

Today we are going to be talking about doubt. We all have doubts. And that holds true even when it comes to our relationship with God. There is no such thing as a perfect faith. There is no such thing as absolute trust. So, let's define what doubt is.

According to Merriam-Webster doubt "**is a hesitation to believe, or to question.** It is a "**feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction.**"

That's what it means. But here's what it doesn't mean: **Doubt is not unbelief.** Doubt is not a complete lack of faith. Doubt is struggling to believe. When it comes to believing the truth is everybody has had doubts, is now doubting, or will doubt in the future. Here' a great prayer: "Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief!"

We tend to view doubt as a negative thing. But the Bible doesn't. In fact, the Bible does quite the opposite. It highlights the doubters. The Bible is full of stories of doubting people. Often the "heroes" of the Bible didn't earn their title because they believed without doubt. Rather they earned their title because they had faith WITH doubt.

If your faith never encounters doubt, how will you ever discover what you believe? If truth never struggles with error, how can the truth be found? If good never battles with evil, how can faith know its own power? A strong faith is a faith that has stared doubt in the eye and made it blink.

Here's a truth: **Those who doubt most, and yet strive to overcome their doubts, turn out to be some of Christ's strongest followers.**

Here's another truth: **Feed your faith, and your doubts will starve to death.**

Every single one of Jesus followers doubted. All of them. John the Baptist doubted whether Jesus was really the one. The disciples doubted Jesus when he said he would rise from the dead and when He was crucified, they all promptly abandoned Him.

But here's the one that I find the most shocking. Jesus has risen from the dead. He has walked the earth for forty days. He has shown Himself to His disciples and many others. He is now about to ascend to His Father.

We read this Matthew 28:16, "**Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.**"

Jesus has risen from the grave. He's walked the earth with His disciples for 40 days. He's about to go to heaven. They go to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him they worshiped Him, but some doubted. Why does Matthew give us those words? He is showing us that doubt is normal. Doubt is part of faith. Doubt is part of believing.

Here's the good news: Jesus doesn't give up on you if you doubt. He doesn't write you off as a lost cause. You can doubt and be a follower of Jesus at the same time. You do not have to have it all figured out. You don't have to have all your doubt worked out. The people who literally walked with Jesus, ate with Jesus, and lived with Jesus didn't have all their doubts worked out and Jesus still let them follow Him. And not only follow Him, but he used them.

Doubting does not mean that God cannot use you. It doesn't mean that you cannot serve Him or share Him with others. No, even in your doubt, God has a use for you. Nor does doubt mean that you can't worship Him.

Here's what Jesus said to those doubting disciples on the mount of ascension. These are His parting words "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**"

One day the disciples were in a boat when a storm came up. They were struggling to make headway against the wind and the waves. But they were losing the battle. But just then Jesus comes to them walking on the water.

"But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid. And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."

Peter realizes if Jesus invites him too, he too can probably walk on water. So, he calls out to Jesus. Jesus says come on out.

So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink he cried out, Lord, save me. That's a great prayer isn't it? Peter doesn't know what else to say so he cries out, "**Lord, save me.**" Have you ever prayed that prayer? You've been in some storm. You've felt yourself sinking. You are overwhelmed. It's in those moments that doubt can creep in. Doubt settles in. It whispers in your ear. Maybe Jesus is not real. Maybe it's not true. Maybe the Bible isn't reliable. Maybe God's not good. Maybe he doesn't care about me... And you start to sink. Just like Peter did.

If you have serious doubts you're wrestling with in your life, listen to these words from Tom Skinner: "**I spent a long time trying to come to grips with my doubts, and suddenly I realized that I had better come to grips with what I believe. I have since moved from the agony of questions that I cannot answer to the reality of answers that I cannot escape. And it is a great relief.**"

Peter teach us an important lesson on how to respond in the midst of the storms. Peter when he saw the waves, experienced doubt he cried out Lord Save Me. What happens?

"Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased."

Don't miss this. He immediately catches him. WHILE he was doubting Jesus caught him. He doesn't scold him. He catches him. And then asks why do you doubt? The answer is obvious isn't it? He started to doubt

when he took his eyes off Jesus. He started to doubt when he began to look to himself. To trust in himself rather than in Jesus.

I think the common perception is that Jesus is mad. He's upset. He's disappointed in our doubt. But Jesus doesn't point a finger when we come to Him. He extends His hand. Peter when he cried out Lord Save Me, Jesus immediately saves him. But notice that Jesus doesn't explain the storm. He doesn't offer answers for why it happened. A lot of times in our doubt we want the answers. But God doesn't often give us the answers. He reaches out, He runs towards us. But He doesn't give the answers we want.

In your doubt... Jesus' response is the same. He will grab you from the waters, save you from sinking. But that doesn't mean you will have the answers you want. At least not on this side of heaven.

He doesn't want to point His finger at your doubt, He wants to extend His hand to help you. When you face doubt... Don't turn away from Jesus. Turn toward Him.

When you step away from Jesus you will automatically step towards something else. Even though things are tough... Even though we have these questions. Even though there's a lot of unknown... Where else would we go? Who else would you go too?

This is THE question for us to ask. If you are going to step away from Jesus. You need to ask yourself this question. If not Jesus, than who? Then what?

No other religion makes the promise that Jesus makes. There is no other place where the words of eternal life can be found. So if not Jesus than what? Maybe you think you'll just live your life. Do your own thing. Be a good person. But where does that get you?

If your doubt is about to take you out you need to ask yourself this question. Here's how Peter answers that question in John 6:69, "**You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.**" There's no other place to go? The disciples in that moment had no idea what they almost missed out on. They had no idea what God's plan for them was. They had no idea what they almost walked away from. They have no idea what hangs in the balance of their decision.

Over and over again Jesus never kicked them out. And they didn't let their doubt take them out. If you doubt Jesus will not kick you out. But you need to answer the same question that Peter asked himself... If not Jesus than who? Because Jesus is the only place you will find the words of eternal life. So, if not Jesus than who?

You will never know what God would have done for you if you allow doubt to take you out. You'll never know what God would have done in and through you if you allow doubt to take you out. You don't have any idea what God is up too. If not Jesus, then who?

So maybe you are thinking, but what do I do with my doubts.

Number one: Don't withdraw from God. Whatever you are going through. Whatever doubt you have. Bring it God. He can take it. You don't need to censor yourself or say the right words. Say what you are feeling what you are thinking. He wants your heart. So, go to Him. With your doubts and all. Don't withdraw from God.

Number two: Don't withdraw from your fellow believers. You need others in the midst of your doubt. Don't withdraw from other Christians. Stay close. Let them encourage you and help you.

Now here are two things you can do to help others who are doubting.

Number one: Stay close to them. Your presence is often greater than your words. Often times it's not what you say it's that you showed up. When someone you care about is struggling the best thing you can do is to be with them and to pray for them. I know the fear... What if they ask me a question I don't know the answer to? Don't worry about that. Just be present and be consistent in prayer for them.

Sometimes it's okay to not fix a problem. Sometimes encouragement and a listening ear is all that's needed... Listen...People that are doubting are not broken. They are being honest with where they are at. They don't need you to fix them. And in fact, that will probably do more harm than good. Encourage them. Don't fix them.

All of us... Have doubted, will doubt, or know someone who doubts. The good news is that Jesus isn't going to kick us out because we doubt. But we've got to respond right to our doubt. But if we don't run

toward God, if we withdraw from others, doubt can take you out. So how will you respond? How will you help those that are doubting? Will you keep trusting God? Because listen... You have NO idea what hangs in the balance on your decision to follow Jesus, to keep trusting Him.