

Coach House Church

BEACONS

DOUBT

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There are those who say "I would love to have faith in God but I doubt too much" or "I would love to become a Christian but I don't have enough faith to not doubt." They say it as if we must have somehow blinded ourselves to our doubt in order to believe.

We know this not to be true. Each of us knows what it is like to doubt. We might doubt our salvation - could God really forgive me, or that God loves us - how could God love someone like me, or his power - could God really do this? or even His existence. We might doubt that God has put us in the right place or that we have the ability to live our lives for Him.

There are so many promises in the bible. The bible promises that if we ask we will receive. The bible promises that we have been made a new creation. The bible promises that we will see the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The bible promises that God loves us so much that He even knows how many hairs are on our heads. Jesus even said that we could ask a mountain to move and jump into the sea and it would.

There will be times in our lives when it feels that none of these promises are coming true. We will feel that we have asked and not received, that we still act as we did before, that God has abandoned us. I think most of us feel that we couldn't ask a mountain to move and really believe it would. The most important thing to say about this is that it isn't wrong to doubt. It's ok to have questions and we will sometimes feel that what God has said isn't true, but it's what we do with that feeling.

James 1:5-8 says If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith,

with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Now the doubt that it's talking about here I think is better described in the NLT version. In the NLT it says "But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver". We should hold to our belief. Even when everything in us is screaming that God no longer loves us or that we are alone we should hold on to what the bible says.

So how can we do this in reality? You might be thinking "Alright Bekah, you've given us a nice sentiment to hold on to what the bible says but what about when I'm right in the middle of my storm? What about when God has abandoned me?"

Before I give some tips as to what I think will help with this, let me start off with what won't work. I can't just assure you of God's love and salvation in your life and that be enough. It might work for a little while but you need to really get down into your own relationship with God. It can't come from the outside, it needs to be in your heart.

Another answer people might have is miracles. They might say, "Well if I saw a miracle or an answer to prayer just once, then I would believe". This isn't the case either. We are so quick to forget as humans and before the day, week, month or year was over you'd need another one. God reveals himself to us through nature and through Jesus. There is no other way He could do it. C.S. Lewis talks about miracles in his book "Miracles". If you have not read C.S. Lewis' books I would highly recommend them. He talks about how there are laws of nature that have to be as they are most of the time because otherwise miracles wouldn't be remarkable. Also, if God answered all of our prayers as we wanted there would be chaos - as can be seen in the film Bruce Almighty. In the film Bruce becomes God and decides to answer every prayer with yes. The result is utter chaos as people's prayers didn't fit the overall plan that was best for their lives.

Also, even if you did see miracles, that alone would not convince you. The bible says of the Jews in John 12:37 "Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him."

So what is the answer to doubt? Unfortunately, there is no easy or permanent fix but there are things we can do to get through these times and learn from them.

Firstly, we can go to our Christian brothers and sisters. It's true, your faith cannot be based on theirs but often the best encouragement comes from those around us. They can see what God is doing in your life even when you can't. They can see the value you have even when you can't. They can see God's calling on your life, even when you can't. So go to them. Let them encourage you. It's a scary thing to say to someone else that you feel that God is letting you down. We feel that it makes us look less perfect and like a bad Christian. But let us remember two things. Firstly, everyone goes through doubt and secondly no one can help you if they don't know you need help. If I need help with anything, whether that be carrying shopping or getting out of sinking sand, no one can help unless they know I'm in need. So let's let each other see our weaknesses and needs so we can help each other.

The second way to battle doubt is to get back to the evidence for our faith. It is so important that we know the factual basis for our faith. It's important we know the archeological evidence that what the bible says is true actually happened. It's important that we know that the bible is a reliable historical document. It's important that we know the evidence for the resurrection, the underpinning event in Christian history. A great book to read on that topic is "The case for Christ" by Lee Strobel. Now reading books or looking at evidence may not change your emotional state and it may not seem exciting but it means that we can know in our heads which way is right and follow it despite our feelings. Our feelings will always sometimes be contrary to what we know to be true and our culture says we should follow them, but they are not always right. Remind yourself of what is true and your feelings will catch up.

The final, and most powerful way to fight through doubt is to work on our relationship with God. 2 Peter 1: 10 says "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election." We need to work hard on our relationship with God. It's not something that just happens. We need to make time to pray and read our bibles. We need to make time for Him to speak to us. We need to do the basics and then our emotions will line up. God will reveal to us how He is working and where He wants us to pray and what He wants to do in our lives. It won't happen instantly and we might still go back into doubting, but let's not let it hold us back.

So even in the wilderness, even in the desert, even when we feel alone and like God is ignoring us, let's hold on to His promises. Let's remind ourselves that this

isn't the end. We have a future hope that is much bigger. Let's look at the evidence we have for our faith and let's talk to our brothers and sisters and get encouragement from them. But most of all, let's pray and read and grow closer to God.



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