

benefit of doubt

CREW LEADER GUIDE: WHEN DOUBT IS THE DOOR - BENEFIT OF DOUBT PART TWO

Message Summary:

This sermon addresses the universal experience of doubt in the Christian faith, particularly focusing on how believers should respond when questions and uncertainties arise. Using the account of Peter walking on water, the message emphasizes that doubt is not the enemy of faith but can be a pathway to deeper relationship with God when handled properly. The central theological point is that Jesus responds to our doubts with compassion, grace, and an invitation to draw closer rather than with anger or rejection. The sermon challenges believers to recognize when they've taken their eyes off Jesus and placed them on life's circumstances, and to make the daily decision to reach out and take Jesus' hand, trusting Him even when all answers aren't clear.

Key Points:

- Doubt is not necessarily a bad thing; it matters how we deal with our doubts
- Jesus would rather have us question Him or be angry with Him than turn our back and walk away
- What we're stuck in, Jesus can walk on; what's impossible for us is easy for Him
- Peter's sinking represents the internal struggle between faith and doubt that exists in all believers
- Taking our eyes off Jesus and focusing on life's circumstances is when doubt floods in
- Jesus responds to doubt with compassion, reaching out, and asking "Why did you doubt?" rather than with condemnation
- We must choose to take Jesus' hand rather than isolating ourselves or seeking answers in wrong places
- The goal is to have a revelation of who Jesus truly is, moving from "if it's you" to "truly, you are"
- Daily decision to trust Jesus even without understanding everything is essential
- The local church should be the safest place to bring doubts and questions

Key Scripture:

- Matthew 14:22-33 - The primary passage about Jesus walking on water and Peter's response
- 2 Corinthians 10:5 - Taking thoughts captive (mentioned in context of not letting doubts become strongholds)
- Luke 16:31 - John the Baptist's doubt (referenced as an example of Jesus responding to doubt with reassurance)
- John 20:24-29 - Thomas doubting and Jesus providing proof (referenced as "last week" and as pattern of Jesus responding to doubt)
- Matthew 28:16-20 - The Great Commission, where some disciples doubted on the mountain (referenced as example of Jesus commissioning despite doubt)
- John 11 - Martha's doubt at Lazarus's tomb (referenced as example of Jesus responding to doubt)
- James 1:6-8 - Asking in faith without doubting
- Mark 9:24 - "I believe; help my unbelief"
- Hebrews 11:1 - Definition of faith

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Discussion and Reflection

1. Peter took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the wind and waves, causing him to sink. What circumstances or realities in your life are currently causing you to take your eyes off Jesus?
2. The sermon states that doubt can be a pathway to deeper faith when handled correctly. How have you experienced doubt leading to spiritual growth rather than spiritual decline?
3. Jesus asked Peter 'Why did you doubt?' rather than condemning him. How does understanding Jesus' compassionate response to doubt change the way you approach your own questions and struggles with faith?
4. The disciples struggled all night rowing against the wind, yet Jesus walked on what they were stuck in. What situations are you trying to overcome in your own strength that you need to surrender to Jesus?
5. The sermon mentions that people often look everywhere for answers except the standard of truth. Where have you been tempted to seek answers to life's questions outside of Scripture and relationship with Jesus?
6. Peter's revelation shifted from 'if it's you' to 'truly you are the Son of God.' What would it look like for you to move from questioning Jesus' identity to fully worshiping Him in the midst of your current struggles?
7. How does the church community respond when people express doubts or ask difficult questions? Should our response mirror Jesus' compassion and invitation to come closer?
8. The sermon describes how unanswered prayers, tragedies, or even successes can cause us to lose sight of Jesus. Which of these has been most challenging for your faith journey and why?
9. Jesus never forces His help but invites us to take His hand. What areas of your life are you refusing Jesus' help because of pride, shame, or a belief that you should handle it yourself?
10. The message emphasizes that taking thoughts captive is crucial before doubt becomes a stronghold. What practical steps can you take to recognize and address seeds of doubt before they take root in your mind?

Practical Challenge:

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

- **Identify Your "Wind and Waves."** Make a list of circumstances currently causing you stress, fear, or doubt. For each one, write "What I'm stuck in, Jesus can walk on." Spend time in prayer, surrendering each circumstance to Jesus
- **Practice "Taking Thoughts Captive."** When doubts or fears arise this week, immediately acknowledge them. Ask yourself: "Am I looking at Jesus or at my circumstances?" Physically or mentally reach out your hand and ask Jesus to help you refocus
- **Create a Safe Space for Doubt.** Reach out to someone in your life who may be struggling with questions or doubts. Listen without judgment and pray with them. Share your own journey with doubt and how Jesus has met you.