

It's time for a **FAITH CRISIS**

Heb 13:7-9 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation. **8** Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. **9** Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Many years ago, I came across the YouTube channel of a previously Baptist self-styled theologian. He's pretty popular online, and so I would stumble across his videos every so often. Each time I did, I would find that there was something he had reversed himself on.

He would be fighting heavily against dispensationalism, and the next thing you know he was fighting heavily for it. He'd suddenly decide that all churches were apostate and that people shouldn't attend. And finally he decided that the Trinity was Catholic and heretical, at which point I stopped caring to even watch what he had to say.

Why are some people willing to switch their denomination so easily? They'll send their kids to any church or just decide where to go based on what's nearby.

Why are other people set in their denomination tooth and nail - but they don't seem to have good biblical arguments when confronted?

The answer is that these two types of people have one difference and one big similarity.

The difference between the denominational jumper and the lifelong church member is that **the first one doesn't know or doesn't**

care much in the way of doctrine. They don't know what they are supposed to believe. **The second one knows exactly** what they are supposed to believe. They know the doctrines of their church.

But **the similarity** is where we can see the problem. **Neither** the denominational jumper nor the lifelong church member **has ever investigated** fully the truthfulness of the doctrine. The first jumps from doctrine to doctrine. The second sticks to one, not because they have proved that it is true, but because their church tells them it is true, and it's comfortable to just trust them.

At this point, this may seem like a message on evangelistic methods - how can we reach these two groups of people? But I have a more sobering and introspective question: **Have you investigated the truth of the doctrine you hold as your own**, or do you just believe it because it's the right thing to believe in an Independent Baptist Church?

Here's what I'm asking you: Can you defend your beliefs biblically? Not defend them so that you can change someone else's mind, not defend them to prove your theological case, but defend them for yourself. To prove to yourself that you really KNOW the truth and you KNOW it's true.

Across this country and world, there are people who hear a sermon every Sunday. Many of these churches will bring out a Bible and quote many verses. Theology will be presented. People will fight that they have the truth. They'll defend their truth.

Methodists will defend their Wesleyan truth.
Presbyterians will defend their Calvinist truth.
Plymouth Brethren will defend their Darby truth.
Church of Christ will defend their Campbellite truth.
Lutherans defend their Lutheran truth.
And you will defend your Baptist truth.

But the TRUTH about the TRUTH is that there is **only one TRUTH**. And I don't think any one of us here today would come up with a different answer if we were asked where the truth is to be found. We all know the answer - it's in the Bible.

The problem lies in that **most people are content** with **letting someone else teach them** the Bible and to accept the conclusions drawn from the selection of passages presented by the elder or pastor or minister.

The title of this lesson is "It's time for a faith crisis." **You may be scared of a faith crisis.**

It's so comfortable to relax in the beliefs that you've settled on.

But as we'll see from the Bible, there's no excuse to settle on beliefs that you haven't proven for yourself from God's word.

10 steps to having a biblical faith crisis

#1 - Follow the flawed leadership

Let's look at our passage again:

Heb 13:7-9 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation. **8** Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. **9** Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

As you have this faith crisis and investigate what really is true in each area of doctrine, you **SHOULD NOT discard** what you already believe.

Follow the faith and teachings of the **leadership** in the church unless and until you have proven biblically that they are teaching false doctrine.

Maybe you were raised in what you now believe, and so you don't hold your beliefs by conviction, but just what you've been taught. That's fine for now. **Keep believing it.** Hold fast your profession of faith. (Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

The guidelines I want to give you are so that you can have a **CONTROLLED** faith crisis. **If you keep the same vehicle** for a few decades, you can either replace and repair the tires as needed, or you can just drive along until there's a blowout. **If you don't have a controlled faith crisis**, one day your faith will just **blow out under pressure**, and it's going to be harder to pick up the pieces than if you get things straight now.

Heb 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

No leadership will be perfect. It could be that you may find yourself even under unbiblical leadership at some point. But until you discover that from the Bible, you need to follow the clear Biblical command to **obey** and **submit**.

#2 - Investigate the truth of what is taught

2Co 2:17 For we are not as **many**, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

I don't believe that people in this church are corrupting the word of God in their teaching. But neither do people in other false churches believe that about their leadership. In the end, we should always let the Bible have the final say. **This means we have to investigate** the truth, not just believe that the verses we were shown on a topic give the whole and right picture.

How can you set yourself up so that you can do a proper investigation?

- Take notes (and not just the sermon outline - take notes with the goal of investigation. Write down everything you need to look critically at the sermon when you pull out your Bible later)

Most preaching nowadays in church contexts doesn't provide a forum for questions, and follows an outline. So you probably **won't be able to do much investigation during the service**. But you can do so afterwards or later in the week!

1Co 14:34-35 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. (35) And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands **at home**: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Some sermons are **devotional** in nature, and some will be on topics you have **investigated before**, and others may be **expository** sermons of a single passage that are facilitating the investigation during the service and may not need much more beyond.

Ask yourself with each sermon you hear: Do I know this is true from the Bible? Have I investigated myself? Or am I just trusting the preacher's explanation and verse selection?

#3 - Don't follow the pace of the church services

I'm not talking here about the pace DURING the church service, I am speaking of the pace of your investigations in your life as a whole.

Don't limit yourself to investigating the truth of an issue to one **Sunday School** lesson, two **Sunday Church** services, and a **Wednesday** service each week. Some very important topics **may not come up for years** - and you still need to know the truth from the Bible on those issues.

is Baptism necessary for salvation?

What is holy Spirit baptism? Is it a secondary event after salvation that we should seek?

Is there an imminent rapture that could take place at any time?

What is the place of anointing with oil and foot washing in the ministry of the church?

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Have you investigated these issues for yourself? Are you only familiar with the verses that back up your position, or have you looked at the verses that are more difficult too?

is Baptism necessary for salvation?

Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

What is holy spirit baptism?

Act 11:15-16 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. **16** Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

What is the place of anointing with oil & foot washing?

Joh 13:14-15 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. **15** For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

Jas 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

Church services and preaching are an **important** part of spiritual growth - but they are not meant to be the only source of your investigation of the truth. Even Bible college classes, directed by a **BIASED** teacher **cannot replace personal research**.

Some of the topics above, simply examples, **may not be covered** in a church service you attend for many **years!** Yet you should desire to know the truth before that.

2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

#4 - Only trust the scriptures - Only trust the **WHOLE** scripture!

you have heard, no doubt, sermons on hell. But faithful church members who believe and trust what they have been shown in the Bible within Jehovah's Witness kingdom halls and Seventh-day Adventist Churches will say you are teaching a false doctrine!

The truth is in the Bible. When two groups disagree, someone has been only looking from one side!

You should not be content to trust your position even if you have heard a hundred Bible-filled sermons. Maybe the preacher only used verses that proved his point! The JW and SDA material is filled with biblical references!

EXAMPLE:
Studying out the topic of eternal hell

Look up every biblical mention of the word hell and determine whether it can be talking about something that ends or something that continues.

Does it show a place of conscious torment?

Look up other words:

Lake of fire
Fire
Torment
Burning
Flame

Look up the words that the English Bible sometimes translates as hell, and sometimes uses other words: (gehenna, hades, etc)

Read every verse in context! Check the book context, the thought context, chapter and verse context.

Play devil's advocate! Write down verses that seem **solid** in support of one position or another! (e.g. Rev 4:11a) and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever:

Look up other contested parts (what is *forever and ever*? - look up all the references)

I don't mean that you should **distrust** doctrine taught by your pastor, or guest preachers, or that you hear on the radio, I mean that you should prove it. Don't accept it blindly. What should you hold fast to? **1Th 5:21** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

#5 - Make a habit of Bible study

I don't dislike Bible reading. I have a Bible reading schedule I follow, and I do Bible reading. But **Bible reading is not Bible Study**. You can make your Bible reading into a Bible study, or you can have separate Bible reading from Bible study.



Bible Study Tips

Keep a list of topics you need to study - that you are aware you haven't proven to yourself from the Bible.

Have a blank page in your Bible or in some way make sure you have it always available in church services to write down things you find out that you need to study.

Let your future ministry motivate you. You will be called on to teach these things one day. People will ask you questions. Don't wait until then. Study out the answer. You may find that the productive study will in turn motivate you to prepare a lesson or sermon.

#6 - Listen to and learn from godly teachers

Here's the balance to #4. You **shouldn't just follow man's opinion** (even God's word that is sorted by man's opinion), but you **should listen**. Prove what is said, and you may find out things that you wouldn't have found out on your own.

A Don't go to the commentary before you go to the Bible. **B** Don't let 'big names' put a thumb on the scale when you try to weigh truth from the Bible. **C** Don't be so proud as to think your own sermons or findings in the Bible are Gold, and never care to read or think well of anyone else's sermons or findings. **D** Consider that if you seem to have found something that nobody else has, there's probably a reason. (And you aren't the only spirit-led person)

Here's a quote from Charles Spurgeon on the subject that I believe speaks for itself:

"Of course, you are not such wiseacres as to think or say that you can expound Scripture without assistance from the works of divines and learned men who have laboured before you in the field of exposition. If you are of that opinion, pray remain so, for you are not worth the trouble of conversion, and like a little coterie who think with you, would resent the attempt as an insult to your infallibility. **It seems odd, that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what he has revealed to others.**

My chat this afternoon is not for these great originals, but for you who are content to learn of holy men, taught of God, and mighty in the Scriptures. It has been the fashion of late years to speak against the use of commentaries. If there were any fear that the expositions of Matthew Henry, Gill, Scott, and others, would be exalted into Christian Targums, we would join the chorus of objectors, but the existence or approach of such a danger we do not suspect.

The temptations of our times lie rather in empty pretensions to novelty of sentiment, than in a slavish following of accepted guides. A respectable acquaintance with the opinions of the giants of the past, might have saved many an erratic thinker from wild interpretations and outrageous inferences. Usually, we have found the despisers of commentaries to be men who have no sort of acquaintance with them; in their case, it is the opposite of familiarity which has bred contempt" - (Spurgeon, Two Lectures Addressed to the Students of the Pastor's College, Metropolitan Tabernacle).

Remember the passage we started with:

Heb 13:7-9 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: **whose faith follow,** considering the end of *their* conversation. **8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.** **9** Be not carried about with divers and **strange doctrines.** For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

- We should listen to others and follow their faith - Jesus hasn't changed, so people for thousands of years have discovered and written truths about him that we can glean from. - Strange and unique doctrines are thus unlikely to be the 'revealed truth' which somehow everyone missed.

#7 - Don't Change Easily but be Willing to Change

Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, **tossed** to and fro, and **carried** about with every **wind** of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Warning against being easily swayed

If you have come to a conclusion from a leader whose faith you are to follow, a trustworthy person, you shouldn't let an attacking sermon online from someone else, or a pamphlet, or a critical argument from a church member sway you to change!

You must investigate the claims from the pulpit, but also the claims from everywhere else.

CRISIS: a time when a difficult or important decision must be made.

Act 17:10-12 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto **Berea:** who coming thither went into the **synagogue** of the **Jews.** **11** These were more **noble** than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all **readiness of mind,** and **searched the scriptures** daily, whether those things were so. **12** Therefore many of them **believed;** also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

The Bereans were **willing to change.** These are **JEW**s in the **SYNAGOGUE!** But if someone could show them something was so from the scripture **they would believe.** (they changed/converted from Judaism to Christianity.)

If you are trying to win souls and be a testimony, what kind of person do you hope to come across?

You probably want a Berean-type person who will not simply stick with what they have been taught, but will allow a person to tell them the word, hear with **readiness of mind,** and then **search the scriptures,** and if they find it to be **so,** they **believe.**

A Berean mindset is to **A** hear opposing arguments **B** Be willing to change to follow the Bible even if that means changing your church! **C** Base the changing of your mind on what you have found by searching the scriptures, and not simply accepting another person's research.

If we want the people we are witnessing to to be Bereans, shouldn't we **hold ourselves to the same standard?** If you aren't willing to be converted to a new belief based on the Bible, **why should you expect anyone else** to be?

2Pe 3:16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Some of the Bible is **hard to understand.** Don't expect the Berean task to be an easy one. Realize you may need help as you go through your structured and biblical faith crisis. Support one another.

You need to be right with God to expect to find the truth.

1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

#8 - Don't TEACH when you need to be learning

corollary principle: Don't languish in the 'need to be learning' stage forever. That indicates you aren't studying.

Jas 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

If you teach, you will be accountable for what other people do based on what they heard from you.

Don't be quick to get behind the pulpit. Never preach something you haven't proven yourself - no matter how well you know it based on what you have heard from others. This is how false doctrine is perpetuated.

Don't be quick to teach because you have a Youtube channel or a blog audience or facebook readers. Don't let availability of teaching opportunities determine if you are ready.

Heb 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Some people who should be **teaching** based simply on **how long** they have been saved still need to be **learning** because they **don't study** the Bible out themselves. Don't let this be you!

If you have a **fear of teaching** or you never feel like you know **what you would preach on,** be honest with yourself! Is it because most of what you know is just what you have **been taught,** and you **haven't dug deep** enough into anything yourself to be **confident** in teaching it?

Pro 12:1 Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish. (stupid!)

Be willing to take correction, whether as a learner, or even if you have been a teacher. Don't keep teaching something that is wrong just because you taught it in the past.

#9 - Conclude your faith crisis

There is a movement in Christianity today that starts with some good premises but draws the wrong conclusions. It's called the EMERGENT church.

EMERGENT philosophy also says that we should be willing to challenge our beliefs - don't accept what is called 'orthodox' or 'accepted' by your group without investigation

Two major problems with the way the EMERGENT movement continues the line of thought:

They believe that the Bible doesn't have a conclusive answer to most everything

Resutantly, they believe that we should never stop questioning or draw any conclusions in doctrine that we confidently hold to.

2Ti 3:1-2 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. **2** For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

(skip ahead to verse 7)

2Ti 3:7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

As you study the Bible for yourself, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, you will come to know the truth not just because someone told you, but because God showed it to you through his word.

Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

The Bible was given by an all-wise God for our learning. He knows better than any of us the proper amount of clarity to give to the scriptures - we can KNOW the truth.

Joh 8:31-32 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; **32** And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

As you study the Bible, your faith will increase. This will be the beginning of the end of your faith crisis.

Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

back to our main passage:

Heb 13:7-9 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation. **8** Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. **9** Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. **For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace;** not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

You shouldn't question for the sake of questioning. You shouldn't have a faith crisis to **lose your faith** but to **increase your faith**.

There should come a point where you are established. We looked at Ephesians 4:14 above. Here is the context:

Eph 4:11-15 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **12** For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **13** Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the **knowledge** of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man,** unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: **14** That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; **15** But speaking the truth in love, **may grow up** into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

THE FAITH CRISIS IS PART OF SPIRITUAL 'GROWING UP!'

'Perfect' means complete or entire. That's what we strive for. We strive to know the truth, and we get there by spirit-led study, and direction from spirit-led leadership of our church.

#10 - Never Quit Investigating

> Become ESTABLISHED

> Draw firm, Biblical conclusions

> Be confident

> Teach others with Biblical authority

> Be teachable

> Keep studying

> Help others through their faith crisis

Make Bible doctrine your own. Follow the truth because you've found it. Never stop looking.