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This series is about questions people in our church have asked.

## This week's question, 'How do I fight against doubt?'

We all doubt at some time or another. Doubt is a normal part of the faith journey. It does not mean you are a "bad" Christian if you doubt.

God *designed* us to seek truth, that we might grow in our knowledge and understanding of Him. Seeking truth often forces us to ask hard questions, and in the midst of this you may experience doubt.

Doubt *in itself* isn't bad, but *what you do with your doubt matters*.

Genesis 3:1 (NIV) Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

- Doubt entered the world in the garden.
- Don't entertain lies from Satan. Don't give him a foothold to create doubt in your mind & heart.
- Know what God actually says.

Matthew 11:1-3 (NIV) When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. 2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

- 'Is Jesus really the one? Have I missed it? Have I led people astray?'
- John went to the source of truth for his doubts: JESUS

The time in the middle between our doubt and finding God's answer, provides the soil where our faith can grow.

## 1. Doubt is an opportunity for greater faith.

James 1:2-4 (NLT) Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

- When our faith is tested through doubt, we have an opportunity to grow in maturity and endurance.

Two types of doubt in the gospels:

John 20:24-29 (NIV) Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

- Doubting - *ápiustos*, not faithful because unpersuaded or not convinced of truth.

Matthew 14:25-31 (NIV) Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. 27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

- Doubt - *distazo*, going two ways, shifting between positions, choosing "a double-stance."

- Both Thomas and Peter were disciples and yet still wrestled with doubt.

What type of doubt are you struggling with? What you do with your doubt matters! Will you go to Jesus with it, to His people?

## 2. Accept that some things won't have answers.

*Scripture is what God has chosen to reveal to us. Though scripture reveals much, it also leaves mystery.*

Deuteronomy 29:29 (ESV) "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

- God chooses not to reveal some things because those things would serve *no* purpose in helping us faithfully obey and follow Him.

## 3. Keep the main things the main things.

Don't get caught up in the 'non-essentials'... things of the faith that offer liberty, i.e. room for different interpretations. This can be an area for doubt and confusion to grow. Focus on living out the essentials.

"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." Rupertus Meldenius.

The essentials: loving God and loving others, don't get lost on the one thing you don't know, rather focus on the things you do know and are called to live out.

## 4. Stay on mission.

Matthew 28:17-20 (NIV) When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- In the face of doubt, stay in the battle and be a disciple maker.
- When we stay focused on who God is and His mission for us, our doubts often subside.
- When doubt persists, seek the prayer and counsel of a trusted, Godly friend.
- In walking with others who are doubting, Jude 22 says "Have mercy on those who doubt."

Doubts are a natural part of the process of our faith journey. If you start to doubt, don't feed it, allow doubt to be a vehicle that drives you to *JESUS*.

### For Small Group Discussion:

1. What is a doubt you have wrestled through in the past?
2. What is your initial reaction when experiencing doubt? What do you naturally do?
3. When have you had to step out in faith when you weren't sure it would work out?
4. What is an area where you are currently working through doubts, or want more clarity in scripture or your faith journey?  
(Remember, no fixing!)

**Supporting Scripture:** Jude 22, Deuteronomy 29:29, James 1:5, Isaiah 55:8-9, John 20:29

**Tips and Resources:** *Before You Lose Your Faith: Deconstructing Doubt in the Church* by Ivan Mesa

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