a frontier of faith for you into which you have been hesitant to go?
- For many, the frontier of faith is financial. What would you do if you had all the money in the world? Well, you do, in a manner of speaking. If God has it all and you know God, then you have access to all the money there is. Step out and trust God.
- Where would you "go" today if your faith overruled your reason? Can you imagine how excited these believers were when they went to the Greeks and God met them there? Can you imagine how you are going to feel when you venture out and God meets you?
- You are waiting for the conditions to be better before you move out. You may not have that luxury. God may mess up your conditions to get you where He wants you to be.
- The persecution spread the Gospel. The Lord orders our steps so that He can get us to do what He wants; sometimes that means a situation that we can't understand or get around, like a lay off, economic setback, or relational tension. God uses those things to get us where He wants us to be. It's not the devil, it's God!
- Stop feeling like you made a mistake or missed the Lord. He sent your current situation so you would move in faith. Otherwise, you would not have done what you

are doing now. Or you would not be considering what you are considering. It didn't happen the way you wanted it to, but stop trying to figure it out. Go with God's flow.

### **19. Acts 13:12**

When the proconsul saw what had happened, he **believed**, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. (NIV)

- Sometimes distinguished leaders or officials seem to be harder to reach for the Lord. God knew just how to reach this one, however. You just need to have faith for someone to believe; God will take care of the circumstances.
- It's time to review your faith prayer list. Who are you believing that the Lord will save? I pray for those involved in the pornography industry to find the Lord. Don't ask me why, but I do. If this proconsul can believe, if Simon the magician can believe, so can those men and women. Who are you "believing the Lord" for?

### **20. Acts 13:48**

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life **believed**. (NIV)

- This makes it sound like only those who are chosen can have eternal life. That is true. Anyone who chooses to have faith, cooperating with the gift of faith that God is offering, are in turn chosen for eternal life. It is a partnership between God's sovereignty and man's free will.
- You honor the word of the Lord by receiving it at "face value."

### **21. Acts 14:1**

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles **believed**. (NIV)

### **22. Acts 17:12**

Many of the Jews **believed**, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men. (NIV)

### **23. Acts 17:34**

A few men became followers of Paul and **believed**. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others. (NIV)

### **24. Acts 18:8**

Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him **believed** and were baptized. (NIV)

- Paul spoke and people from all walks of life and background had faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. (see Hebrews 11:6) Faith comes by hearing. The goal of our outreach and evangelism is not that people join our church, but that people have faith in God and Jesus Christ, His Son.
- Paul almost always saw results from what he did. While we cannot judge everything on the results, at some point we should see the reward or fruit from what we are doing. Faith is ultimately rewarded.
- The people sealed their faith with baptism. Faith without works is dead and their faith required that they do something, not just give mental assent to something.

### **25. Acts 18:27**

When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had **believed**. (NIV)

- There is an old adage that says, “God helps those who help themselves.” God helps those who trust Him and are attempting to do something with what they believe. If you are exercising faith and need help, God will send it. He may not send the answer that you are ultimately believing for, but He will send you some message of encouragement that He is with you. You must accept that and not stubbornly persist in your discouragement. (see the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19)
- You need to welcome God’s help when it shows up, as the church welcomed Apollos. God often disguises Himself when He comes and we need to recognize who it is that is encouraging us in our faith. How often God opened people’s eyes in the Bible to see what was right in front of them that they could not see otherwise.
- Ask God to open your eyes to see what you aren’t seeing. (see Ephesians 1:18-19)

### **26. Acts 19:1-2**

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you **believed**?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." (NIV)

- God always has more for us to receive. We never “arrive” or stop growing in the Lord. These disciples had not even *heard* of the Holy Spirit, let alone received Him.

What haven't you heard yet that God has in store for you? Are you open to new things from the Lord, or do you have Him all figured out?

- Are you open to new things God wants you to do? We often can't get hold of the new until we've let go of the old. What are holding onto that is keeping you from the new thing God has for you? Is it a job? Ministry? Place you're living? House? Country? Retirement plan? You say you trust God: Do you really?

### **27. Acts 19:17-18**

When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who **believed** now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. (NIV)

- Ephesus became a center of faith that touched the world. Many of the New Testament books and letters were either written to or in Ephesus. They had to let go of the old evil deeds to get the new of the Word.
- Are there evil deeds you need to confess before you can move on? It seems here that they had faith and then still had to confess their deeds. Faith does not mean someone is perfect.

### **28. Acts 21:19-20**

Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have **believed**, and all of them are zealous for the law. (NIV)

- What a contradiction of terms: faith and the law. These Jewish believers were bound by the past and could not embrace what God was doing in the world. It was like the Lord had two works in the world: one in Jerusalem and one outside. What a shame!
- The law and faith shouldn't be diametrically opposed. Even the offering of animal sacrifices involved faith that God would do what He promised by forgiving sins and accepting the sacrifice. But the Jews worked out a religious system from the law that precluded faith. It didn't have to be that way.
- It is said that the greatest hindrance to the current move of God is the last move of God. Reflect on that statement.
- The Jews praised God for what He was doing in the Gentile world, but they could not praise God for Paul, who they considered to be an enemy of their law. They were narrow-minded.

- This cost Jerusalem its place as the influence center for the believers. Antioch and Ephesus were more significant centers of faith because the Jews could not get past the issue of the law. The law was irrelevant to most Gentiles but the Jews could not let it go!

### **29. Acts 9:26**

When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not **believing** that he really was a disciple. (NIV)

- God was doing something in Saul's life, but people didn't have faith for it. It was too good to be true.

### **30. Acts 14:23**

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their **trust**. (NIV)

- We appoint someone to a place of spiritual authority because we put our faith in God, not in them.
- Paul and Barnabas had to appoint elders and leaders much earlier than they would have preferred to do so. But they had faith that God would oversee the works He had used them to start. If you are a leader, do you have the same faith in God? Or are you the only one that God can use to allow ministry to occur?