



**DOUBT, JOHN 20:24-29**

## Doubt

- **Mathew 14:28-29 NIV**, 28 “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” 29 “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.
  - Come Peter, I will give you the authority to do what you ask
  - Why would Peter even ask this? What about Jesus would lead Peter to assume Jesus would or could grant this?
  - Can you see in your mind’s eye the freedom Peter is experiencing?
  - But then another voice came into this experience
  - **Mathew 14:30-31 NIV**, 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

## Doubt

- Have you ever read a promise in Scripture and your heart soared until that same voice Peter heard come to you?
- “Why did you doubt?”
  - Doubt - a feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction
  - My Grandfather had an old rickety cane chair he would lean in the corner by the wood stove
  - He never tested the chair - just sat, and leaned
  - Me, I doubted that chair would stay up, so I was never comfortable even sitting in it

## Doubt

- “Why did you doubt?”
  - The Greek dictionary defines doubt as “to waver, hesitate”
  - In English, the word "doubt" means to be uncertain or unsure about something, skeptical about, consider questionable or unlikely, distrust, not be sure, to lack confidence in
- “You were doing so good Peter, why did you doubt?”
  - What was Peter doubting?
    - His abilities?
    - Ultimately, Jesus’ word or command, “Come”

## Doubt

- Doubt is neither good nor bad
  - It keeps us from buying a copper mine in Argentina for \$50 or sending Amazon gift cards to get a loved one out of an Ecuadorian prison
  - Also used by Satan and our old nature to suppress the working of God in our lives
  - Doubt suppresses the freedom we have been given in Christ Jesus
- The title of Os Guinness's 1976 book on doubt captures the experience well: *In Two Minds*. "Doubt divides and doubles you, Jekyll-and-Hydes you, splits you in the most uncomfortable places."

## Scripture

- **John 20:24-29 NIV**, 24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”
  - 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” 28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

## Doubt

- I think we tend to be too hard on Thomas, Were his doubts reasonable?
- All people of faith have areas of doubt at times
  - Doubts are a natural part of believing
  - Doubts do not equate with unbelief
  - Christian theologian Paul Tillich wrote, "Doubt isn't the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith."

## Doubt

- Thomas
  - **John 11:14-16 NIV**, 14 So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”
    - **John 11:8 NIV**, “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?”
  - **John 14:4-6 NIV**, 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” 6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me



## Doubt

- Thomas
  - **John 20:28 NIV**, “Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”
    - Boy I wish it was that simple – just stop doubting

## Doubt is a silent killer

- Most Born-Again Children of God don't normally doubt what God's Word says or even if it is true
  - We doubt whether it applies to us in our situation or whether it will be shone true in our lives
  - We doubt it can really happen in our lives
    - "More than a conqueror" – I'm not seeing it
    - "Loved by God" – salvation yes but my experience I question
    - "Jesus interceding for me" – must be some disconnect in me
- Much of doubt's power lies in its ability to dismay and disorient, though unique in some ways, doubt is a normal trial of faith

## Doubt is a silent killer

- Doubt can be inherently isolating, feelings of shamefulness, and sometimes impossible to explain
  - We believe we will be judged, excluded, and misunderstood
  - Result – We feel like we are the only one to struggle with doubt
  - Look at this list of Biblical heroes struggled with doubt
    - Moses ([Exodus 3:13](#)), Asaph ([Psalm 77:7–9](#)), Habakkuk ([Habakkuk 1:2–4](#)), Zechariah ([Luke 1:18](#)), John the Baptist ([Matthew 11:2–3](#)), Peter ([Matthew 14:31](#)), and Thomas ([John 20:25](#)) all battled versions of doubt

## Doubt is a silent killer

- Doubt can be inherently isolating, feelings of shameful, and sometimes impossible to explain
  - You are not alone with Christian history, but you are not alone here, today
  - There's not a week where I don't doubt I will be able to fulfill the role as pastor to this church
    - That I won't mess up what God is doing here
    - There's not a week where I don't stand before you with fear gripping my heart that I will not accurately and faithfully present God's Word given me, or respond incorrectly, or let the ADHD demon out inappropriately

## **Doubt is a silent killer**

- Doubt can be inherently isolating, feelings of shameful, and sometimes impossible to explain
  - And there are several others like minded here
  - We may not be able to understand your situation, but we can your condition
- But still, God call me and us forward – How?

## **We must respond to doubt as we respond to all other temptations and sins: with resistance**

- Because doubt wraps its fingers around the very throat of faith, it has a way of demanding attention
  - A man being beaten struggles to consider other matters
- One of the worst things is to focus obsessively and exclusively on doubt

## **We must respond to doubt as we respond to all other temptations and sins: with resistance**

- Scott Hubbard wrote in an article on doubt
  - “Looking back, I can see that many of my attempts to overcome doubt were like a man trying to change his appearance by staring harder and harder in the mirror: they only curved me more deeply inward. I needed to pray about more than my doubts; I needed to read and watch more than apologetics resources; I needed to journal about more than my own internal afflictions. Doubt needs sunshine, full and clear, and my grapples with doubt often took me to the cellar.”

## **We must respond to doubt as we respond to all other temptations and sins: with resistance**

- We place all the stress of doubt on us and forget what God is doing in us and in our circumstances
  - **Philippians 2:13 NIV**, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”
  - **Hebrews 12:2 AMP**, [looking away from all that will distract us and] focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith [the first incentive for our belief and the One who brings our faith to maturity]
  - **1st John 16:33 NIV**, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”



## **We must respond to doubt as we respond to all other temptations and sins: with resistance**

- What then can doubters do beyond seeking answers?
  - Once again, Scott Hubbard, “Sit long under the sky of God’s glory, breathing deeply creation’s soul oxygen (**Psalm 19:1; Psalm 104:24**).
  - Escape self by weeping and rejoicing with God’s people (**Romans 12:15**).
  - Sit in the gathering and sing of glories far above you and problems not your own (**Colossians 3:16**).
  - Find mind rest in the hard labor of a worthy vocation (**Colossians 3:23**).
  - And above all, slowly, prayerfully, and longingly consider Jesus (**Hebrews 3:1**).”

## **Never stop seeking God**

- Doubt for long enough, and you may begin to despair of ever escaping doubt
  - This is just who I am — the way I'm wired
  - Fighting feels like little use
  - The deep internal division seemed unbudgeable
  - You began recasting your future in terms of doubt

## Never stop seeking God

- As you keep resisting, God will mercifully remind you with a simple truth that doubt — or any long struggle — easily overshadows
  - God saves
    - The living God is a rescuing, delivering God, who enters in from the outside and shatters the bars of our expectations
    - He is a Pharaoh-crushing, sea-parting God; a sky-splitting, earth-shaking God; a Christ-giving, tomb-emptying God — and his hand cannot be stayed
    - For him, the impossible is only a word or a thought away

## Never stop seeking God

- **Matthew 7:7-8 NIV**, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”
  - “In defiance of the darkness, ask and keep asking, seek and keep seeking, knock and keep knocking while waiting patiently”
  - But Randy, **James 1:5-7 NIV** says, “5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.”

## Never stop seeking God

- A week later Thomas' doubt was answered. Why a week?
  - If locked doors couldn't keep Jesus from reaching Thomas, surely time was no obstacle
  - The risen Lord was not hindered but tarried on purpose, allowing Thomas to wait not for an hour or an afternoon, but for eight anguished days
  - Jesus had his reasons, as always
  - We don't know all of them, but we do know that when Jesus waits to rescue his people, mercy governs his waiting
  - For doubt not only tempts and tortures; it teaches

## Never stop seeking God

- Here in the waiting, we learn, with Thomas, just how fragile our faith is unless God upholds it
  - We learn to sympathize with others' weaknesses
  - And we learn to seek God in the face of the despair that screams at us, "You will not find him."
  - We can learn to say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

## Doubt

- Your doubts may never go completely away but they can be hushed
  - As you seek and wait for answers to questions you never thought you would have to answer
  - As you wait for God's waiting to accomplish His purpose in your life
  - As you learn to agree with Paul in **Romans 8:18 NIV**, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."
  - As we learn to agree with the hymn writer, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness."



**DOUBT, JOHN 20:24-29**