

## **How to deal with doubt**

### **Matthew 11:1-6**

We all have times when we tend to believe everything is going just as planned for everyone else, right-on schedule, smooth as silk. and doubt begins to creep into our thoughts about what we know to be true or what we believe. That is the mind side of doubt, then there are our present circumstances right in front of us that are real life day to day events that seem to pile on the mind side of doubt to weaken our faith.

Excessive doubt can actually increase our faith in God... if we tear away from our hope and trust in our circumstances, then turn our hopelessness to God .

As our circumstances are spiraling out of control, we lose more and more confidence in them which can increase our faith in God.

There are certain things God has revealed: That's what makes faith possible. There are certain things God has kept secret: That's what makes faith necessary.

Doubt is not the absence of faith; doubt is the questioning of faith. You can only doubt what you already believe.

Doubt is one of the most common struggles in the Christian life.

So, let's just get this one thing straight right now... those of us who doubt at times are in all company.

Doubt is questioning what you believe.

Unbelief is a determined refusal to believe.

Doubt is a struggle faced by all believers.

Unbelief is a condition of the unbeliever.

You can see the difference in the story of a married couple – Job and his wife – who experienced a great family tragedy. In one day, they lost their business, wealth, property, and every one of their seven children died, as a house where they were holding a party collapsed on them.

Job and his wife were thrown into a tailspin. They responded in completely different ways.

Suffering exposed Job's love for God, as he

wrestled with mysteries he could not understand, but it exposed his wife's unbelief: "Curse God and die," she said. Their response to suffering was the most revealing thing about them, and it will be one of the most revealing things about us. A defendant was on trial for murder. There was strong evidence indicating guilt, but there was no corpse. In the defense's closing statement, the lawyer, knowing that his client would probably be convicted, resorted to a trick.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I have a surprise for you all," the lawyer said as he looked at his watch. "Within one minute, the person presumed dead in this case will walk into this courtroom." He looked toward the courtroom door. The jurors, somewhat stunned, all looked on eagerly. A minute passed. Nothing happened.

Finally the lawyer said, "Actually, I made up the previous statement. But, you all looked on with anticipation. I therefore put to you that you have a reasonable doubt in

this case as to whether anyone was killed and insist that you return a verdict of not guilty." The jury, clearly confused, retired to deliberate.

A few minutes later, the jury returned and pronounced a verdict of guilty.

"But how?" inquired the lawyer. "You must have had some doubt; I saw all of you stare at the door."

The jury foreman stood up and replied, "Oh, Yaa we looked, but your client never looked."

Let's look at our text this morning

**Matthew 11:1 NLT** When Jesus had finished giving these instructions to his twelve disciples, he went out to teach and preach in towns throughout the region.

**V2 NLT** John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus,

**So how do we deal with doubt ?**

## **1. we need to verbalize our doubt**

John the Baptist might have been thinking along these lines ....

Lord have you forgotten about me ....

Remember I was the guy that pointed you out in the wilderness...

**John 1:29 NLT** The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

**John 1:30** He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' ...

**John 1:32 NLT** Then John testified, "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him.

**John 1:33 NLT** I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

**John 1:34 NLT** I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God."

Jesus, remember not long ago, I called you out

I told everyone you were far greater than me that you existed long before me, that you were the man.... THE GOD MAN JESUS!

I was right there when the whole dove thing happened when the HOLY SPIRIT landed on you in the form of a dove.

I heard the heavens open with a voice this is

my beloved son in whom I am well pleased

That day was so real to me as it was yesterday.

But since that day things have been really going downhill.

It all started when I told king Herod that he should have not taken his brother Philip's wife, I still can't figure out why everyone got so mad.

Now have been arrested and thrown into the dungeons of the fortress machaerus in the mountains near the dead sea.

I'm waiting in this cold dark damp prison waiting to be executed.

If you are waiting for me to ask for help or if I missed something here, I am running out of time so show me what you got I'm in a tough spot.

This is not going like I thought.

I heard you speak, I seen you move I  
watched the spirit of God fall from heaven.

But my circumstances that I find myself in  
right now, are causing me doubt, what I  
believe to be true and what I have seen and  
heard.

Doubt is something that must be  
addressed; it will lay us low and keep us off  
the battlefield, right where the enemy  
would have us.

## **Here are some signs you are experiencing doubt.**

- Sensitivity to criticism
- Isolating oneself
- Irritability or hostility
- Fixation on personal problems
- Physical symptoms (fatigue, insomnia, headaches, etc.)
- Poor self-image
- Negative thoughts about oneself
- Feelings of worthlessness and depression
- Intense self-criticism after failure

You feel lost don't you

Confused because what you thought and what you see is so different.

Things seem to be in a fog and unclear

Perplexed = a feeling of the inability to understand

Disoriented = a feeling of losing your sense of direction

Bewildered = a puzzled temporary loss of direction

To John it seems like everyone has forgotten about him.

## Asking himself....

How come you didn't keep me from getting arrested and thrown into prison?

So because you know I'm in prison and everything else seems to be going as planned I just need to ask this one question I know it sounds crazy but...

**V3 NLT** "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?"

This is a picture of doubt based on circumstances that are suppressing the truth.

Don't ever doubt when you're in the dark what God has spoken to you in the light.

## **2. Take Ownership of our doubt.**

**V4 NLT** Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen-

Do you feel suspended between 2 or more roads to travel right now?

Maybe you feel indecisive you just can't pull the trigger based on the facts you have gathered.

Doubt causes delay, but rightly so.... like me you have probably made some pretty big mistakes in the past and this one decision impacts a lot of people maybe even your family.

Indecisiveness also has the fear of making a mistake woven all through it.

That is the perfect reason for step 2 in today's message, **we need to own our doubt.**

**Take responsibility for what the doubt is doing to us.**

Hesitation

Indecisiveness

Over exaggerated fear to make a mistake

Self confidence at a all time low

Don't be afraid to share the doubt you are experiencing in your life right now.

Doubt is a common tool of the enemy to paralyze you.

Going all the way back to the garden of Eden it's been very effective tool of the enemy to cause believers to doubt.

We know what is true so it's not unbelief. Its doubting what we already know to be true.

**Gen 3:1 NLT** The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

**V2** "Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied.

**V3** "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

**V4** "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman.

There are 3 common tools in the enemy's tool belt that has been working effectively since the beginning of time.

**Doubt**= which we are talking about today, questioning what we know to be true

**Discouragement**= loss of confidence or enthusiasm, paralyzing us from moving forward.

**Defeat**= a signal of inability to go on, to tap out, to wave the white flag

These are all common tactics the devil has been using effectively since the garden of Eden and regularly in our lives, but we don't many times, realize it.

Ok so what is the next step, I am so glad you asked ....

### **3. We need to disconnect the doubt**

#### **How do we disconnect from our doubt?**

Doubt is a feeling, so we need to re-align our decision-making process.

How we feel about something is not a good foundation to stand on because our emotions seem to be centered on our circumstances.

When we have a headache, we say I don't feel good, it's based on our circumstances ... we have a headache.

To disconnect from doubt the **1<sup>st</sup> step** is to go back to the facts about what you know to be true.

**Facts** = don't change, facts are the truth, not an interpretation.

**2<sup>nd</sup> step** is we need to exercise our faith ....

Not a leap of faith... not blind faith.... but we need to exercise our faith based on the facts. WHAT WE KNOW TO BE TRUE

**Faith** = acting on what we know to be true based on facts.

**Now step 3** this is the one that gets in the way of facts and faith which inflames doubt.

You probably already know it's our feelings,

**Feelings** = a irrational emotion that drives most of our reactions.

So, let's just get the steps in the right order to disconnect from doubt using a small train as an example.

**Facts** is the engine of the train

**Faith** is the car right behind the engine carrying the fuel .... The coal or the wood to push the engine.

**Feelings** this must be the caboose of the little train, that gets pulled along by the facts of the matter and our faith.

So, we have disconnected from doubt, but if we just stand there, we become easy prey for the enemy so we need to.....

#### **4. We need to turn back to Jesus.**

**V6 NLT** And tell him, '**God blesses** those who **do not turn away** because of me.'"

God blesses...not with wealth but He could,  
not with stuff but He can.... not with favor  
but He might.

Being blessed by God is the fact of us  
knowing that God is happy with us and so  
we are blessed.

Blessed is based on our relationship with  
God.

Our approval of God.

THAT'S BOY DOWN THERE LOOK AT HIM  
GO....

### **Psalm 1:1-3 NKJV**

**V1** Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

**V2** But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

**V3** He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in

its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither;  
And whatever he does shall prosper.

**The writer of Psalm 1 was happy because  
those are the things that make God happy**

Blessed in the Greek is **"Makarios"** it is a joy which has its secret within itself, a joy which is serene and untouchable, and self-contained, a joy which is completely independent of all the chances and changes of life."

## **A. Return to Jesus**

### **Pray**

1. Ask for forgiveness for how our doubt has caused us to act by letting your feelings control your actions.

2. Sit down with the Lord and re-establish the facts.

3. Beg Him to give you the faith... the fuel to drive the facts so that you can begin to move forward based on the truth.

## **B. Remember the victories**

Take a moment to stop and recall God's faithfulness in your life in times past.

Here is a great example in scripture

### **Jos 4: NLT**

**V1** When all the people had crossed the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua,

**V2** "Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe.

**V3** Tell them, 'Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight.'" ...

**V6** We will use these stones to build a **memorial**. In the future your children will ask you, 'What do these stones mean?'

## **C. Remain Faithful**

You just stacked up at least 12 stones in your own personal life of how God has been faithful to you.

Now you need to recommit your faithfulness to God by holding onto the facts empowered by faith to stay committed to him.

## **In Closing**

### **D. Hold fast to what is good**

As hard as it may be.... look for any good in all this decision-making process, and when you see some good pieces that are mixed in with all the bad, difficult, or impossible

**HOLD FAST TO WHAT IS GOOD**

Before we pray lets just look at one powerful scripture.

## **Philippians 4:8 NLT**

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is **true**, and **honorable**, and **right**, and **pure**, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are **excellent** and **worthy** of praise.