



# Personal *times* of doubt

**Doubt, John 20:24-29**

## Doubt

- Last week during the Sunrise Service I asked a question like, “What truth found in God’s Word do you have trouble fully accepting?”
  - Maybe you grasp it mentally but fully accepting it as fact just kind of eludes you...you got some questions
  - Maybe you have difficulty accepting parts of Noah’s Flood story
  - Israel passing through the Jordan River at flood stage, Manna from heaven, Clothes not wearing out in 40 years
  - The whole Elijah wheel in a wheel thing
  - God creating the heavens and earth

## Doubt

- Last week during the Sunrise Service I asked a question like, “What truth found in God’s Word do you have trouble fully accepting?”
  - Or maybe it’s more like, is faith in the finished work of Jesus really enough for my salvation?
  - Have my sins really been forgiven or am I just hoping?
  - Does God really love me?
  - Can God really redeem my past?
  - Does He even know who I am and what I am going through?
  - Is there really a place for me in heaven?

## Doubt

- Did Jesus really rise from the dead with a glorified body?
  - **Luke 24:9-12 NIV**, 9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.
    - “They did not believe because their words seemed like nonsense”
      - **ESV**, “their words seemed to them an idle tale”
      - **TLB**, “But the story sounded like a fairy tale”

## Doubt

- Did Jesus really rise from the dead with a glorified body?
  - **Luke 24:9-12 NIV**, 12, Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.
    - So if it was nonsense, why did Peter and John run to the tomb?
    - Maybe it wasn't a hardened unbelief but a soft doubt that they were fighting

## Doubt

- Did Jesus really rise from the dead with a glorified body?
  - All of the disciples struggled with some form of doubt, some even 30 days after Jesus' resurrection but none highlighted like Thomas'
- There is a difference between Biblical doubt and hard-hearted unbelief
  - Doubt can be heightened by our emotions and fears and those must be worked through before faith can come
  - Unbelief is a matter of our will our refusal to let go and believe

## 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!”
  - What do you think was going through Thomas’ mind or what would have gone through your mind?
    - “Why was I left out?”
    - “Have I been less of a disciple than Peter, James, or John?”
    - “Did anyone actually touch Jesus?”
    - “Did I miss out on receiving the Holy Spirit?”
    - “Has anything really changed for me?”

## Scripture

- Thomas had heard Jesus say, “It is finished”, and to Thomas it was
  - Through his hurt, pain and confusion, with the crucifixion scenes still vivid in his memory, Thomas let his emotions respond
    - **John 20:24-29 NIV**, 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.”
- After the brutality of the crucifixion, Thomas may have been protecting himself from further, devastating disappointment through grief - Doubting grief doesn't always respond well

## Scripture

- **John 20:24-29 NIV**, 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them
  - This is so important
    - Thomas didn't just throw up his hands and walk away, give up
    - He still had his doubts, but he stayed with his group
      - ✓ He was still seeking what he needed to believe
    - The other disciples didn't reject him and push him away

## Scripture

- **John 20:24-29 NIV**, 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.”
    - Jesus’ first words again are for peace among His disciples, He understands
    - Did you notice Jesus heard Thomas’ cry

## Scripture

- **John 20:24-29 NIV**, 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.”
    - Thomas, there is more than enough evidence of my resurrection
    - Turn loose of your hurt, pain, doubts and what-ifs and step into belief

## Scripture

- **John 20:24-29 NIV**, 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.”
  - Blessed - the divine favor, spiritual joy, and deep honor bestowed upon believers who trust in Jesus' resurrection without needing physical evidence

## Doubt

- Thomas was much more than his doubts; he was a man who believed and loved deeply
  - **John 11:16 NIV**, 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 14:5 NIV**, 5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”
  - So be very careful about labels we place on people

## Doubt

- So where does this kind of faith to overcome doubt come from ?
  - Faith comes from God
    - **Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV**, 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.
    - **Romans 12:3 NIV**, 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

## **Doubt is not rejection of belief, but holding a belief with hesitation and uncertainty**

- How many times have you tested a ladder, chair, stack of boxes or maybe a tree branch to see if it will hold you up
  - You have faith or belief it can, but you are going to test it going up
  - If you have unbelief, you wouldn't even consider testing it

## **Doubt is not rejection of belief, but holding a belief with hesitation and uncertainty**

- This is what the biblical Greek word “doubt” means - “to waver, hesitate, be uncertain”
  - Doubt is not rejection of belief, but holding a belief with some hesitation and uncertainty
  - Doubt says, “I’ve got some questions I must work through to bring this into my heart”
  - This is especially true in new believers or believers who are not maturing in the Christian faith

## **Doubt is not rejection of belief, but holding a belief with hesitation and uncertainty**

- This is what the biblical Greek word “doubt” means - “to waver, hesitate, be uncertain”
  - You believe Scripture is God’s Word and can be fully trusted to be true
    - Does it really mean the same thing today as it did back then?
    - Do I have an accurate grasp on its meaning and purpose?
    - How am I supposed to apply it to my life today?

## **Doubt is not rejection of belief, but holding a belief with hesitation and uncertainty**

- What was Thomas doubting?
  - Remember Thomas is looking through a faith that has been shattered he thought was beyond repair
    - He was doubting his ability to believe
    - That is too far a step for me
    - I've got some questions to work through first

## Certainty is not required for belief

- So often God's truth is proven as we push out from the banks of doubt and begin floating in His truth
  - **Psalm 34:8 NIV**, 8 Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
  - How many here were experts on your first float trip?

## Certainty is not required for belief

- Moses
  - **Exodus 4:10-13 NIV**, 10 Moses said to the Lord, “Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.”
    - 11 The Lord said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”
    - 13 But Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.”

## Certainty is not required for belief

- Gideon
  - **Judges 6:14-15 NIV**, 14 The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”
    - 15 “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”
  - “Go/Trust in the belief you have, and I will lead you to faith”

## Certainty is not required for belief

- The Disciples
  - **Matthew 28:16-17 NIV**, 16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

## Doubt

- Five lessons to handling doubt we can learn from Thomas
  - Don't be afraid of your doubts
    - God doesn't love you less because of them
    - Don't tuck them away and ignore them
    - Don't be ashamed of your doubts hoping no one will find out
    - Stay connected with your community of believers
    - Identify the Root - Pinpoint where the doubt originates (e.g., pain, lack of knowledge, personal tragedy) to address the root cause, not just the symptom

## Doubt

- Five lessons to handling doubt we can learn from Thomas
  - Be honest about your doubts
    - The first step of any addiction rehab treatment is to be honest about it
    - Acknowledge them as normal, temporary thoughts rather than absolute truths, and take small actions learning to overcome them
    - Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is part of your faith journey

## Doubt

- Five lessons to handling doubt we can learn from Thomas
  - Reframe doubt as a learning opportunity rather than a sign of failure
    - Study to answer your questions rather than assuming they have no answers or you're not smart enough
    - Practice self-compassion, challenge negative thoughts, and visualize success

## Doubt

- Five lessons to handling doubt we can learn from Thomas
  - Take your doubts to Jesus
    - In honest, persistent prayer, openly acknowledging your questions rather than hiding them
    - It means bringing your struggles directly to Him in prayer, reading the Bible for truth, and staying involved in a community of believers
    - A helpful, authentic prayer is: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

## Doubt

- Five lessons to handling doubt we can learn from Thomas
  - Let your doubts lead you to greater faith
    - Doubts can stagnate you or lead you to greater faith as you work through them
    - Continue to act on what you do know about God's Word and rely on faith rather than your feelings or senses
    - **John 16:13 NIV**, 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

## Doubt - Action Steps

- You will never have all of your questions or doubts answered completely
  - **2nd Corinthians 5:7 NIV**, 7 For we live by faith, not by sight.
  - Jesus will ask you at some time, “Do you trust me enough to move on from your doubts and questions and simply believe and trust my Word?”
- How are we to respond to the doubting believer?
  - **Jude 22** says, “And have mercy on those who doubt.”
    - And this includes yourself



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