

benefit of doubt

CREW LEADER GUIDE: THE GOD YOU THINK YOU KNOW - BENEFIT OF DOUBT PART THREE

Message Summary:

This sermon explores how times of doubt and uncertainty throughout history—from the Protestant Reformation to the American Revolution—were transformed when people lifted their eyes from their circumstances to their Creator through God's Word. The pastor addresses five common lies believers can fall into about God's nature and character, emphasizing that doubt doesn't disqualify us but can deepen our resolve when we return to Scripture. Using Peter's journey from doubt to martyrdom, the message calls for personal reformation (being corrected by God's Word), revival (being brought back to life), revolution (being reordered under Jesus), and restoration (being brought back when we fail). The central theme is that we are like sheep who have gone astray but can return to the Shepherd and overseer of our souls.

Key Points:

- Doubt can come from having the wrong view of God rather than allowing Scripture to shape our understanding of Him
- Five lies believers often believe: God exists primarily to make me happy; if I'm suffering, God must be disappointed in me; God helps those who help themselves; God's commands restrict my freedom; if I do everything right, God owes me
- God exists primarily to make us holy, not just happy, though holiness and joy are not mutually exclusive
- God helps the helpless, not those who help themselves; grace cannot be earned or it ceases to be grace
- God's commands are meant to protect us and lead us to greater life and joy, not restrict our freedom
- Historical examples of reformation, revival, and revolution show how returning to God's Word transforms times of uncertainty
- John the Baptist's doubt in prison demonstrates how knowing God's Word lifts our eyes to the Creator even in suffering
- We need personal reformation (correction), revival (new life), revolution (reordering), and restoration (grace when we fail)

Key Scripture:

- 1 Peter 2:25 (primary text): "For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and the overseer of your souls"
- Matthew 16:21-23 (Peter rebuking Jesus about His coming death)
- 1 Peter 1:15-16 (Be holy because God is holy)
- Matthew 11:4-11 (Jesus' response to John the Baptist's doubt)
- Isaiah 61:1-2 (referenced in Jesus' response to John the Baptist)
- Hebrews 12:6 - God disciplines those he loves (referenced when discussing suffering)
- Hebrews 12:2 - "For the joy set before him, he endured the cross" (referenced when discussing joy)

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Discussion and Reflection

1. How does understanding that God exists primarily to make us holy rather than happy change the way we approach His commands and our daily obedience?
2. In what ways have you experienced doubt deepening your resolve rather than disqualifying you from following Jesus, similar to Peter, John the Baptist, or William Tyndale?
3. What lies about God's character have you believed, and how has Scripture corrected those false beliefs in your life?
4. How does the historical connection between reformation, revival, and revolution challenge us to see spiritual awakening as necessary for cultural transformation today?
5. When Jesus told Peter to get behind him and called him Satan, what does this teach us about the difference between human concerns and godly concerns in our decision-making?
6. How does the sacrifice of William Tyndale for Bible translation impact the way you value and engage with Scripture in your daily life?
7. In what areas of your life do you find yourself believing that if you do everything right, God owes you, and how does John the Baptist's story challenge that mindset?
8. How can we distinguish between God's discipline that comes from love and the false belief that suffering means God is disappointed in us?
9. What does it mean practically to have your eyes lifted to the Creator rather than your circumstances, especially during seasons of doubt and uncertainty?
10. How does understanding that grace is unmerited favor free you from the lie that God helps those who help themselves, and what does this mean for how you approach your weaknesses?

Practical Challenge:

Here are a few ways to help activate key next steps this week:

- **Identify Your Lie:** Which of the five lies do you most struggle with? Write it down. Then find three scriptures that speak truth against that lie. Memorize one of them.
- **Return to the Word:** Commit to reading your Bible for 15 minutes each morning this week. Use a reading plan or start in the Gospel of John. Journal what God is speaking to you.
- **Honest Conversation:** Have a vulnerable conversation with a trusted Christian friend about an area where you're experiencing doubt. Ask them to pray with you and point you back to Scripture.
- **Gratitude for Access:** Research William Tyndale's story more deeply. Write a prayer thanking God for access to His Word and commit to not taking it for granted.
- **Check Your View of God:** Complete this sentence honestly: "When I think about God, the first thing that comes to mind is _____. Is this biblical? If not, what scripture can reshape that view?"