

## Doubt

That You May Believe: A Series on Apologetics, Part 3

*Psalm 73; Mark 9:14-29; Matthew 28:16-20*

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Hilltoppers for Christ | Worship Wednesday | 2.13.19

### Scripture Reading

- *Psalm 73*
- This is a psalm of a person who struggled with doubt. This psalmist struggles with why it seems that God does not judge evil people, if it's worth following the commands of God, but ultimately trusts God.

### Review of Apologetics

- “What is apologetics? Apologetics (from the Greek *apologia*: a defense) is that branch of Christian theology which seeks to provide rational justification for the truth claims of the Christian faith.”<sup>1</sup>
- Purpose and hopes of our series, “That You May Believe: A Series on Apologetics”
  - We hope this study will empower your faith.
  - We hope this study will equip you to answer tough questions.
  - We hope this study will embolden you to share your faith with others.
- In our last week of the series, I will respond to any questions you have. Submit your questions [HERE](#).<sup>2</sup>
  - Tomorrow (Thursday, 2.14.19) at 10am we have a text scheduled to go out that will include the link to submit your questions.

### Doubt

- Tonight we will discuss doubt. We all have doubts. We all experience doubt. Some of us have doubts right now.
  - Is there a God?
  - If there is a God, how can we understand Him?
  - Can we trust the Bible?
- Doubts are real.

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<sup>1</sup> William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* 3rd edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Google form link:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfOXaeEOjH61Co3BHa72vOcUber59kMMcFDDnwnj39S6KrHmA/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfOXaeEOjH61Co3BHa72vOcUber59kMMcFDDnwnj39S6KrHmA/viewform?usp=sf_link)

- There are hard questions. And hard questions require hard answers. Easy, quick answers will not suffice hard questions.
- Many of the most popular Christians struggled with doubt.
  - C.S. Lewis, Martin Luther, Mother Teresa, to name a few<sup>3</sup>
- When I was around 20 I began questioning a lot.
  - Many college-aged people question their faith.

### **Doubt a part of the human condition.**

- Doubt is a part of the human condition. From the beginning of the Bible to the end we see people struggling with doubt. Doubt is a trait of humanity. To be human is to doubt.
- Examples in scripture of people who doubt (even heroes of the faith)
  - Adam and Eve - *Genesis 3:1-6* (the first people to doubt).
    - The Fall of humanity was a result of doubt. The first sin ever committed was the result of doubting God's word.
  - John the Baptist
    - Jesus said of John the Baptist, "I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John" (*Luke 7:28*). John the Baptist was the greatest human, but he doubted.
    - *Matthew 11:2* - "Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'"
  - Peter
    - Peter was an amazing character in the New Testament and did amazing things. One night he and the other disciples saw Jesus walking on the water. So he walked, too. But he doubted and fell in.
    - *Matthew 14:31* - "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
- Doubt is a part of the human condition. We all doubt.
- Don't feel bad if you experience doubt. Don't feel guilty for having questions. You're in good company if you have doubts. It's normal to doubt.

### **Mark 9:14-29**

- The story of Jesus healing the boy in *Mark 9:14-29* illustrates how we ought to posture ourselves towards our doubts.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://relevantmagazine.com/god/7-prominent-christian-thinkers-who-wrestled-doubt>

- By this time in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is drawing massive crowds. A man bring his son to Jesus with the hopes that he'd be healed. Jesus' disciples were unable to heal the boy themselves, so they brought the boy to Jesus himself. Jesus tells the father that "all things are possible for one who believes" (9:23). The man's response to Jesus is this: "I believe; help my unbelief" (9:24). Then Jesus cast out the unclean spirit. The boy was healed.
- *Mark 9:24* - "I believe; help my unbelief."
- The father held both belief and unbelief. He came to Jesus because he believed in Jesus, but still had doubts.
- We have faith in Jesus. But we also have doubts. We believe, but we need help in our unbelief. We have both faith and doubts.

### How not to handle doubts

- Before we ways to address doubt, here are a few ways to not handle your doubt
- Don't...
  - Think you're the only person to ever experience doubt
  - Ignore your doubts
  - Leave Jesus because you have questions/concerns
- Asking questions and experiencing does not mean you're leaving the faith.

### 3 Ways to Address Your Doubts

#### Trust God with your doubt.

- We serve a trustworthy God.
- It's ok to say, "I don't know."
  - *Job 38:1-18*
  - Job questions God. But then God turns it around and starts questioning Job. God expresses to Job that He was in the beginning of creation, that He knows all things, that He is all-powerful.
  - It's ok for us to not know everything. God does not expect us to know everything.
- Illustration of someone falling from a cliff<sup>4</sup>
  - Imagine you were falling from a cliff. You are falling to your death, and the only possibility of you being saved it a tree branch sticking out from the cliff. What is better? (Option 1) You have a lot of faith in this branch. You think it'll hold you. So you act on your faith, but when you reach for the branch, it breaks and you keep falling. (Option 2) You have little faith in

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller, *King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (New York: Dutton, 2011).

the branch. You doubt that it will hold you up. But you act on the LITTLE faith you have, and it holds you up. It saves you from death. Obviously Option 2 is better. It is better to put a little faith in something strong and trustworthy than a lot of faith in something untrustworthy, weak, and will fail you.

- The object of our faith is more important than the amount of faith we have in it, as long as we act on that faith.
- You might have doubts. You might not have a strong faith in God. But a small amount of faith in God is infinitely better than a lot of faith in anything else.
- Remember mustard seed faith (*Matthew 17:20*).

### **Seek answers to your questions and doubt.**

- Ask God. Say to Him, “I believe; Help my unbelief.”
- Ask, seek, find - *Matthew 7:7-11*
  - <sup>7</sup>“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup>Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup>If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”
  - Jesus encourages us to ask God for help.
- Doubting Thomas - *John 20:24-29*
- “I believe; help my unbelief.” *Mark 9:24*
- So many of the Lament Psalms question God. *Psalms 13*
  - Be brutally honest with God. It’s better to question God than to ignore God.
  - I love that this is included in scripture. The fact that God allowed for His people expressing doubts to be included in scripture is encouraging.
- We do not have all the answers. But we do have some answers. In fact, we have a lot of answers.
  - Most of the questions you ask, have already been asked by many people. Most of your questions have been addressed by thoughtful Christians.
  - There are resources and books that address your questions.
  - There are people who would be happy to talk with you about their struggles with doubt.
- Examining doubts will strengthen your faith.
  - Two great quotes from Tim Keller in *The Reason for God*

- “A faith without some doubts is like a human body without any antibiotics in it. People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart skeptic. A person’s faith can collapse overnight if she has failed over the years to listen patiently to her own doubts, which should only be discarded after long reflection.”<sup>5</sup>
- “Believers should acknowledge and wrestle with doubt--not only their own but their friends’ and neighbors’. It is not longer sufficient to hold beliefs just because you inherited them. Only if you struggle long and hard with objections to your faith will you be able to provide grounds for your belief to skeptics, including yourself, that are plausible rather than ridiculous or offensive.”<sup>6</sup>
- In my opinion, the price of *The Reason for God* is worth it just for the introduction.
  - It will take work to examine doubts.

**Continue to worship, even in your doubt. (*Matthew 28:16-20*)**

- *Matthew 28:17* - “And when they saw Jesus they worshipped him, but some doubted.”
- The disciples literally saw Jesus’ literal resurrected body. But still doubted. But they worshipped.
- The passage does not say, “Those who did not doubt worshipped.”
- Worship and doubt are not incompatible.
- Continue to worship God even if you’re doubting.
- “This is How I Fight My Battles”<sup>7</sup> by
  - The lyrics are so simple, but so powerful. “This is how I fight my battles. It might look like I’m surrounded but I’m surrounded by you.”
- Worship when you doubt. Worship will help your doubt.
- Worship reminds you that God is great and love. God’s love and greatness and holiness is greater than any of your doubts.

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<sup>5</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), xvii.

<sup>6</sup> Keller, *The Reason for God*, xvii.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4CwKroZtCI>