

DO YOU BELIEVE?

BY ROBERT NOLAND

Experience the full power of the cross

40-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Do You Believe?

Experience the Full Power of the Cross

Based on the motion picture *Do You Believe?* by Pure Flix Entertainment. All content from the movie used by permission.

ISBN: 978-1-4245-4986-3 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-4245-5040-1 (e-book)

Published by BroadStreet Publishing Group, LLC

Racine, Wisconsin, USA

www.broadstreetpublishing.com

Copyright © 2015 Robert Noland

Published in association with the literary agency, WTA Services LLC, Franklin, TN

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. / Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. / Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. / Contemporary English Version® Copyright © 1995 American Bible Society. All rights reserved. / The Living Bible copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. The Living Bible, TLB, and the The Living Bible logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers. / Good News Translation® (Today's English Version, Second Edition). Copyright © 1992 American Bible Society. All rights reserved. / Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved. / © Christian Literature International / Scripture taken from the New Century Version®. Copyright © 2005 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Chris Garborg at www.garborgdesign.com

Interior typesetting by Katherine Lloyd at www.TheDESKonline.com

Stock or custom editions of BroadStreet Publishing titles may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, ministry, fundraising, or sales promotional use. For information, please e-mail info@broadstreetpublishing.com.

Printed in the United States of America.

15 16 17 18 19 20 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	5
Day 1 Symbol of Salvation.....	7
Day 2 From Baggage to Belief.....	11
Day 3 Imprint or Fingerprint.....	15
Day 4 Matter of Life and Death	19
Day 5 Reception to Revelation.....	23
Day 6 Blood-Red Ransom.....	27
Day 7 Band-Aids on Bullet Wounds.....	31
Day 8 Hanging in the Balance	35
Day 9 Hear Here	39
Day 10 The Hole Truth.....	43
Day 11 Voice Lessons.....	47
Day 12 Crossroads.....	51
Day 13 Make a Right Turn	55
Day 14 If There Were No “Ifs”	59
Day 15 Traitors to Translators.....	63
Day 16 Life Saving 101.....	67
Day 17 Providential Plot Twists.....	71
Day 18 Getting Guilt Gone for Good	75
Day 19 About Time for About-Face.....	79

Day 20	Heavenly Help for Hypocrites	83
Day 21	No Fractions in Faith	87
Day 22	The Divine Dividing Line	91
Day 23	From Fugitives to Friends	95
Day 24	Safe versus Chafe	99
Day 25	Leaving Lasting Impressions.....	103
Day 26	Focusing on the “Fors”	107
Day 27	Unlimited Inception.....	111
Day 28	No Silence for Saints	115
Day 29	Proof Positive	119
Day 30	Leaving Enemy Territory.....	123
Day 31	Are You Missing Something?.....	127
Day 32	Removing Roadblocks	131
Day 33	The Very Visible Verse.....	135
Day 34	Concentric Community	139
Day 35	Lord of “the Rings”	143
Day 36	The Fabric of Family and Faith.....	147
Day 37	The Faith Factor	151
Day 38	Embrace Your Place	155
Day 39	One Thing I Know	159
Day 40	At the Foot of the Cross.....	163
	Believe and Tell Your Story	167

Mark 1:35 tells us Jesus got up early in the morning and went away alone to pray. One of the most life-changing spiritual disciplines in which you can invest is a daily and dedicated time alone with God. No distractions. No devices or noise and no one else around. Here are a few steps for success in utilizing this book.

1: *Decide to commit.* Purpose to use this book for the next forty days—one day at a time. Set aside the time to make a habit of engaging with the words contained here. If you miss a day, just pick back up. Don't quit—commit.

2: *Pick a time.* While spending time with God first thing in the morning is best to set the pace for your day, choose a time that is optimum for your schedule. You may need to experiment a bit, but pick a time and stick with it.

3: *Choose a place.* You need a quiet and peaceful setting. Get away from distractions. Turn off the phone. The place is crucial for you to be focused and comfortable as you engage with God.

4: *Read.* Take in the content—every word. Carefully read the Bible verses. If you prefer to use your own version of Scripture each day, feel free to do so.

5: *Journal.* There is journal space included with every day. Answer the closing questions, then write out anything you hear from God or feel you need to express. Journaling is a

powerful tool God can use to help you process your spiritual walk.

6: *Pray.* Allow time to speak with God and tell him everything as you would a best friend. If you have never spent time in personal prayer, the next forty days could revolutionize your spiritual growth.

7: *Listen and obey.* Close your time with a quiet moment to hear God speak. Then obey what you hear and “walk out” what he tells you each day. The goal is to complete these forty days and allow Jesus to change your life!

Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace. —Matthew 6:6 MSG

SYMBOL OF SALVATION

Matthew is a pastor, sitting at his desk at night. The house is very quiet. He is intent in his thoughts and appears burdened. The small desk lamp illuminates a legal pad. As we move closer, we see he has filled the page by drawing a simple outline of a cross. Underneath it, he has written a bold message: Do You Believe?

Humans have always used symbols to represent important elements of their existence. Few have stood the test of time and lasted throughout generations, becoming unmistakable, non-verbal icons to create a recognizable image of deep meaning.

One of the most enduring symbols of all time is the cross. But different people understand different meanings based on their life experience, so let's ask ...

When you hear the word *cross*, do you tend to think about ...

- ... a fashionable piece of jewelry?
- ... a classic element of church architecture?
- ... a representation of a religion long since left behind?
- ... the physical instrument God used for the spiritual redemption of your soul?

For you, is the cross's meaning ...

- ... historical?

... religious?

... personal?

While your answer to the latter question could certainly be “all three,” there is a likelihood one rings the *most* true for you.

As we begin this forty-day journey centered on the cross of Christ, evaluating how you feel, what you think, and how deep your belief goes is important to how impactful these days will be for you. One of the vital keys for experiencing life change will be the level of honesty and transparency you allow with God. He already sees you and knows you intimately, but opening your heart to him will make all the difference.

A distinguishing focal point of the cross is that it is not associated with any belief system other than Christianity and with no person other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Throughout church history, and in art of all forms, the cross is presented in two ways.

First is with Jesus hanging on its beams, representing his suffering, sacrifice, and eventual death. Second, and where we find many of our artistic images, is the empty cross. While this could seem to denote an absence of Christ, it is actually showing the opposite—a presence. Christ has risen! He is alive and seated at the right hand of God. The cross and the tomb are now empty so that our hearts can be full and our lives fulfilled.

Few will debate or argue the historical fact that Jesus hung on the cross and gave his life. The only disagreement for people is whether or not his death meant anything for mankind.

The simple, rough-hewn wooden beams strapped and nailed together convey a powerful and prevailing image of God’s intervention in the world. While the cross may instigate

different responses, the image has remained a respected, valued, and consistent reminder of man's problem met with God's presence. But the real question is not what does the cross mean throughout history for the world, but rather, what does the cross mean to *you*?

Regardless of your own personal perspective, this cruel device of torture and execution the authorities used to eliminate Jesus actually was the instrument God wielded to surgically remove the sting of sin and death forever from those who would choose to believe him.

Today, let us not think of the cross as a symbol, an image, or an icon, but rather, a personal choice each one of us must make. So our closing question today comes from the film's title and Pastor Matthew's drawing ... Do you believe?

Whether you feel you are hanging on to life by a thread and desperately searching for answers or you are a vibrant, mature follower of Christ simply looking to grow, we must continually ask ourselves what we believe and what the cross means to us—today. This day!

And when he was living as a man, he humbled himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused his death—death on a cross. —Philippians 2:8 NCV



With as honest of an answer as you can give, complete the sentence below on your journal page, while expressing any other thoughts you have on today's reading.

For me, the cross of Christ means ...



IF THERE WERE NO IFS

Jesus was walking amidst a crowd when a man called out that his son was possessed by a spirit that made him mute and caused severe seizures. When they brought the boy to him, the demonic spirit responded to being in the presence of Jesus by throwing the boy to the ground and convulsing.

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can"? said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"
—Mark 9:21–24 NIV

Jesus rebuked the spirit and it left the boy, thereby restoring him to complete health and freedom. There are two quite fascinating points to Jesus' dialogue with the dad.

First, the boy's situation didn't faze Christ at all. His focus was completely on the man's comment about belief, or maybe more accurately, lack of it.

Second, Jesus doesn't show offense about the comment, but rather places the focus back on the person who believes.

The point we want to zero in on today, however, is verse 24, where the father says, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" What a great phrase for all Christ-followers to hang on to. While this might appear at first read to be a negative statement, there is much truth and a great prayer in the spirit of these words. First, we focus on his first three words: *I do believe!* But then he readily admits he needs growth and maturity to believe at a deeper level. This will always be true of us at any point of spiritual maturity until we get to heaven.

It is unlike any other kind of growth we can experience in this life. Let's look closer at this concept ...

Spiritual growth is like a plant. You can take a look at any plant of any type and make a judgment call on whether it is thriving or dying. The appearance of the leaves, branches, or blooms gives us clues. Is it reaching upward, showing health and growth, or wilting downward in distress? But is a plant ever just in a state of neutrality, not growing or dying? No, it is always heading in one direction or the other. The same is true for our spiritual growth.

The people around us know if we are growing or wilting in our maturity. Going forward or falling backward. Our level of belief versus unbelief is usually more visible than we even realize. A great question we should ask regularly is: Am I growing spiritually?

Spiritual growth is not measured by seniority, but by maturity. Likely right now, you can think of someone who claims to have been a Christian for many years, yet you wouldn't count

on that person for spiritual wisdom or help. You see years of religious activity, but few moments of spiritual maturity.

On the other hand, you likely know someone who has been a Christian for a relatively short time, and this person's fervor draws you to his or her faith. Their maturity is showing and growing at a rapid pace. You can literally see it. The time this person is putting into prayer, Bible study, discipleship, and fellowship is creating growth.

But the great news is a wilting person can become a growing person at any time. Surrender to Christ is the key—saying, “I do believe. Help me overcome my unbelief.” Between our salvation and entrance to heaven, our goal is to increase belief and decrease unbelief.

In his message about the cross, Pastor Matthew states, “What does it mean to believe? I remember hearing once that true belief is an action. So if we believe that Christ died for us, it should bring us not just to our knees, but to our feet.”



In your journal, write down at least one step you can take to bring your faith to action, to help unbelief in your life become belief.