

Don't Let Your Doubts Defeat You

All of us have doubts in all aspects of our lives.

There are many different kinds of doubt.

When we doubt the future we call it – **worry.**

When we doubt other people we call it – **suspicion.**

When we doubt ourselves we call it – **inferiority.**

When we doubt God we call it – **unbelief.**

When we doubt what we hear and see on television we call it – **intelligence.**

When we doubt everything we call it – **scepticism.**

Men go through a period of doubt that we call – **the mid-life crisis.**

Mid-life crisis is the period of the three “Bs” – **bifocals, baldness and bulges.**

James 1:6-7 [NIV] *“He who doubts is like a wave in the sea, blown and tossed by the sea ... unstable in all that he does.”*

Do Christians ever doubt? Should a Christian ever doubt?

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 [Good News Bible] *“We are often troubled, but not crushed; **sometimes in doubt**, but never in despair; there are many enemies, but we are never without a friend; and though we badly hurt at times, we are not destroyed.”*

Three things that can cause us to doubt God.

1. Critics

Those who challenge us and ridicule our beliefs, the Bible calls them “*scoffers*”. One church teenager whose Christianity was challenged by a teacher at school, who said “*The Bible doesn't make sense, it is hard to understand, nobody should try to read the Bible, because you can't understand it at all.*”

The Christian teenager replied “*Sir, the Bible is God's love letter to Christians, and that is what you get for reading someone else's mail.*”

King David had to deal with critics.

Psalm 73:8-11 [Living Bible] *“They scoff at God ... how proudly they speak! They boast against the very heavens, and their words strut through the earth. And so God's people are dismayed and confused and drink it all in. Does God realise what is going on? They ask.”*

We drink in what critics say and are influenced by their words and doubt creeps into our minds. As it states in the Psalm, most critics are egotistical, they say we are dumb to believe in God. But God sees the situation very differently.

Psalm 14:1 [NIV] *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.”*

Psalm 53:1 [Living Bible] *“Only a fool would say to himself there is no God. And why does he say it? Because of his wicked heart, his dark and evil deeds. His life is corroded with sin.”*

It doesn't matter how many degrees a person has after his name if he doesn't believe in God he is a fool.

All a person has to look at is the overall evidence of the created universe to realise there had to be a Creator – it could not have all come together by chance.

Romans 1:18-21 [Living Bible] *“But God shows His anger from heaven against all sinful, evil men who push away the truth from them. For the truth about God is known to them instinctively [is manifest in them – their own bodies and minds] ... since earliest times men have seen the earth and sky and all God made, and have known of His existence and great eternal power. So they will have no excuse when they stand before God at Judgement Day. Yes, they knew about Him all right, but they wouldn't admit it or worship Him or even thank Him for all His daily care ... the result was that their foolish minds became dark and confused.”*

Some critics say they will *“only accept what they can understand”*.

Well they will have to reject a lot in this life.

Electricity, air, gravity, magnetism, life-force, accepted but not fully understood by anyone.

If God could be completely understood then He wouldn't be God.

Psalm 42:10-11 [Living Bible] *“...again and again they scoff, ‘Where is that God of yours?’ But oh my soul, don't be discouraged, don't be upset. Expect God to act!”*

Critics cannot stand to be around joyful Christians, they want us to be miserable like they are.

2 Conscience

When we feel guilty we have a tendency to rationalise our beliefs in order to fit our lifestyle, then begin to doubt God.

1 Timothy 1:19 [Living Bible] *“...for some people have disobeyed their consciences and have deliberately done what they knew was wrong. It isn't surprising that soon they lost their faith in Christ, after defying God like that.”*

When we have a guilty conscience we start to deny our beliefs.

Unbelief is often an excuse to justify our lifestyle.

When someone says they don't believe in God, ask them: *‘Suppose God did really exist, would there be some changes you would have to make in your lifestyle?’*

An honest reply would be *“Yes, there are things I don't want to give up.”*

Well the real issue is not *‘do you believe in God or not?’* but *‘are you willing to change your lifestyle?’*

Our morality determines our theology.

When God's Word disagrees with the way we want to act we say *"Well that is your interpretation. I believe this is the true meaning. I don't care what God says, I believe this is true."*

3 Circumstances

Circumstances are the primary reasons for people doubting God.

When our prayers are unanswered.

When there is a tragedy.

When we are faced with an impossible situation.

Mark 4:35-41 [NIV] *"That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.' Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. **The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'** He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?' They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'"*

"Don't you care, God?" is a typical reaction when we come under pressure of uncontrollable circumstances.

Many people believe in a God but it is the type of person they think He is that causes their doubts, when they see what is happening in the world and society today.

Is God loving? Can God be depended upon? Is God interested in me personally?

These are the doubts people have about God that makes them atheists.

I have yet to meet a person who is an atheist for intellectual reasons.

Most people who are atheists doubt God because some *"Christian"* had *"burned them"*.

"If that is what it means to believe in God and be a Christian then forget it, God."

People don't care what we know until they know that we care.

A lot of atheists are just resentful people who have been hurt by those claiming to believe in God.

How then do we prevent our doubts from defeating us?

1. Admit our doubts

Be honest, we all have doubts and we cannot overcome them unless we admit them.

Don't be intimidated by our doubts, they don't mean we are no longer a Christian. Our doubts won't stop God loving us. **It is not wrong to have legitimate, honest questions about what God allows or does.**

John the Baptist had doubts about Jesus being the Messiah, inspite of being the one to announce His coming.

Matthew 11:2-3 [NIV] *“When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”*

Jesus did not criticise John for having doubts, He just helped John to resolve them, then told the crowd how great John was, right after John had expressed his doubts.

Matthew 11:11 [NIV] *“I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”*

John’s doubts did not change God’s opinion of John and what a great work he had done.

Thomas is another example of a disciple of Christ who had doubts.

John 20:24-29 [NIV] *“Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 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 it.’ 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!’ 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.’ Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Then Jesus told him, ‘**Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**’ ”*

Thomas needed personal, physical proof of Jesus’ resurrection, but Christ did not rebuke him because of his doubt but made a special personal appearance for Thomas to deal with his doubts. Jesus opened His arms to Thomas in love and Thomas became a believer.

Not even our doubts can stop God from loving us.

Jude 1:22 [NIV] *“Be merciful to those who doubt;”*

Why does it say this?

There is a difference between doubt and unbelief.

Doubt is when you just do not know what God wants to do in a situation. We may not even know how to pray about the situation.

Unbelief is when we know exactly what God wants us to do; we have read His Word and we still choose to do our own thing.

The strongest faith comes out of struggles with our doubt.

King David had doubts when he saw how the wicked prospered.

Psalm 73:3, 11, 13, 16 [Living Bible] *“For I was envious of the prosperity of the proud and the wicked ... does God realise what is going on they say ... have I been wasting my time? Why take the trouble to be pure? ... it is so hard to explain this prosperity of those who hate the Lord God.”*

Why do bad things happen to good people and wicked people prosper? Such things can cause us to doubt. Why does God allow this to happen?

Yet scripture tells us that God looked on David as *“a man after my own heart”* and did not doubt David’s loyalty to Him.

Acts 13:22 [NIV] *“After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’ ”*

Although David had doubts about the way God did things at times, he knew that this did not alter God’s Love for him.

Psalm 89:1-2 [NIV] *“I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.”*

The rest of the psalm is David’s assurance of God’s continuing love and faithfulness.

Job doubted God had the power to change his situation, until God Himself confronted him to allay Job’s doubts. **But there was not condemnation in God’s Words to Job because of his doubts.**

Abraham and Sarah both doubted God being able to give them an heir because of their ages, but this didn’t stop God from fulfilling His promise in a miraculous way and calling Abraham the *“father of the faithful”*.

When we have doubts all it proves is that we are human! So admit them to God and let Him deal with them.

2 Doubt our doubts

We tend to do the opposite to this. We doubt our beliefs and believe our doubts.

Proverbs 3:5 [NIV] *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;”*

What do we listen to the most? God’s Word or our own feelings?

I don’t feel loved by God! I don’t feel God is in my life! I don’t feel God has a personal plan for me!
I don’t feel I’m good enough for God to love me!

Do we listen to circumstances or do we listen to what God’s Word tells us?

Doubting our doubts is a hard thing to understand, but if we think back on our past lives we will all be able to remember times we had big doubts about what God had allowed to happen; we thought God had made a big mistake in doing this or that. I know I can recall such situations.

When we admit our doubts to God He will then in some way help us to doubt our doubts.

3 You begin with the faith we already have

There is a wonderful story in Mark’s gospel of a man who brought his son who was possessed by a spirit to Jesus for healing, after the disciples had failed to drive out the spirit.

Mark 9:21-24 [NIV] *“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 him who believes.’ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, ‘I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!’ ”*

Can you be filled with faith and doubt at the same time? Yes!

We can have the faith that God wants us to do something and be terrified at the same time.

Courage is not the result of being without fear, but doing what we fear inspite of our fear.

The same story is given to us by Matthew and includes the disciples asking Jesus why they had failed.

Matthew 17:19-21 [Living Bible] *“Afterwards, the disciples asked Jesus privately, why couldn’t we cast the demon out? Because of your little faith, Jesus told them. For if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed you would say to this mountain, move! and it would go away. Nothing would be impossible, but this kind of demon won’t leave unless you have prayed and gone without food.”*

We all have a measure of faith and exercise that faith every day.

We have faith that the food our wives prepare for us is not poisoned!

We have faith every time we drive a car on the road.

We have faith that the chair we sit down on will not collapse.

We all have faith: what is important is what we place our faith in.

As a Christian we don’t need a lot of faith!

The equation is – **a little faith in a big God equals big results.**

It is not the size of our faith that makes the difference but where we place that faith.

If we wait until we have all our doubts cleared up before we commit ourselves to fulfilling God’s Will for our lives, we will never start.

We have to step out with what little faith we have and then watch what God will do through us.

I have been a Christian over 50 years and I still have many unanswered questions about God and what He is doing, and why He is doing it the way He is. But these questions and doubts don’t stop me faithfully serving God and His people as God makes it possible and then empowers me.

Every step we take towards a closer fellowship with Jesus Christ, the more of our doubts will fade away.

Start with the little faith we have in a big God and let Him move all the “*mountains*” in our lives and deal with all our doubts one by one.

Admit our doubts – doubt our doubts – begin with the faith we have and grow in faith.