

Under the Circumstances

HOLDING ON TO GOD
WHEN IT APPEARS GOD IS
NO LONGER HOLDING ON TO YOU

Under the Circumstances - Part 3

Our circumstances are volatile— things change rapidly, which may leave us wondering whether our ideas about God, the world, and our place in it are misplaced. Worse, if you're currently in a tough time of life, other peoples' struggles can seem small. It can feel like God is taking everybody else's life experience seriously while totally ignoring us. We may even run into religious platitudes from other believers whose circumstances seem fine, and whose vision of God strikes us as shallow. This can be a perfect recipe for doubt. But rather than viewing doubt as some kind of aberrant state of alienation from God, what if we recognized that in the scriptures, doubt is baked into the experience of faith as a natural, necessary step in our journey with God? What if the heroes of our faith struggled with the same doubts we do?

Getting Started

1. Has a change of scenery ever rocked your serenity? When? What happened?

What About You?

2. Do you ever get the impression that everybody else is doing fine while you struggle?
3. Why do statements like "everything happens for a reason" or "God must be trying to teach you something" fall so flat in the midst of extremely trying circumstances? What makes these statements such tempting sentiments to fall back on when somebody else is suffering?
4. Even if it was well-intentioned, what is the most frustrating thing anybody ever said to you during a difficult season of life?



Look It Up

Matthew 11: 2-11, Mark 6:18 –20, Matthew 4:12-13,

5. What was it about John the Baptist that Jesus so greatly admired, in your reading?
6. What does the fact that Jesus considered John the Baptist the greatest tell us about John's doubt in prison? How does it affect your reading of the story?
7. How does John's doubt in prison compare to his level of certainty during other times in his ministry? What accounts for this gap in his attitude?
8. What do you think motivated John to send his disciples to question Jesus? What was his thought process?

Putting It All Together

9. Have you felt that God is distant, recently? How have you coped with that feeling?
10. Do you find it comforting or disconcerting that Jesus's favorite person experienced such a traumatic life?
11. Review Jesus's statement in Matthew 11:6. What does this teaching have to say about your current circumstances?
12. How can you confront your own doubt with the same boldness John showed? Where can your faith take you this week?





**SOUTHSIDE
CHURCH**



**SOUTHSIDE
CHURCH**