

# MAKING ROOM FOR DOUBT

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## READ JOHN 20:19-31

As we have been re-reading some of the accounts of what happened after the resurrection, I've been struck by the fact that none of the disciples (those who travelled with Jesus, who knew him best, and who heard his predictions and promises) greeted the resurrected Jesus with the words, "I knew it!" or "We've been expecting you!" or "Welcome back!" None of them. Instead, in each Gospel, the disciples can't believe what they're seeing. We tend to forget that for the first disciples, there was doubt and confusion BEFORE there was understanding and joy at what had taken place on that day.

## QUOTE 1

Pastor and writer Tim Keller says, "A faith without some doubts is like a human body with no antibodies in it. People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask the hard questions about why they believe as they do will find themselves defenceless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart sceptic. A person's faith can collapse almost overnight if she failed over the years to listen patiently to her own doubts, which should only be discarded after long reflection."

## QUESTIONS

1. What do you make of this statement?
2. Where or when in your life have you experienced doubts about faith or God?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Doubt is, in fact, not only a natural part, but also an essential component of the life of faith, and when we don't make room for it, we suffer needless guilt. When left, doubt only grows & preys upon us.
2. Questions, doubt and even scepticism are quite often, are the soil in which vibrant and a more mature faith is born. Our doubts can be a doorway to deepened honesty and intimacy with Christ rather than derailing our faith.
3. Doubt can expose our own false constructs about God, our limited attempts to control Him, or ideas about Christianity or faith that need to be discarded / explored more rigorously.

## QUOTE 2

Philip Yancy in the book *Reaching for the Invisible God* says, “doubt is the skeleton in the closet of faith, and I know no better way to treat a skeleton than to bring it into the open and expose it for what it is: not something to hide or fear, but a hard structure on which living tissue may grow. If I asked every person to stop reading whose faith has wavered – as a result of a tragedy, or a confidence-shaking encounter with science or with another religion, or disillusionment with the church or individual Christians – I might as well end the book with this sentence.”

In many ways Thomas represents all of us. Many of us have experienced the same struggles to believe & trust, to come to terms with aspects of the Christian faith, to make a commitment to the risen Lord.

## QUESTIONS

1. What have you found helpful / unhelpful for your faith in dealing with doubt?
2. How might you respond to someone if they come to you with their questions and doubts?

## WHEN YOU FACE DOUBTS, I HAVE THREE HOPES FOR YOU:

1. That you will feel ok to express them and that you will not conclude that doubts disqualify you from a life of faith.
2. That you will exercise wisdom with whom you share your doubts / questions
3. That you will be patient with those things you cannot yet understand or reconcile.

Jesus' response to Thomas and those who shouldered doubt should give us confidence to approach him regardless of our emotional state. It shows us we can trust that Jesus will not turn away from us, even when our faith wavers, but meet us with grace and love.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious, patient God, too often we don't trust you. We don't trust you enough to be honest with you, to share our doubts with you, or to be real with other people about our struggles. Lord, please help us to be more honest with you and with others as we confess our weaknesses, fears, and doubts to you now in silence of our hearts.

At times we doubt Your power and Your ability to change things in our lives. We doubt that Your methods and solutions are the best way to go. We fool ourselves into believing that our ways will be superior to Your ways. We doubt that all You are doing is the result of your great love for us. Have mercy upon us, Lord. Help us with our disbelief. Forgive us for looking through worldly eyes instead of asking You for

heavenly vision. Thank You for Your endless faithfulness and compassion. More than anything, we want to walk in Your will. We pray all of this in the precious Name of Jesus. Amen.

