

DOUBT

Disarming Your Doubts

John 20:24-29

The questions that came to Glenn's mother's mind

- Where were you God?
- How could you let this happen to one doing your work?
- If you could not do a better job protecting him here, how can I know you are taking care of him now?
- Are you really watching and in control?

Doubts are basically guaranteed in a Christian home

- The essentials of faith are so ingrained, so taken for granted, that we must test them before making them our own
- It is simply a rite of passage we must all pass through as we grow into a deeper faith
- God understands

Doubts are basically guaranteed in a Christian home

Jude 1:22 NIV Be merciful to those who doubt

Philippians 2:12b NIV continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling

- Doubt is not unbelief
- Doubt is asking questions, seeking truth
- Unbelief refuses to hear the answers

Doubts are basically guaranteed in a Christian home

- We can get stuck in doubt and just tread water
 - It is difficult to do the mental and spiritual gymnastics
 - You will regress if not pushing forward
- Let's examine the issue of doubt and maybe some ways to deal with it.
- **John 20:24-29**

Alister McGrath, “Doubt arises partly because we feel frustrated at not being able to understand everything.”

- We just can't make sense of the event
- Doesn't seem to fit like when you can't find a needed puzzle piece and your first thought is, “It must be missing.”

John the Baptist

- **Matthew 11:2-3 NLT** 2 John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, 3 “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?”

Thomas Didymus

- Didymus is an English word for ditto, means double or twin
- Thomas had a twin sibling we know nothing about
- Also mean “in two minds” which is a definition of doubt
- He was a classic skeptic, adamantly unwilling to accept anything on simple hearsay
- Razor-sharp questions

Thomas Didymus

John 14: 3-5 NIV 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 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?”

Thomas Didymus

- Thomas' Reply – “Lord we got no idea where you are going. How could we know something like this?”
- He was missing when Jesus appeared to the other disciples
- He was practical, skeptical, taking nothing for granted, but not unbelieving but he had a lot of questions

What can this tell us about doubt?

Doubt develops in isolation

- **John 20:24** is the key to understanding Thomas' doubt – he was not with the others
 - He had been drawn apart and missed the consoling of Jesus, but also the miracle
 - He is asking for exactly what the other's received, verification

Doubt develops in isolation

- Doubt flourishes in the dark, questions seem larger and more hopeless
- Doubt is a wise time to examine your feelings
- Sometimes our questions have less to do with theological issues than with a simple case of the blues

Doubt develops in isolation

- Our souls and bodies tend to catch each other's diseases
- Stay connected to people and you're more likely to stay connected to your faith

Doubt demands evidence

- True doubt never turns away from the facts, wherever they may lead
 - He was honest
 - He never called the disciples' claims impossible
 - He never ruled out the miracles
- He simply wanted to test the evidence personally
- He was a good ole Missouri Baptist, "I'll believe it when I see it."

Doubt demands evidence

- Jesus met Thomas at the point of his question. Ask God with an honest heart and He will respond
 - As long as we are not looking for him to just tell us what we want to hear
 - As long as we remember we are finite beings and even if God told us we would not be able to understand

Honest doubt draws us back to Christ

- What is honest doubt?
 - Where you are earnestly seeking truth and you will follow that truth where ever takes you
- Have they witnessed the greatest event in history, or have they been cruelly deceived?
- It is significant that Thomas, despite his reservation, has lingered among them

Honest doubt draws us back to Christ

- Doubt says, “I’ll stay and investigate.” Unbelief stalks away and says, “I’m out of here.”
- **John 20:26 NLT** Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said.

Honest doubt draws us back to Christ

- Christianity ultimately comes down to more than theological questions
- In the end it's all about a Person named Jesus
- Thomas asked the right questions and whose doubts kept him among the community of faith and guided him across the room into the presence of his Savior

Honest doubt draws us back to Christ

- So often we become ensnared in some element of doctrinal minutiae, forgetting the miracles that transcend the details

Honest doubt deepens our faith

- **John 20:27 NIV** 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.”
- There are times in our Christian lives where the only answer is to look deep in to the hands and side of Jesus
- Are you unsure? Reach in and feel for yourself

Honest doubt deepens our faith

- Hear Jesus say, “Recognize the love I have for you.”
 - Now, does your doubt overcome that?
- God is big enough to handle the questions that trouble you
- Don't block out your doubts, examine them well

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Honest doubt deepens our faith

- Turn them around in your mind, discuss them with wise and patient friends, have courage to struggle with your convictions
- God has somehow outlasted thousands of years of champion doubters
- Your doubts will not stump Him

Honest doubt defines your faith

- **John 20:28 NIV** Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”
- Does Thomas have all of his questions answered?
 - I doubt it, but neither did any of the other disciples
 - There is one thing they knew beyond a shadow of a doubt.
 - Jesus was dead and now lives
 - Everything has changed

Honest doubt defines your faith

- This is one of the supreme turning points in scripture
- The first ringing declaration of the Resurrection's transforming power upon an individual life
- Can you agree with Thomas? Jesus is your Lord and God

So how can I disarm the doubts in my life?

Admit your doubts personally

- Can you imagine the glares Thomas must have gotten from the others?
- Thomas could have smothered his doubts and not let anyone know
- Could have smothered his emotions with a sanitary smile

Articulate your doubts clearly

- Put your finger precisely on what is causing your uncertainty
- Identify it and describe it clearly
- Articulate what you doubt and why you doubt
- What brought this on?

Acknowledge your doubts prayerfully

- Mark Littleton found a little formula to use
 - Turn your doubts to questions
 - Turn your questions to prayers
 - Turn your prayers to God

Acknowledge your doubts prayerfully

- The Bible's best and brightest weren't heroes for the lack of doubt
 - Gideon, Sarah, David in Psalms, Job
- God met each of them in the middle of their doubt

Analyze the evidence diligently

- Why won't we confront our doubts?
 - Because deep down, we're afraid the doubts will win
- We think Christianity is somehow weaker than its accusers
- You don't find flaws in God's Word, it finds flaws in you

Accept the limitation humbly

- We must accept our own limitation
- In the end, some mysteries will remain
- We must accept our limitations as finite beings

We must accept the Bible's limitations

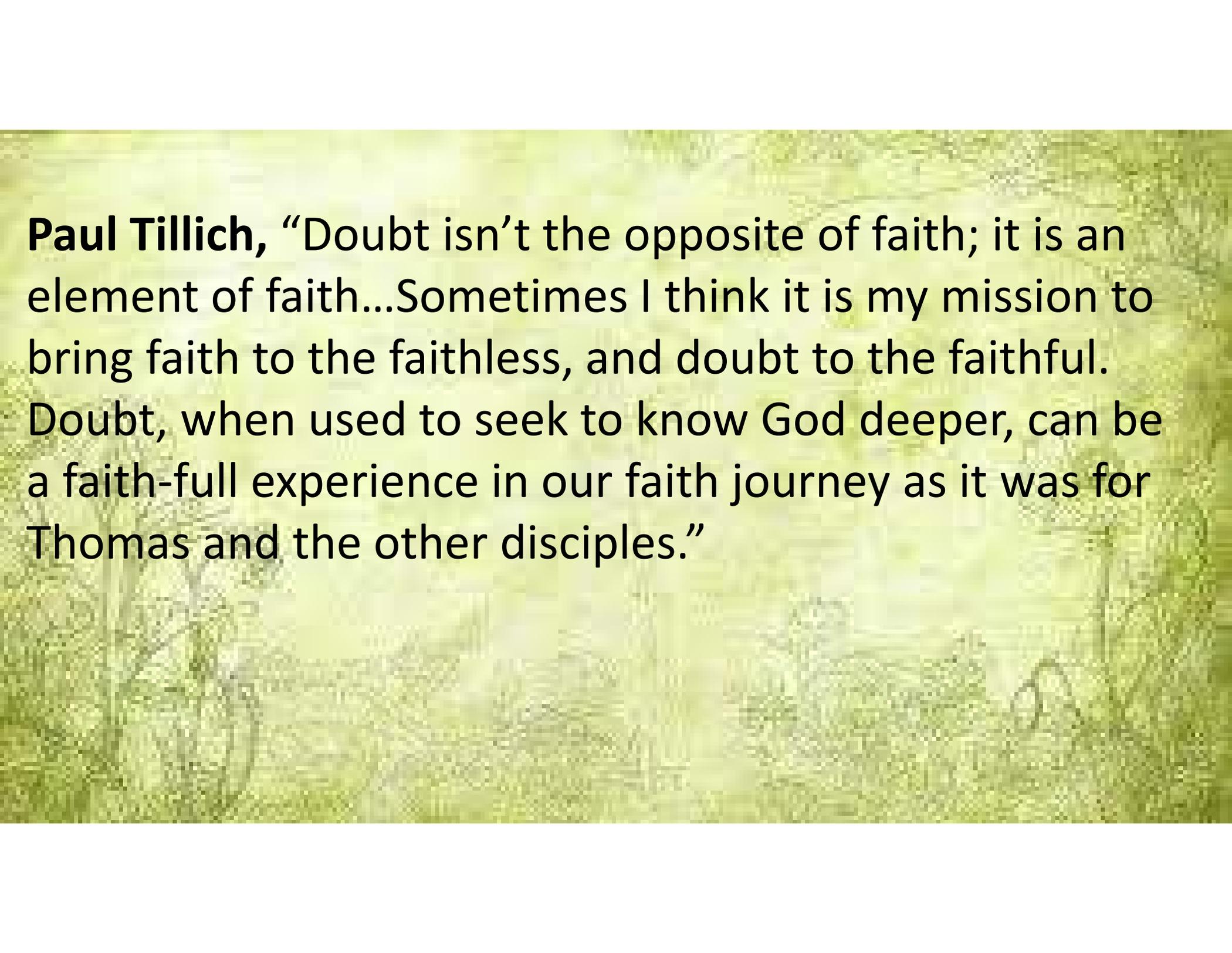
- The Bible is God's inspired Word of truth
- There are many issues that God didn't see fit to cover in His Word
- We must accept the fact that, occasionally, the Bible opts for silence
- God has an answer, but we must trust the Spirit and our own sound mind as we make our decisions

We must accept the Bible's limitations

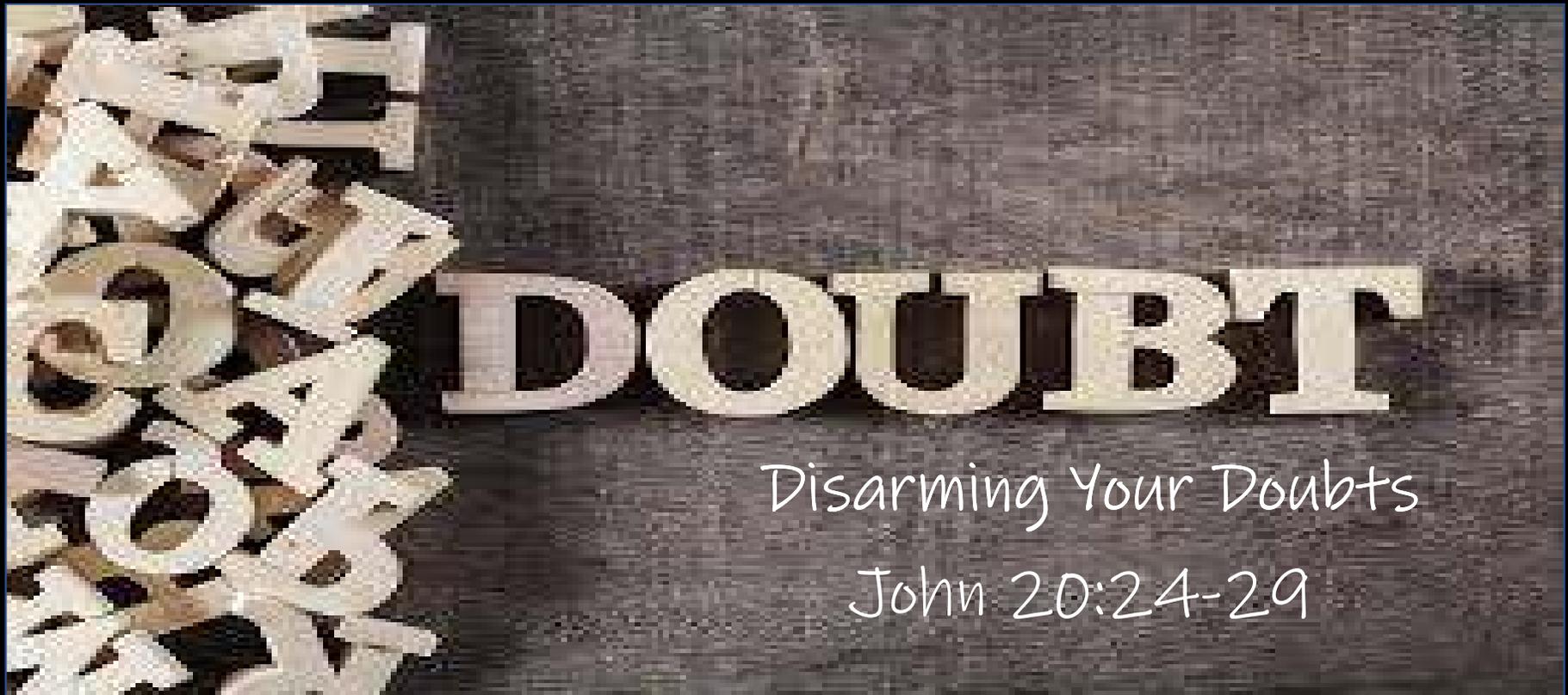
- We must adjust to the complexity of the universe
- The more we learn about the world the more complexity we discover and the more questions we will have
- Our minds are too small to encompass the wonder of it all

We must accept the Bible's limitations

- There are times there is no simple answer
- We will never have a handle on the nature or work of God
- We will never find a box that He will fit in
- Be thankful we have room for worship, to stretch toward something so much greater than ourselves



Paul Tillich, “Doubt isn’t the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith...Sometimes I think it is my mission to bring faith to the faithless, and doubt to the faithful. Doubt, when used to seek to know God deeper, can be a faith-full experience in our faith journey as it was for Thomas and the other disciples.”



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