

THRESHOLDS

1- Is there a God?

Belief

8/8/24

Introduction:

Question: How many of you vividly remember that moment you first stepped into a new home, or walked into your new place of work, or stepped foot in your first foreign country? I remember the first time I entered this church building in February of 2010. It had lightly snowed outside. I remember entering through the glass doors out front. I remember it felt warm inside, both physically and spiritually. It was a significant moment in my life.

We are beginning a new series titled “Thresholds”. In it we will be talking about those significant moments in our faith that require us to intentionally step over a threshold of faith. Everyone here this morning needs to open their hearts to these messages. One of these thresholds may be one you are currently at and struggling to step through. Or maybe that threshold is someone in your life and you need to understand their struggle so that you can help them best. OR maybe one of these thresholds is on your horizon and you’ve just begun to think through it.

Threshold: 1) the sill of a doorway, 2) any place or point of entering or beginning, 3) the point at which a stimulus is of sufficient intensity to begin to produce an effect

I want us to visualize that threshold as we work through these significant moments of faith. **It’s a doorway that is both a point of entering AND a point of leaving.** When we make these decisions of faith (and we will examine what each of those are in the weeks to come) we are **stepping into a new chapter of our lives...and we are closing a previous chapter.** And I like that last definition of *threshold*, that **there needs to be a sufficient intensity built up that we would be compelled to take a step OVER that threshold.** That means we have come to what we call in theology a *crisis of faith*.

Today we use the term *crisis* to describe a very difficult moment, but the word really is about a critical stage. Today, we might use the phrase *breaking point* in

its place. **There are milestones in your walk with Jesus in which your ability to keep pace with Jesus hits a breaking point. You can go no further with Jesus until that threshold is stepped over, when that declaration or commitment is made.**

You will feel an opposition to stepping over any of these thresholds, coming from any or all of these:

- The world wants to control you...
- The enemy wants to corrupt you...
- You want to be the center of the universe...

The first of these *thresholds* is one I label **BELIEF**. And it begins by asking the question, ***“Is there a God?”***

Let’s acknowledge that the opposition does NOT want us asking this question. You will be kept too busy, your life will be too chaotic, you will be indoctrinated, you will be so overwhelmed with challenging beliefs that you won’t be able to trust any answer. But you will also feel incomplete, unfulfilled, frustrated, disappointed, and even lost...which will bring you back to this question, ***“Is there a God?”***

This question will keep you awake at night. However, if you are serious in asking it, you will begin to see the evidence of God everywhere you look.

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah shares a powerful promise by God:

‘You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.

(Jeremiah 29:13 NASB)

- *You will seek Me...* this is the person who is exploring the question, *Is there a God?* It’s the first most important question that must be answered. You can try to bypass this question. People have done this for years. But then the church experience is just a country club membership. Without God being real and active, there is no faith...only religion. It makes sense that Genesis 1:1 establishes the answer so clearly, *“In the beginning, God...”*
- *and find me...* God wants to be found! We are promised success in this endeavor.
- *WHEN...* listen to this clarifier because it’s important... *with all your heart*. The original Hebrew text gives a much deeper insight about what this really means. It’s almost a play on words or a rhyme: *baqash* and *darash*

- **Seek:** Hebrew *baqash* means *to strive for, to desire greatly*
 - Really it's saying: *When you desperately desire...*
 - Not a little, not halfway
 - God is talking to the Israel people who had allowed God to fall further down their priority list until He was nothing more than an afterthought
 - *'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.* (Revelation 2:4 NASB)
 - Do you hunger for God in this way?
- **Search:** Hebrew *darash* means *to tread or frequent*
 - *When your desire compels you to move...*
 - God is not just offering a bandaid to the sin issue and the brokenness but a new heart
 - Life transformation requires action, as YOU are changing so must the THINGS in your life change.

So you ask the question, *Is there a God?* and then you begin seeking and searching. And we aren't talking about a potential higher power. Agnostics settle in on the possibility of an unknowable divine being. But that's not really the question being asked this morning. Our question is asking if there is a Creator God that knows me, is involved in this world, and has a plan for our redemption. Finding Yahweh God has the potential to transform your life.

In 2022, Gary Abud Jr. wrote about his journey through this threshold of belief. At the height of his career in leadership development he was invited to a TedTalk conference and even met with the President of the United States. He was at the pinnacle of his worldly pursuit of success, fame, and fortune. But behind all of that was a life that was a shambles. He quoted that it was *the best of times, it was the worst of times*. While Gary was away doing his thing, his wife was back home packing up all of her things and leaving with their infant child. He was so self-absorbed that he didn't even realize there was that severe a problem in his marriage.

Gary had grown up in church. But all he had understood was that there was a God who you always tried to please. He had given up on that pursuit and kicked that god out of his life.

But now his life had crashed. Gary says, *“with every achievement, I continued to feel emptier inside. I sacrificed everything, including my family, on the altar of career and built my identity on my success. And it worked—until it didn’t anymore. It was then that the questions of God and faith and life and meaning all resurfaced, but this time I was the one asking them.*

God rewards those that seek Him.

Soon after his life had fallen apart, he was at a leadership conference and there happened to be a number of Christians there that he surprisingly became friends with. He was impressed with their demeanor. They had a sense of peace and joy about them that he desperately wanted in his own life. Gary began asking them questions about God and they shared with him their own stories and how God had changed everything. That begs a question doesn’t it? How can NOTHING change ANYTHING? The power of our testimonies is a powerful proof of Yahweh God. Gary writes, *“it profoundly affected me to the point that I could no longer ignore the truth and began seeking God with all my heart.”*

So Gary stepped over the threshold of Belief. And everything changed. He shares that the ripple effect of his new belief was *what God used to save my marriage, rescue me from an identity centered on career, later carry my wife and me through a years-long battle with infertility, medical treatments, and adoption. It later led me to pursue a calling into lay ministry working in apologetics, evangelism and discipleship in my local church.*

This first threshold of belief unlocks all of the other thresholds.

Do you believe? Not in some impersonal, distant, all-powerful supreme being; but in a very personal and involved loving Father who created you and knows you better than you know yourself? This God can change your life. Step across the threshold.