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# getting to know God

a 2-part video-driven Bible Study for youth groups

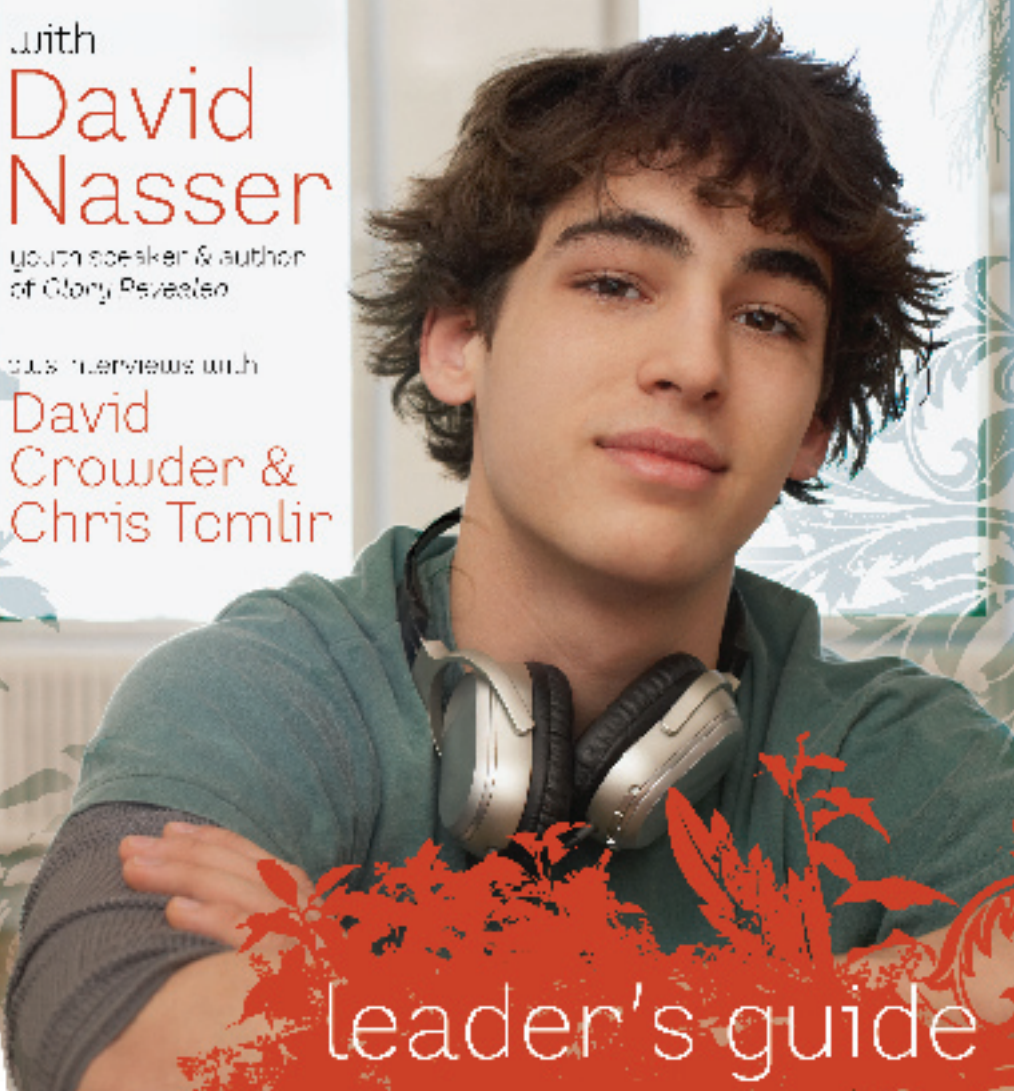
with

## David Nasser

youth speaker & author  
of *Glory Revealed*

plus interviews with

## David Crowder & Chris Tomlin



  
Youth Ministry

leader's guide





# I AM

getting to know God

with  
teaching from  
David  
Nasser



Bluefish TV Presents *I AM GETTING TO KNOW GOD* LEADER'S GUIDE

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# I AM

getting to know God

## leader's notes

This curriculum is a tool for you to use. Don't let it use you. Take some time in advance to plan the questions you'll ask, the subjects you'll emphasize, and how you'll break into groups. We want this Leader's Guide to be so easy you could pick it up last-minute and *read* the material to the class. But don't do that. Use your teaching gifts to shape this material into a dynamic learning experience.

With that in mind, let's preview the curriculum. The main body of the Guide is written as a conversation you would have with the class. **When there's a specific question to ask**, it appears in bold type. (If you're looking for a quick answer, the suggested answer sometimes appears in parentheses after the question.) But most of the questions are open for discussion, so they have no (suggested) answers in parentheses. Instead, the following paragraphs might include thoughts you could add to the discussion.

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**Leader:** *When we want to whisper directions in your ear, we'll use this italic type. This is usually about breaking into groups, or other logistics.*

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Each lesson has particular sections, listed on the next page.





## Set up

This lets you know what will be needed for your class. Since every class session includes a video portion, think about the logistics in advance. What screen will be showing this? Will everyone be able to see and hear clearly? Do you have all the electronic needs covered?

Plus there are handouts to use with each lesson. You'll need to make enough copies for your entire class beforehand. You have the option of making copies from the handout in this guide, or you can go to [www.bluefishtv.com](http://www.bluefishtv.com) for an 8 ½ x 11 version of the same handout and make copies from your computer.



## Kicker

This is the icebreaker. Adjust it to the character of your group, but don't skip it, for several reasons. (1) Every group needs some transition time. (2) The people get to know each other. (3) The introductory questions draw out practical connections between the subject matter and their lives.

If everyone in your group knows one another very well, you obviously don't need to spend so much time sharing basic info. But if there's even one newcomer, these introductions will be very helpful.



## Video

Make sure to set the audio at a comfortable level before beginning the session and everyone can see the screen. You don't want your class to miss anything.



## Discuss

People can forget what they see unless they review it right away. Many of the discussion questions have to do with remembering what they just viewed. But other discussions try to connect the video to their emotions or experience. *How did you feel when they said that? Is that true in your life? Do you have the same issue?*

*continued on next page*

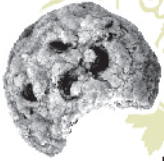
You as the leader will set the tone. If you offer a comment that's a bit challenging, a bit radical, a bit cutting-edge, then the group will feel that they have permission to do the same—and you will have a rip-roaring discussion.



## Bible

---

This is a Bible Study, so in each session is grounded in Scripture. Within your youth group, you will find different levels of faith. This is a time to open up the Bible and help them grow, or find their faith.



## Crunch

---

This is an opportunity for your class to apply what they've learned. By using the handouts and breaking into small groups for discussions, your class will work on situations and personal issues brought up earlier in the video, Bible section and discussion.

Pay attention to the way you group people. If you have a group large enough to break into smaller groups for discussion; mix it up. Be aware that some shy or new teens may feel left out if you let your teens group themselves into cliques.



## Just Do It

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In closing, we offer you a kind of pep talk to send them forth.

So our pep talk to you now is this: Teens are in a battle between the culture and church; between the secular and the sacred. Your job is challenging, but so important as you help lead these young lives toward the sacred. We salute your faithful service.

# David Nasser

---



In 1979 Iran is embroiled in a bitter revolution. Untold numbers of people are being slaughtered everyday. Fear and panic grips the Mid East. Fortunately, in the midst of this horrible turmoil, God is moving.

David, only nine at this time, is forced to escape his native homeland of Iran with his family. They leave everything behind, escaping to the United States in hopes of beginning a new life. In the years that follow, a young David Nasser feels isolated. He seeks acceptance from his peers, turning to everything imaginable to fit in, but always feeling like an outsider.

However, David only finds true acceptance, at the age of eighteen, when through the persistent witness of a body of believers, David receives salvation and purpose through a deep and personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

As one of the nation's forefront speakers and visionaries, God has blessed David with the talent to reach the high-tech, attention-lacking culture of Generation Next.

Involved in revivals, citywide rallies, camps, and school assemblies, David speaks to over 700,000 people each year. The heart's cry of D. Nasser Outreach is to effectively present the same relevant message, the Gospel of Christ, using fresh, innovative methods and resources. DNO has worked extensively with ministries such as Youth Specialties, Student Life, Billy Graham Evangelistic Team, Acquire the Fire, and many others. David, his wife Jennifer and their children live in Alabama.

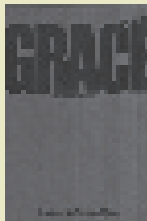
on the web: <http://www.davidnasser.com>

## also from David Nasser

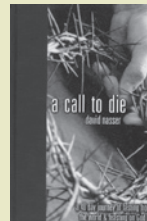
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**Glory Revealed**  
How the Invisible God Makes Himself Known



**A Call To Grace**  
How the Grace-Filled Life is Not About Doing But About Being



**A Call To Die**  
A 40 Day Journey of Fasting from the World and Feasting on God



Session 1

# Looking for God



## Set up

Set up TV/DVD player; DVD with *Looking for God* session; pens/pencils; make copies of the “*Can You Hear Me Now?*” handout (pg 21) for the entire class. Or, for 8 ½ x 11 version; go to [www.bluefishtv.com/handouts](http://www.bluefishtv.com/handouts) and click **I AM Getting to Know God** series. Then click on the *Looking for God* lesson to download the “*Can You Hear Me Now?*” handout and make copies for the entire class.



## Kicker

**How do your parents talk to you? Do they use different voices in different situations?**

**Have you been able to figure out what they’re thinking just by their tone of voice?**

Sometimes you’ll see this when parents are with little kids. A mom will say, sort of softly, “Suzy, don’t play with that, no Suzy, that’s not a toy. Don’t pick it up, Suzy.” And it looks like Suzy isn’t paying any attention, because she’s reaching for the thing, and mom snaps, “SU-ZEE!” And the kid stops dead in her tracks. She knows what that voice means, and she’s in TROUBLE.

Now you’ve had fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years to figure out how your folks talk. **What have you learned?**

**Leader:** *Be ready with an example or two from your own family, either your parents or your spouse or kids.*

**Do your parents ever use your middle name to get your attention? Does that work?**

**When they really want to get your attention, what do they say or do?**

The lesson today is not about your parents—well, not your earthly parents. It's about our heavenly Father, and how we listen to him. It's an interesting question: *Does God use different tones of voice with us? What does he say to get our attention?*

Let's watch.



## Video

Show: *Looking for God*. (14 minutes)



## Discuss

**What was Halla's problem?** (She lacks confidence; she doesn't think she looks pretty enough; she feels like an outcast.)

**Do you think this is a common problem? Do you know people who feel that way?**

**Do guys have this problem too, or is it just girls?**

**Do you think she has a sense of her own identity? Does she know who she is?**

The honesty of her interview indicates that she might have a clear sense of identity—as the outcast. It's her *value* she doesn't grasp. She struggles to find support in a cruel world.

**What would you say to her if you had the chance?**

**As you look at the culture in which you live—and we’re talking TV, Internet, magazines, but also the groups at your school—what does your culture consider valuable? What do you have to do to be important?**

One psychologist has described our culture’s values with four B’s—Beauty, Brains, Brawn, and Bucks. There may be others, such as talent in a particular field or generally being likable. And particular schools may have distinct cultures. Sometimes the “bad kids” develop a following, or the kids with the most tattoos. And sometimes—as in the larger world—there are people who are popular just because they’re popular, and no one really knows why.

**In the video, David Nasser suggested that the church could be a place of safety and acceptance for everyone, including Halla. Do you think it is?**

**Leader:** *You can talk about churches in general, or you can talk about **your** church, if you’re leading this lesson in a church class or youth group. You might find it very helpful, though possibly painful, to get specific about the culture of your church or youth group.*

At the end of the video, David Crowder talked about some “really incredible friends that were a part of my spiritual formation.” He said “there was a little group of us who wanted to follow this guy Jesus and figure out what that looked like.”

**What do you think a group like ours could do to help someone like Halla understand her value?**

Doesn’t it really come down to what Crowder said: figuring out what it means to follow Jesus? We find our value in our relationship with our Creator, a relationship we have through Jesus? In a group like this, we can encourage and affirm one

another, reminding ourselves that our true value is from God and not by the shifting standards of the world.

**Let's talk about the first one interviewed in the video, Michael, who has dyslexia. What would you say to him if you had the chance?**

Obviously he had a very specific problem: Dyslexia kept him from reading the Bible. But he voiced a number of thoughts and questions that many others have.

For instance, he said this: *When I hear other people talking about hearing God's voice, I wonder if it's going to be something really big or something really small. I've just never heard it. I've asked God things, what he wants me to do, and he's never answered me.*

**Have you ever felt like that?**

**How does God tell us what he wants? Is it a big voice or a small voice, or something else?**

**Musician, David Crowder said that the times he sees God revealed most are the times his wife gives him grace and forgiveness. When or where do you see God?**



## Bible

When you flip through the pages of the Bible, it seems like God is always talking to people. He calls out to Adam and Eve in the Garden. He tells Noah to build an ark. He becomes Abraham's real estate agent. He gives dreams to Joseph. He speaks to Moses from a burning bush. It seems so ordinary.

But is that what happens to us today? Maybe sometimes.



But there are lots of Christians who are frustrated because they're *not* hearing the voice of God. Or at least they're not recognizing it.

Turn to Psalms 28. Would someone read the first two verses?

**How would you describe David's feelings at this point?**

(Obviously he's frustrated because he's not hearing God's voice.)

**What does he call the Lord in verse 1? (His Rock.)**

If any of you have been studying poetry in school, you'll find a great metaphor here. David often uses "Rock" as an image for God, because he's strong and sturdy, dependable. David spent a lot of time in the canyons of the Judean desert, so he knew rocks. But in this case, it feels like God is hard and impenetrable, like a rock wall. The one he depends on is not answering him.

**What is "the pit" that he's worried about? (Death.)**

David knows that, without a relationship with God, his life is going downhill fast, right into the pit of death. He's doomed. Life has no meaning. There's no hope for the future. Usually, he's confident in that relationship, but lately he's not feeling it.

**Have you ever felt like this, as if God is silent? What does it feel like?**

As bad as that feels, it might be comforting to know that someone like David felt it too. If anyone in the Bible gets points for being close to God, it's David. But even he had times when God seems far away.

Turn to Jeremiah 29:10. If God ever seemed far away, it was at this point. For years, Jeremiah had been saying that God

was going to judge his people by sending them into captivity for seventy years. They kept saying, "Yeah, yeah. Jeremiah, you're just too negative."

Well, it happened just as he said. The Babylonians invaded, conquered, and took many of the Jews into captivity. So there they were, in Babylon, wishing they had listened to Jeremiah in the first place, wondering if God would ever talk to them again.

But God did have a message for these people. We can read it in Jeremiah 29:10-13. Would somebody read that aloud?

**What were God's plans for his people?** (After seventy years, he'll bring them back. They'll prosper. They will have hope and a future. They will have a renewed relationship with God.)

**How do you think the Jews in captivity felt after receiving this message?**

**What does it mean to "seek God"? How do you seek him "with all your heart"?**

You could spend a lifetime answering this question, and some do. Obviously it involves prayer, Bible reading, living in obedience, and connecting with other Christians, but it's more than a checklist of activities. It's a desire to know God, a deep longing to be in relationship with him, a commitment to please him. When you seek "with all your heart," you make this a priority. You screen out the raucous voices of the culture and you listen intently for God's voice.

Obviously Michael, from the video, is bothered, but he's on the right track. He is seeking God with all his heart. And in this passage of Jeremiah, God says he *will be found*. Michael will find a way to connect deeply with God, despite the reading issue, because of his passion to hear God's voice.



# Crunch

**Leader:** Break into groups of 4-6 and distribute the "Can You Hear Me Now?" handout. Give each group one Bible passage to start with, but instruct them to do a second one if time permits. As they meet, circulate through the groups, ready to offer background info. After about ten minutes, re-gather the groups and discuss what they discovered.

*In the discussion, start with 1 Samuel 3 and continue through 1 Kings, Acts, Exodus, and Judges.*

Our question is: *How does God speak to us?* As we read all of these stories, it's not just about what happened then, but also what *can* happen in our lives.

## Exodus 18:5-26

**Background:** The Israelites had miraculously crossed the Red Sea, escaping from slavery in Egypt. Now it was time to become their own nation. Jethro was Moses' father-in-law, some sort of chieftain of a nomadic tribe in the Sinai. Here he gives some practical advice.

**Moses** got guidance from his father-in-law. This might have been confusing, because it's not clear from the text that God was speaking through Jethro, but the advice is good, and Moses took it. You can't do it all yourself! Moses himself was sort of in the place of God, judging the people's disputes, and he needed to find other leaders to share the load.

*Note:* God uses other wise Christians to speak to us—especially parents and other older folks who know us (as Jethro knew Moses). When you're not sure what God wants, talk to people like that.

## Judges 6:12-24, 36-40

**Background:** “Judges” were leaders God appointed to save his people from foreign oppressors. Here we find Gideon being called into service to lead Israel against the Midianites, but he seems rather reluctant.

**Gideon** felt ill-equipped for the task at hand. He had excuses, but he was willing to do this, if God really wanted it. So he put God to several tests. He basically dared God to work some mini-miracles to prove himself. We’re not told that this was a good thing to do, but God indulged him.

*Note:* God works with us. When we have doubts, he deals with them. When all else fails, you can ask God to confirm something you think he might be saying. If you are honestly seeking him with all your heart, he will get the message through.

## 1 Samuel 3

**Background:** Samuel was a boy who was given by his mother to serve in the Tabernacle with Eli the priest. The nation was not in good shape, due to poor leadership by Eli and his sons. Here God gives a message to young Samuel, who isn’t sure what he’s hearing.

**Samuel** heard God’s voice, but he thought it was Eli the priest calling him. After being rudely awakened a few times, Eli instructs young Samuel about listening to God. Simply, it’s about being ready to listen. God gives Samuel a message of judgment, doom for Eli and his family. It was the beginning of a long career for Samuel as a prophet and leader of God’s people.

*Note:* Many of us grow up hearing God’s messages from our parents. But the time comes when God starts dealing directly with us.

## 1 Kings 19

**Background:** Elijah had just had a mountaintop experience, literally. He had challenged the false prophets of Baal to a sacrificing match—and Elijah had won, successfully calling fire from heaven. But wicked Queen Jezebel still wanted to kill him, and that was depressing.

**Elijah** had called fire from heaven, but God hadn't changed the nation. Moping in a desert cave, he witnesses huge displays of God's power, but he learns that God "is not in" those displays. It's the gentle whisper that gives this prophet his next assignments.

*Note:* We get charmed by big displays of religious power—revival meetings, powerful preaching, awesome occurrences—but we need to listen for God's gentle whisper.

## Acts 10:1-23

**Background:** Peter was a leader of the church, which was growing, but only among Jews. By law, Jews were forbidden to eat with or stay with Gentiles (non-Jews), just as they were not allowed to eat certain foods. But on this occasion, God challenges Peter's assumptions.

**Peter** wanted to do the right thing, and it seemed that God was telling him to do the wrong thing. Eat unclean food? Never! But God was doing something new in the world, welcoming Gentiles into relationship with him. Peter's obedience would change the world.

*Note:* Sometimes God leads us "outside the box." Be careful about this, because rule-breaking is generally not a good idea, but every so often he will challenge us to take a bold new step that everyone else thinks is crazy.



# Just Do It

Religion was easy back in the time of Jeremiah.

Before they were taken captive, the people were saying, "Hey, God's Temple is here in Jerusalem. How could this city ever be conquered?" They were going to God's house, but they weren't listening to God's message.

Sometimes when faith gets too easy for us, God plays hard to get. We can get really casual about church and youth group and prayer and the Bible. We take it for granted, for a while. And then suddenly God seems far away. That's scary, isn't it?

He's not far. He just wants to be searched for. He wants you to want him. And the recurring message of Scripture is this: "Seek and you will find. Ask and it will be given to you. Knock and the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7).

## Handout

# Can You Hear Me Now?

Read the assigned passage and answer the questions. (You can ask your leader/teacher for some background, if you like.) If you finish with one passage, start on a second one.

Passages:

**Exodus 18:5-26**

**Judges 6:12-24, 36-40**

**1 Samuel 3**

**1 Kings 19**

**Acts 10:1-23**

Assigned Passage: \_\_\_\_\_

Who was God speaking to? \_\_\_\_\_

How did God "speak"? \_\_\_\_\_

Was the person sure it was God speaking? \_\_\_\_\_

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was the gist of God's message? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did the person ultimately respond? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Passage: \_\_\_\_\_

Who was God speaking to? \_\_\_\_\_

How did God "speak"? \_\_\_\_\_

Was the person sure it was God speaking? \_\_\_\_\_

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was the gist of God's message? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did the person ultimately respond? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Session 2

# When Bau Things Happen





## Set up

Set up TV/DVD player; DVD with *When Bad Things Happen* session; pens/pencils; make copies of "Living By Faith" handout (pgs. 35) for the entire class. Or, for 8 ½ x 11 version; go to [www.bluefishtv.com/](http://www.bluefishtv.com/) handouts and click **I AM Getting to Know God** series. Then click on the *When Bad Things Happen* lesson to download "Living By Faith" handout and make copies for the entire class.



## Kicker

Let's play the Feud.

**Leader:** *Divide the group in two, maybe right-side/left-side. Appoint a captain/spokesperson for each side. You have three questions here with a number of random answers (not a studio poll). One side goes first, trying to guess as many answers as they can. A right guess is a point. A wrong guess is a "strike," and they'll get three strikes. If they guess all the correct answers, they get those points. But if they get three strikes, then the other side has an opportunity to steal all the points for that question—they have one chance to provide one of the remaining answers. If they fail, the first team keeps its points. Do the whole thing again on the second question, with the second team leading off. (It might be best to hold the third question as a possible tiebreaker.)*

*This might get a bit crazy, if it works. Establish yourself as the final authority on the rightness of answers and the awarding of points.*

**Question 1: Name an emotion you might feel when something bad happens.**

*Seven Game Answers:*

Anger  
Confusion  
Sadness  
Fear  
Worry/Anxiety  
Denial/Pretending it didn't happen  
Depression

**Question 2: What is something a person might do when angry?**

*Nine Game Answers:*

Swear  
Hit something (or someone)  
Throw something  
Yell  
Try not to show it  
Play a video game (or other "escape" like shopping/sports)  
Get drunk/high  
Count to ten  
Threaten someone or plan revenge

**Question 3: Name a book of the Old Testament that has five chapters or less.**

(You might want to make this an open-book question, but impose a time limit.)

*Ten answers:*

Ruth  
Lamentations  
Joel  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Malachi

Your answers have been brilliant, and they'll be very important in today's lesson. The video today is called "When Bad Things Happen," and later we'll be looking into one of those short books of the Old Testament. Let's watch.



## Video

Show: *When Bad Things Happen*. (11 minutes)



## Discuss

**Let's talk about the second story first. This girl named Gabby. Her friend was in some sort of accident. What happened there?** (She was a Christian, but sliding. Her friend, a more devout Christian, was in a car accident, then in a coma.)

**How did Gabby feel about that?** (Of course it was hard for Gabby to deal with. It didn't seem fair that God would take her good friend instead of *her*.)

**If you could talk with Gabby about that, what would you say?**

**Earlier we heard from Tamika, whose mom died. Obviously that made her sad, but she was talking about other feelings, too. Do you remember how she felt?**

In the space of a few sentences, Tamika described a whole range of emotions:

"I do feel very **lonely**," she said. ". . . After losing my mother, my biggest **fear** was that I would lose somebody else that was close to me. . . . It **hurts** so bad that she's not here. And **my relationship with God**, right now, isn't the best. . . . There have been many times that I've been **angry with God** . . . just angry for not knowing why."

**Do you think those different emotions are pretty common when bad things happen? Are there others that you have felt in response to tragedy?**

**How does a crisis like that affect a person's relationship with God? Does it draw people closer or drive them further away?**

**Tamika talked about being angry with God. Is that a legitimate feeling? Are we allowed to feel that way? Why or why not?**

It seems weird to be angry with God. After all, he's God. But the Bible shows us a whole bunch of people who have expressed anger toward God—and questions, disappointment, challenges, etc. And these aren't the "bad guys" of the Bible. They're folks like Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, and Jeremiah. God sometimes used their emotional outbursts to teach them, but he didn't scold them for their honest expressions.

Our conclusion, then, is that it's okay to be angry with God, as long as you tell him about it. As in any other relationship, if you hold a grudge, it will poison your life with bitterness. But if you open up your emotions, you and God can deal with it together.

**Do you think Christians feel any sort of pressure to avoid negative emotions like sadness or anger? Do we try to pretend that we have everything under control?**

This might vary from church to church, from person to person. Some Christians do think that "faith" requires a calm approach to everything, and if you're terribly sad or angry, you're showing a lack of faith. But others realize that our emotions are a gift from God, and it doesn't make sense to stifle them. "Faith" means that we have a relationship with God in which we can express our feelings and sort through the issues *with him*.

**Did Jesus show emotions like sadness or anger?** (Absolutely, he did. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He showed anger at the moneychangers and on a few other occasions.)

**What does that mean for us? What does it say about our emotions?** (Jesus is our example. If he showed emotion, so can we.)

Again, we are hard-wired as emotional beings. We bring God our whole heart, soul, mind, and might—including the feelings he has put in our hearts. But God has a way of transforming whatever we bring to him. He sees our sadness and raises it to another level. We still miss whomever we lost, but we know that there's another life beyond this one. It doesn't take away our sadness, but it adds hope to the mix.

Toward the end of the video, David Nasser was talking about Gabby, who was kind of a casual Christian before her friend's accident. He said this: *I think in years to come Gabby can look back and say, "When my friend was in the accident, God shouted at me, and God called me back home."*

**What did he mean by that?**

**Do you think God uses tragic events to get our attention?**

God uses anything and everything to get our attention. We can't say that he caused Brooke's accident so he could change Gabby's life. (That would lead us into a whole cause-effect area that gets pretty murky.) But God does use the situations around us—good, bad, and ordinary—to draw us closer to him.



Turn to the book of Habakkuk, one of those short books of the Bible, the fifth book from the end of the Old Testament. Would someone read Habakkuk 1:2-3?

**What is it like in Habakkuk's world?** (Violent, unjust, and God seems far away.)

*Background:* Habakkuk lived in the same place and time as Jeremiah (about 600 years before Jesus). The nation of Judah was living a lie, pretending to worship God but shot through with injustice and violence. Jeremiah was complaining about this and predicting God's judgment. Now Habakkuk was saying the same thing.

Into this mess, the Lord speaks. Somebody read verse 5.

**What does God promise to do?** (Something amazing.)

You can imagine the excitement of Habakkuk. God has finally responded to his complaints. He is finally going to throw out the evildoers. He is finally going to set things right. And how? Look at verses 6-7 to find out.

**Who is God "raising up"?** (The Babylonians.)

**What are the Babylonians like?** (Ruthless, impetuous, violent, proud.)

**How do you think Habakkuk felt about this?**

It's a classic good news/bad news situation. God is finally acting. Hooray! But with the Babylonians???? What's that about? They're not only violent; they're idol-worshippers. How could God use such godless people to judge his own people?

Skip down to verses 12-13. Somebody read that aloud.

**What is Habakkuk's complaint?**

It's possible that the second phrase there is a question: *Will we not die?* In that case, he's saying something like this: *Come on, God, you've been around long enough to know how*

*awful the Babylonians are. They will demolish us! Are they really the ones you want to use to punish us? You are so holy! How can you use people more wicked than we are?*

### **What do you think? Does Habakkuk have a point?**

It's a little like having a church that's mismanaging money, so God sends the Mafia to take it over. It doesn't make sense.

Somebody read Habakkuk 2:1.

**How would you describe Habakkuk's attitude here?** (It seems as if he's boldly putting the question to God and demanding an answer. "I'll wait right here until you answer me.")

### **Do you think this is a good or bad attitude to have with God?**

(It's not unusual in the Bible to find the people who know God best talking with him like this. It shows faith that God is real and that he cares about his relationship with us.)

Would somebody read verses 2-4?

**Why does God want his answer written down?** (So that a herald may run with it.)

There is some disagreement about what this means in the original Hebrew. And that gives us several intriguing possibilities. Literally it says, "So that the one who reads it may run with it." This might be a messenger who would carry the message from Jerusalem to the outlying towns. In that case, God is saying something like this: *This message is just as important as the law I gave Moses, which I also wrote on tablets, but keep this short and simple because the messenger has to carry it from town to town. (We don't want it to get too heavy.)*

But the message also has to do with the future, so there might be the sense that it should be communicated clearly so

that it could be carried into future generations (to people like us, who are now reading the message).

In a business meeting, a boss might say: "That's a good idea. Let's run with it." Maybe that's the idea here. That we don't just read the message, but we "run with it." That is, we make it part of our lives.

**Leader:** *That's probably enough to share with the group, but there are a few other ideas. The herald might be running to Babylon, sharing this message of hope for the captives, which is also a message of impending judgment for the Babylonians. Also, some commentators imagine a huge roadside billboard with the message written large, so that someone running by could read it quickly.*

In any case, the message is not a static one, not a bunch of pointless facts, like your last history test. It's on the move. We're taking it and running with it.

**What does verse 3 tell us about this message, this "revelation"?**

There is a timing factor here. Things will be different in the future. The promise of God might seem false for a while, but wait for it. It will come true at the proper time.

**Why would this be important for the Jewish captives in Babylon to hear?**

Jeremiah had predicted seventy years of captivity, but then a restoration. The captives needed to hear that this was a temporary judgment. Things would eventually be set right.

**Why is it important for us to hear that God's promises might take time?**



We don't like to wait. We want it all *now*. And when tragedy happens, we're thrust into a time of pain and sorrow that we think will never end. But healing does come. It just takes time.

And there's a larger sense of timing that we have as Christians. It's like David Nasser said in the video: "This is not our home. We live in the land of the dying; we live in a place where we're not guaranteed our tomorrows; we live in a land where there is mourning, there is crying, there is pain; but it gives us hope for heaven. It turns our hearts towards home. It makes us realize that, even though in this world there will be trouble, one day that trouble will go away, one day we'll be in a place called heaven."

**After all this build-up, we're eager to get this "revelation." But where is it? It certainly starts in verse 4. What do we learn there?**

The next several verses talk about the fate of the ungodly Babylonians. They are "puffed up," over-inflated with wicked desires. But those desires will not satisfy them. They are ultimately doomed.

**But what about the righteous? How are the righteous people different?** (They live by faith.)

**What does it mean to live by faith?**

In Romans 1:17, the apostle Paul quotes this phrase to set up his major point—that we can only access the righteousness of God by trusting in Jesus to save us from our sin. That is a huge point. It is certainly where our life of faith starts. But is there more to learn from this verse? How does the righteous life of faith contrast with the self-important life of the wicked?

### **How did your faith affect the way you lived this past week?**

Did you do the right thing instead of the wrong thing, even if you really wanted to do the wrong thing? Did you return good for evil? Did you provide a certain hope and joy to the people around you? Did you show love to someone that other people were ignoring?

### **How does "living by faith" affect the way we deal with tragedy?**

Our faith gives us an assurance that God is ultimately in control, even though it might not seem like that right now. We trust that God wants what is best for us. We accept that we may not always know the answers, but we know God, and we can find comfort in him.

Somebody read verses 18-20 of Habakkuk 2.

**How is God different from idols?** (He's real. He has power. We haven't made him; he has made us.)

According to these verses, perhaps the most important difference is that our God speaks. Idols don't. An idol can be whatever its maker wants it to be. It's just an extension of the maker's own desires. But our God is far bigger than that. Our God has his own agenda. He has his own things to say.

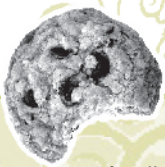
Now we can talk about the idols of our age: sex, drugs, money, power, entertainment, sports, etc. But let's take a different angle on this. Sometimes we treat God like our personal idol. We carry him to church with us, and we expect him to do certain God-like things. You know: bless us, protect us, answer our prayers.

But then something happens that shatters the illusion. A friend dies in an accident. There's some huge tragedy. And we get all upset because our little pet idol-God didn't do what we expected him to do. How could he do that to us?

The truth is that God is far bigger than our expectations. He will continually surprise us—with good things and with some things that don't seem good. God is doing his thing, not our thing. And we may never understand what he's up to. He doesn't seem to mind it when we, like Habakkuk, ask him for answers. But then it's time to keep silence before him and listen. He has a lot to teach us about who he really is.

**Does that make sense to you? Do you think we tend to treat God as an idol instead of the powerful God he is?**

That seems to be what we saw with Gabby from the video. She had her idol-God tucked away in her closet when she was out partying. But then he burst out and shouted, "I'm bigger than you think."



## Crunch

**Leader:** Break into groups of 4-6 and distribute the "Living by Faith" handout.

This is not one of those worksheets where one person takes notes for the group. Everyone has to write down their own stuff. If you come up with a good statement, share it with the group. The others may agree or disagree. They might even write it down on their own sheet.

You see a bunch of statements on the side to get you started. You could even borrow some of these, but be careful. Think them through first.

**Leader:** Circulate as best you can. Offer feedback. After 6-10 minutes, direct them to the bottom of the handout. After a few more minutes, regather them for the closing. No need to review what they wrote, but encourage them to keep thinking about it.



# Just Do It

The last chapter of Habakkuk sounds very much like a Psalm. After all his questions, the prophet erupts in praise. And he ends with this interesting verse:

“The Sovereign LORD is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
he enables me to go on the heights.”

Somehow, the deer that live on the mountains have special hooves that keep them from slipping. God allows them to run through some pretty dangerous places.

We've been talking about some dangerous ideas here. *Does God really care? Why do bad things happen? Can I get angry with God? What should I do when he seems far away? What is it like to trust in a God who is bigger than our ideas about him?*

We could slip and fall on questions like that. We could run back to the security of easy answers, back to the idol in the closet. But he makes our feet like deer feet. He enables us to run through this dangerous terrain.

# Living by Faith

*Come up with three or four personal “statements of faith.” These might be things you believe about God, about Jesus, about yourself, or about life in general. In the column at the right, you’ll see a number of sample statements of things people believe—but beware: some of them aren’t really true, even if they sound good.*

1.

2.

3.

4.

*Of course faith isn’t just about **what** you believe. It’s **who** you’re trusting in. Do some thinking about how your faith will impact your life.*

**Because of my faith, here’s how I will act . . .**

. . . when I see someone in need:

. . . when a tragedy happens:

. . . when I face temptation:

. . . when people mistreat me:

There is an answer for everything, if you’re smart enough.

Some things we’ll never know until we get to heaven.

Everything will work out easiest for us, if we have faith.

God works things together for a good purpose, even if we don’t see it.

If we’re living in God’s will, our lives will be pain-free.

God loves us and wants us to have lives of joy.

When bad things happen, God suffers too.



Session 3

# Identity



## Set up

Set up TV/DVD player; DVD with *Identity* session; pens/pencils; make copies of “*All That Is Within Me*” handout (pg 47) for the entire class. Or, for 8 ½ x 11 version; go to [www.bluefishtv.com/handouts](http://www.bluefishtv.com/handouts) and click **I AM Getting to Know God** series. Then click on the *Identity* lesson to download “*All That Is Within Me*” handout and make copies for the entire class.



## Kicker

### What's your song?

Maybe it's your favorite song, but I'm not just talking about a song you like. It's *your song*. Maybe it says something about you, or maybe it describes the feelings you have. Maybe you just connect with it in a way you can't describe. It could be your theme song. If they made a movie about your life, this song would be playing under the opening credits.

### What is that song, and why do you connect with it?



## Video

**Leader:** *It's time to shake things up a bit, so distribute the “All That Is Within Me” handout now. You'll be asking them to come up with the discussion questions for the video. So encourage them to jot down some notes as they watch. What are the problems, the issues, the directions that we could talk about?*

Show: *Identity*. (14 minutes)



## DISCUSS

**Leader:** Now break into groups of 4-6. Give each group a few minutes to come up with at least one discussion question, and as many as three. Then have each group present a question to the entire class. You may want to throw in a follow-up question here and there to focus the group on important issues.

In case the small groups come up totally empty, here are some questions you could use. **Note:** You don't need to use these, but they're a backup set for you.

**What would you say to Laura or Bud, if you had the chance?**

**Laura talked about having trouble telling her parents how she was feeling. Why is that so tough?**

**David Nasser made this big point that we're "saints." What does that mean? That we're perfect?**

**Do you think Christians are better or worse than non-Christians when it comes to picking on people, or about the same?**

**What can we do to help people who get picked on?**

**At the end, musician Chris Tomlin talked about how he knew where God was leading him in life. What did he say about that?**

**Are you feeling any leading in what you want to do in life?**





# Bible

Turn to Genesis 2:7. We'll take a quick stop at this verse that David Nasser mentioned in the video.

It's the creation story. God makes this beautiful garden, but there's no one to live in it—yet. Somebody read 2:7.

**So, according to the verse, what's the raw material that went into making the first human?** (The dust of the ground and God's breath.)

**Where does our life come from?** (From God, God's breath.)

The word for breath also means wind, or spirit. That old song, "All we are is dust in the wind," isn't far off. But it's not some aimless whirlwind, it's the Spirit of God that gives life to our dusty bodies.

**What does that mean to you? How does that affect your view of yourself?**

If you're trying to build your self-esteem, it doesn't sound so great to say you're a pile of dirt. But don't forget that God created that dirt. It was the rich soil of the Garden of Eden. Yet the point remains that our life is a gift from God, and not only a gift but an infusion. Without the breath of God, we are just dust.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul writes a lot about the "flesh" and the Spirit—two forces that are at odds within us. [The NIV translates flesh as "sinful nature."] Some people get the wrong idea and say that our bodies are bad. But no, God created our bodies. It's basically going back to Genesis 2:7 and saying we are dust and breath. Without the Spirit of God blowing through our lives, we are just so much soil. But when God's Spirit fills us, we are magnificent creations.

One more thing, as long as we're talking about words. When it says that man became a living *being*, it uses the Hebrew word *nephesh*. This is a good translation, but the word can also mean *soul* or *self*. When God breathed into the dust, the first human got its *self*. We hear a lot these days about self-image, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-actualization, and so on. Here's where it starts. If you want to know about your *self*, it starts here. And who are you? You are soil brought to life by the breath of God.

Turn to Psalm 103. Somebody read verse 1.

**Who is the Psalmist talking to?** (To his soul, his inmost being.)

The word for soul is *nephesh*, same as we saw in Genesis. Ever talk to yourself? That's what the Psalmist does here.

Here's a case where the Old King James Version gave us a really good wording: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name." There's something wonderful about that. You can bring to God *all that is within you*.

Sometimes we get the idea that we need to hide some stuff away from God. If we have sinful thoughts or selfish attitudes, pack those away before you go to church. Right? The experts say you're thinking about sex every eleven seconds or so, but *ssshhh*, don't tell God about that. If you're angry with your parents, you keep that out of your prayers. We all pretend that we're God's kind of person, and we cover up the bad stuff. And the silly stuff. The just-hanging-out-with-your-friends stuff. Have you told God a joke lately? Well, no, he's God, right? Why would he care about the stupid stuff you say with your friends?

We dress ourselves up and fix ourselves up and we never bring our true selves to him. But this verse says we need to

gather *all that is within us*, and bring it together to praise him.

### **So . . . what-all is within you?**

That's the first Bible Blitz question on your worksheet. I'll give you sixty seconds to write down everything you can think of that's part of you. Starting NOW.

**Leader:** *It's about high energy here. Keep a running patter going, suggesting stuff they could write. Something like this:*

*"No one else will see this paper, so be absolutely honest. Write down your thoughts and feelings. Everything that's within you. Your fears about the future. Your love for the people around you. Your aggravation with your parents, but your love for them too. Write it all down. Forty seconds left. That person you have a crush on. That time you were embarrassed in front of the class. Your talents. The teams you're on. The clubs you're in. The household chore you despise. Your favorite subjects at school. The 37 you got on that mid-term. How you really feel about your little brother. Keep writing. Twenty seconds. The temptations you face every day. That time you tortured the cat when you were nine, which you now deeply regret. Your favorite TV show. Your favorite video game. The realization that you'll never skate in the X games. The screenplay you're planning to write. The kind of car you really want to drive. The needy people you know. The nasty people you know. Three two one. Time's up."*

Look back at what you've written. Good stuff, bad stuff, silly stuff. That's just sixty seconds of "all that is within you." God wants to connect with all of it. If there's sin, he wants to forgive it. If there's pain, he wants to comfort. If there's excitement, he wants to enjoy that with you.

Let's do something together. Put your hand on top of what you've written. Now let's say together: "Lord, I bring it all to you." [Do this.]

Here's a thought. Maybe this becomes your prayer list for the next few days. Take a break from your prayer routine and go through this crazy collection of stuff. "Here, God," you're saying, "this is who I am. I bring it all to you."

Now, somebody read Psalm 103:2-5.

**What are we not supposed to forget?** (His benefits.)

**What's a benefit?** (Something good that we receive.)

**What benefits are listed in these verses?** (Forgiveness, healing, redemption, "crowning," satisfying desires, renewing youth.)

**Why does he "crown" us with love and compassion? That seems like an interesting choice of words.**

At first it seems like he's showing his love and compassion to us, but a person is "crowned" in order to serve others—like a king or queen. So maybe we receive his love, and that empowers us to show his love to others.

**According to verse 5, does God grant all our desires?**

Well, he *satisfies* our desires with good things. Little kids may cry out for candy, but wise parents satisfy that hunger with broccoli.

Time for another Bible Blitz. What "benefits" has God given you. What can you thank him for today? Write it all down in sixty seconds. Ready, go!

The Psalm talks about forgiveness, so be sure to include that. And maybe times your parents forgave you for something. It talks about healing. Have you been healed? Have you seen healing among your friends or family? Be sure to thank him for redeeming you, for giving you the hope of eternal life, and an abundant life right here. Write about love and compassion that you have received from him, but also the joy of showing that to others. Write down the desires that he has satisfied in good ways. Specifically, what has he blessed you with? Write it down. Thank him for your youthful energy. Thank him for the fun we have in this group. Write down all the joyful experiences he has given you. And three, two, one, time.

And you could add this to your daily prayer list. God likes to be thanked.

Let's skip down and have someone read verses 8-12.

**How is God described here?** (Compassionate, gracious, etc. He seems easy-going, forgiving, loving.)

In the video, Laura was talking about her past, how it was "hard to forgive" some of the mistakes she has made. A lot of people have that problem. They feel bad about something they have done in the past and they're burdened with guilt. God's promises must be for other people, they think, because God must be angry with them. God could never forgive them for their crime.

**What do these verses say about that?** (That God doesn't hold grudges. He removes our sin as far as the east is from the west.)

**Exactly how far is the east from the west?** (It's a logical opposite. Sure, there will be a smart-aleck who says that if you go east and another goes west eventually they'll get to the same place. Muzzle that person. The point here is that

God puts our sin as far as possible from us. He removes it from consideration.)

Somebody read verses 13-14.

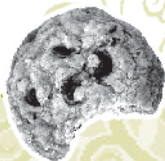
**What "dust" is this referring to?** (The dust of Eden, that God breathed into.)

**What is this saying about God's expectations? Doesn't God want us to be perfect?**

Sure he wants that, but he knows, better than anybody, that we are dust in the wind. It's not a surprise when we get dirty. He understands that. He made us from physical stuff, and so we'll have physical desires. He gave us a *self*, so sometimes we will act selfishly. He wants to guide our lives by his Spirit, but he knows that we'll choose to make our own decisions sometimes, and we'll mess up.

Imagine some folks from NASA visiting your school, going to the honors science class and saying, "We want you to design the next space shuttle." That's crazy. Oh, there are smart kids in the class, but they need years and years of training before they can reach that level of ability. (You might have a brainiac or two who could actually do it, but for the most part, it's beyond the range of high school students.)

That's what it's like with God. He knows what we're like. He knows our limitations. So when we mess up, he's ready to forgive us.



## Crunch

**Leader:** *Break into the groups again.*

We're talking about Identity today. Who are we? Our identity starts with what we've been talking about so far. We are created by God from the dust of the earth. We are this odd mixture of physical desire and spiritual power. We are capable of doing good things and bad things. But God gets that, and he's ready to forgive us for the bad things. He wants a relationship with us. He wants to send the breeze of his Spirit blowing through our lives, bringing us to life again. That's who we are.

But he has also given us each a unique identity. Physically, we all have our own DNA, but we've also had unique experiences that have shaped us. Each of us has a distinct soul, a self, at the core of our being.

In the groups right now, let's talk about who we are. On your worksheets, write down three things about yourself—not the physical stuff like eye color or weight, but your inner self. What you care about, what you think, how you feel, how you relate to others. Three things that you'd be willing to share with the others in your group.

**Leader:** *Give them about three minutes to write these down.*

In your groups now, go around the circle, with each person sharing those three things. Feel free to talk back, to clarify or compare. As each person talks, write down one of their three things, one thing that you find especially interesting.

*[After about five more minutes]* I hope you've been able to get to know one another on a deeper level in these groups. And maybe the process has helped you to define something else about your own identity.

Here's another idea. As long as you're using this worksheet for your prayer list, add these items. Pray for each person in your group—with special attention to the thing you wrote

down. Ask God to bless that thing within that person, to use it for his glory. In this way, we can pray for each other from the inside out.



## Just Do It

There's a marvelous promise in 2 Corinthians 5:17. Let's read it.

Many of us have stuff in our past we're not proud of, but that doesn't need to clutter up our identity. God created us from the dust of the earth, and he has *recreated* us in Jesus Christ. Whatever the past has been, it's gone. We have a glorious new future.



Handout

# All That Is Within Me

**PART ONE:**

Notes from video:

Discussion question(s):

**PART TWO:**

Bible Blitz

All That Is Within Me

God's Benefits

**PART THREE:**

Three Things In Me

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Notes on the others

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
What? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
What? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
What? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
What? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
What? \_\_\_\_\_



Session 4

# Question of Faith



## Setup

Set up TV/DVD player; DVD with *Question of Faith* session; pens/pencils; make copies of “*Compelling*” handout (pg 60) for the entire class.

Or, for 8 ½ x 11 version; go to [www.bluefishtv.com/handouts](http://www.bluefishtv.com/handouts) and click **I AM Getting to Know God** series. Then click on the *Question of Faith* lesson to download “*Compelling*” handout and make copies for the entire class.



## Kicker

**What is something not very important that you have a strong opinion about?**

Oh, you may try to pretend it’s important, but you have to admit it’s not world-changing. Like who’s the best NFL quarterback of all time? Or what movie should win the Oscar? We’re *not* talking about social issues or political candidates, but other stuff that you feel strongly about. Like the best way to eat an Oreo cookie. Like when in real life will you ever have to solve a quadranomial equation?

**Leader:** *Be ready with an example or two of your own, but do your best to goad the group into spouting their opinions, even if they argue over these admittedly unimportant things.*

It’s interesting that we talk pretty freely about sports or music or movies or even cookies, but when it comes to life’s most important questions, we get shy about that. Today’s video deals with a “Question of Faith.”



## Video

Show: *Question of Faith*. (15 minutes)



## Discuss

Let's think back through this video, because there seemed to be three distinct "questions of faith" raised. The first one is about ***finding your faith***. How can you find faith in God?

Hunter was the first guy interviewed, and he talked about growing up in a Christian home. He said, "It makes me question if it's *my* faith or my parents' faith."

**How can you tell the difference? When people take what they've learned from their parents and they make it their own, what happens? What changes?**

That's not an easy question, is it? Obviously we learn things from our parents that we accept as true. When we're younger, we accept these things just because they say so. Now that you're teenagers, you're beginning to question what you've been taught. It's not enough that your parents told you—you need to experience it for yourself.

So, what have you been experiencing? What questions have you been asking? Has Jesus become a reality in your life, not just a religious idea, but a real person that you interact with? Maybe that's the main difference. When people move from their parents' faith to their own, they have a new energy. Faith for them isn't about having all the answers—because they don't—but it's about connecting with the resurrected Jesus.

**For Hunter, the problem was the suffering in the world. He just couldn't see how a powerful and loving God could allow suffering. Is that a problem for you? How do you handle it?**

It's a tough question, and it has tripped up many. The Bible gives some guidance on the matter, but it doesn't provide a definitive answer. Perhaps the best answer to the problem of suffering is that God is working on it. He has defeated the forces of sin and destruction at the cross, and we're headed for an eternity without such suffering. In the meantime, though, people suffer. But God meets them in their suffering. He suffers with them. The Bible hints that those who suffer understand God in a special way.

**Are there other issues that seem to be roadblocks to faith, issues that motivate people to ditch Christianity as they grow older?**

There are a number of issues like that. For some it's the whole creation-evolution thing. How can they study college-level science and still believe in a Creator? For others it's a behavioral issue. They want to have sex or do drugs or get drunk and Christianity just gets in the way. Still others have personal pain. It's not the suffering of the world, but their own suffering that they blame God for.

**Do you think Christians should be asking the tough questions, or will those questions just lead us astray?**

The Bible doesn't shy away from questions. God seems to welcome questions from those who truly want to know him. What leads people astray is an attitude of pride that foolishly asserts, "I'm too smart to believe in God."

The second part of the video was about *living your faith*. There we met Schelbi (Shelby), who found it hard to be the only Christian in her home.

**Remember that? What was so hard about that situation?** (A number of things. She worried about them, spiritually. She also felt pressure to live the Christian life flawlessly in front of them. She wants to make everyone happy, but she can't.)

So the first part involved finding your faith, for yourself, when you grow up in a Christian home. This second part involves living your faith when you're growing up in a non-Christian environment.

**Schelbi mentioned her brother's comment that "Christians should be perfect in every single way." Do you get that same pressure from the non-Christians who are closest to you? Do you worry that one little sin might ruin your testimony?**

**Is that a good thing to be worried about?**

It's funny how this works. People often think of Christians as being judgmental, but sometimes it works the other way. When you declare yourself a Christian, some non-Christians see that as a challenge, even as an insult, as if you're saying that you're better than they are. So they feel a need to expose you as a hypocrite. They find a secret delight in finding your sins, to prove that you're just as messed up as they are.

That can put pressure on you. You feel like you're living in a fishbowl, everybody judging your every move.

*Should* Christians be perfect? Well, of course, we should try. *Will* we be perfect? Uh, no. Does that destroy our testimony? It shouldn't, because it was never about us to begin with. Christians aren't morally better than non-Christians. We shouldn't claim to be. We are people who have entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ and found forgiveness for our sins. We *keep* finding forgiveness as we continue to make mistakes.

And maybe that's the most powerful testimony we can offer, not living a perfect life (which others will try to shoot down), but being honest about our failures, claiming forgiveness from God (and asking it from others), and moving on from there.

**David Nasser talked about the importance of living “in alignment” with “who we say we are.” What did he mean by that? Is that a helpful idea?**

It's a matter of consistency, making sure our lives don't contradict our beliefs. But what are those beliefs? Who do we say we are? Is our faith based on the idea that we are perfect people? Of course not! Are we trying to get to heaven by being perfect? No, we know that won't happen. Our faith is based on our weakness and God's forgiveness.

So if you lose your temper and say nasty things to someone, that's a sin, but it doesn't have to throw you out of alignment. Ask forgiveness, and get things right. That's what Christianity is about, and the way we do that can send a powerful message to others. What *will* throw you out of alignment is if you pretend that you're not a sinner anymore. If you let the pressure to be perfect push you into a life of pretense, that's *not* what Christianity is about. It's about honest confession, not proud posturing.

The third part of the video was about ***sharing your faith***. There we met Angie, who helped to start that club at school.

**What was that Christian club trying to do?**

**Was that a good idea?**

**How do you think the other people at that school responded?**

**Leader:** *Angie brought up some hot-button issues—notably homosexuality and Islam. Don't get blind-sided by these. Be ready for strong feelings in your group to be expressed. Provide whatever leadership is necessary. While this lesson is not about those subjects, it is about sharing our Christian identity in a culture where other people are sharing their identities.*

Here's something Angie said: "[People] view Christians as condemning and stereotypical and so we just really wanted to put an end to that and to show that we are just like regular teenagers: we make mistakes, we're sinful, we like to have fun, but in the end we know what our purpose in life is."

**Do you think people tend to look at Christians as "condemning"? If so, why do they do that?**

**Is that the defining characteristic of Christians, that "we know what our purpose in life is"?**

**What is our purpose in life?**

There are a number of different ways we might express that purpose. We are here to glorify God, to be in relationship with him, to enjoy him. We are here to connect with Jesus. In fact, we might say that we have a calling to *be* Jesus in the world, to live as he lived, to love as he loved.

**If Jesus wandered into that high school, where Angie and her friends go, how do you think he would treat those other groups in the school? What would he say to them?**

I said that this section was about "sharing your faith," but it's different from how we usually think of evangelism. Angie and her club, they're sharing their faith within this marketplace of ideas. They're not parachuting in and saying, "You're a sinner, you need a Savior, here's a Bible," and running off.



They're talking. They're loving. They're being radically honest about their connection to Jesus. That is faith-sharing in the finest sense. And that's how evangelism is going to happen in the next generation.



## Bible

Turn to 2 Corinthians 4. Paul is writing about his own work, as he shares his faith with others in a world full of different opinions. Somebody read verses 1-2.

**What are the values that Paul observes as he conducts his ministry? How does he go about it?** (Dedication, not losing heart. But also honesty, not secrecy or deception. He doesn't manipulate people to win them over, but he speaks plainly, giving them an honest choice.)

**Would those principles work for us as we share our faith with others?**

Somebody read verses 3-4.

**Who is "the god of this age"?** (That's a term Paul uses for the devil.)

**Is that an appropriate description? Are people "blinded" to the gospel?**

Jesus used a similar description to explain why he taught in parables. Those who were spiritually ready to see would see. Others would just think it was a cool story. Here Paul says that some people just won't *get* the gospel. They're blind to its truth.

Somebody read verses 5-7.

**Have you ever seen preachers who seemed to be preaching themselves rather than Jesus?**

**In verse 5, what does Paul call himself (and his co-workers)? (Servants.)**

**Is that an important attitude for us to have as we share our faith? Why?**

If we're "witnessing" to somebody because we have to, or because we want to be some great soul-winner, people will see that a mile away. It's not about scoring points for ourselves. This isn't some spiritual pyramid scheme where we get credit for the people we bring into the kingdom. It's all about Jesus.

**Paul talks about the gospel as a light that shines in our hearts. How can we share our faith in such a way that the light can shine through?**

It takes transparency. Authenticity. We don't manufacture the message. It's the power in our hearts that comes pouring out. Oh, sure, it makes sense to think about how we talk about Jesus in a way that will make sense to our friends. But it's not about our brilliant ideas or smooth delivery. It's always about God's light in our hearts. "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine." That's what we're talking about.

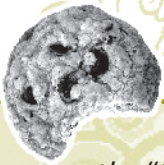
**When Paul says, "We have this treasure in jars of clay," what does he mean?**

We are the clay jars. We are made from the soil of the earth, remember? We are physical beings with physical weaknesses. We are containers made out of dirt. But what do we contain? A treasure. The light of God is in our hearts. His power is in our lives. Not to bring glory or attention to us,

because we're just clay pots. No, "this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

**Remember Schelbi from the video, living in a non-Christian family, trying hard to be perfect? How would verse 7 apply to her situation?**

Like the rest of us, she's a clay jar. She will make mistakes, but that doesn't change the fact that God's power is working within her.



## Crunch

**Leader:** Break into groups of 4-6 and distribute the "Compelling" handout.

We talked about three themes: Finding Faith, Living Faith, and Sharing Faith. In the next chapter of 2 Corinthians there's a great passage that can help us with all three. In your groups, read through that text—2 Corinthians 5:14-21. Then look for phrases, sentences, or ideas that would fit any of those themes, and write them into the chart on the Handout.

You'll see some phrases there already, from chapter 4. Again, what words in this new passage would help you *find* faith, what words would help you *live* your faith, and what words would help you *share* your faith?

**Leader:** After 6-8 minutes draw them together and review their findings. Here are some ideas, but they aren't definitive answers. There may be other legitimate choices.

## Finding Faith:

Christ's love (14)

Christ died for all (15)

In Christ, everything is new (17)

Because of Christ, God doesn't count our sins against us (19)

Be reconciled to God—make peace with him (20)

We find righteousness because Christ took our sin (21)

## Living Faith:

We don't live for ourselves (15)

We live for the crucified and risen Savior (15)

We're new creatures, not bound by the old ways (17)

## Sharing Faith:

We're compelled by Christ's love (14)

God gives us the ministry of reconciliation (18, 19)

We are his ambassadors (20)

As you look over your chart I want you to identify the cutting-edge area of your life. Which of these three sections is most important to you right now?

Maybe you're involved in finding your own faith right now. You've been taught stuff by your parents or by the church, but now you're sifting through it all, making it your own. That's something you need to do.

Or maybe your challenge is in living the faith. Maybe you have a non-Christian family, or maybe you just find it difficult with your unbelieving friends. You want to be a good example for them, but it's tough, isn't it? And they're ready to pull you down whenever they can. In that case, living the faith is cutting-edge for you.

Maybe the issue for you is sharing your faith. Maybe you've tried various techniques or formulas. Maybe you feel guilty for not doing more witnessing to others, but maybe it feels uncomfortable for you. You can express your opinions about music or sports, but when it comes to Jesus, things get weird. Then that's your cutting-edge.

Look at your chart, in your cutting-edge area and think through the phrases you put there. Does anything jump out at you? Is there anything that makes a great deal of sense to you? Or is there something that teases you—you just want to dig into that idea more? Circle it on your paper, and claim it in your heart. Let that play around in your soul for the next week. And if you'd like to talk more about it with me, I'm available.

**Leader:** *This could be a good next step for some kids. Be ready to follow up with them, or get others to.*



## Just Do It

I think of the story of Gideon. He had a small army, just 300 against thousands. But you know what they did, they surrounded the enemy camp, holding torches, but hiding their light in clay jars. Then, at Gideon's signal, they gave a great shout and they broke the jars, letting the torchlight flood the camp. The enemy soldiers were terrified, falling all over each other. Gideon's army won a great victory because they broke the jars and let the light shine.

We hold God's light in jars of clay. It's a struggle to believe the right things, to do the right things, and to say the right things. But it's not about us. If we get a bit broken in the process, that's more of God's light that comes shining through.

Handout

# Compelling

Text: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

*What phrases, sentences, or ideas would help someone FIND faith, LIVE faith, or SHARE faith?*

FIND FAITH	LIVE FAITH	SHARE
	We're jars of clay We're servants	Don't lose heart No deception



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