

Do My Doubts Mean I Don't Have Faith?

<u>Matthew 14:30-31</u>: (NASB) ³⁰But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me! ³¹Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and took hold of him, and said to him, you of little faith, why did you doubt?



If you doubt, you must not have faith. So goes the typical thinking of many Christians. If we adhere to this thought then each and every one of us will need to brace for our next crisis of faith, because the fact is we ALL doubt. We all question. We all wonder and at times we all second guess. So, what about it? Is there a way to look at our questions and insecurities in a different light? Can those nagging thoughts that swirl about in our minds actually be a benefit? Yes! Yes, they can, and we are saying this without a doubt! Once we understand doubt and its different forms, we can begin to piece together the process that can actually

take those insecurities that silently and incessantly gnaw away at us and use them as tools to feed and increase our faith. Admittedly, this is not easy, and it may not even be fun, but it is an answer to the debilitating experience of doubt. Faith can win!

Our subject is addressing a question sent to us from a listener.

First of all, let us establish that doubts come to us in two primary ways:

(Source: I'm Doubting My Faith by Jim Burns (Ignite Your Faith)

- 1) <u>Intellectual questions</u>. In this case, people's doubts come from questions about what's true and what's logical. People who have intellectual doubts often have questions like these: "Why should I believe the Bible is inspired by God?"...
- 2) <u>Emotional questions</u>. These questions often come from hurt or grief. The emotional doubter may actually ask questions that are similar to those asked by the intellectual doubter... The difference is that emotional doubters are not easily satisfied with intellectual answers. Why? Because their problem is not intellectual. It's usually about their wounded feelings.

What if we continually add God's words to our minds, but we are influenced by teachers who misinterpret and lead us to error and cause doubt in our minds? More on this soon.

(1) What is doubt, Should Christians Have Doubts, Impact 360 Institute

- The Bible is reliable. Or is it? What do you do with doubt?
- "Good Christians do not have doubt."
- "You're not a very spiritual person, are you?"
- "How dare you question God!"
- "You ask too many questions."
- "You must not be saved."
- Is it wrong to doubt the Bible? Well, what is doubt? It's your mind trying to learn and adjusting its grip on truth. As you move through life some of your ideas about reality become more firmly positioned in your mind, while others become less certain. These need to be examined from time to time. If



they're reaffirmed they're inserted back into your belief system. If not, they're thrown away and updated with a new understanding.

Can personality and experience add or reduce doubt in our life?

Yes. Always go back to the question, "Are my doubts intellectual or emotional?" In the last audio clip, he was talking about intellectual doubts. Personality, background and experience have an influence on us. Some people are naturally more prone to doubts than others.

Intellectual questions and emotional questions can cause doubt.

Facing any doubt can only be done through clarity and conviction! Clarity is achieved when the mind is fed a steady diet of SCRIPTURAL truth and sound teaching. Conviction can only be engaged when our clarity has taken root within our hearts and has begun to grow.

Even the greatest among us can have doubts: John the Baptist had doubts! Luke 7:18-23: (NASB) ¹⁸The disciples of John reported to him about all these things. ¹⁹Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, are you the expected one, or do we look for someone else?



John is in prison when he sent his disciples to the Lord.

John's doubts were *emotional*. Why? He had been given God's Spirit and done great work and he brought Jesus into the public eye. Why the doubt? His success did not meet his personal expectations. John expected the Messiah to save them then - and here he was in prison! John did not understand the suffering and the long period of time before the victory would appear.



Have you ever woken up one morning and said, "This is not where I am supposed to be! This is not the way my life should have turned out."



That actually happened to me when I hit bottom in life many years ago. It was debilitating. By God's grace, that lonely and harsh experience led me to my new-found direction and changed my life completely. I am thankful, but it was hard and hurt.



Because of the hurt, emotional doubts are debilitating and can cause us to want to give up. How do we combat emotional doubt? With clarity and conviction.

Clarity to combat emotional doubt: Attempt to reset your perception of reality:



We can be emotionally wounded by our experiences. John the Baptist was emotionally wounded by his experiences.

John sent for help!

²⁰When the men came to him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us to you, to ask, are you the expected one, or do we look for someone else? ²¹At that very time he cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and he gave sight to many who were blind.

John gave his followers clarity by sending them to Jesus. Jesus gave John's followers clarity by doing what he always did - he was healing. That led them to conviction.



Jesus did not leave it at clarity; he told them what to tell John:

²²And he answered and said to them, Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them. ²³Blessed is he who does not take offense at me.

Jesus' response helps give John conviction.

Jesus continued to fulfill prophecy and reminded John by showing John's representatives and giving him conviction. This helped John with his emotional doubt.



Being alone in a harsh experience can really throw us off. What more can we rely on to overcome?

Finding more tools in the fight to reel in doubt is always appropriate. The great news here is twofold: First, Jesus set the pace and went through life experiences as we do. Second, God provided us with a myriad of promises to walk us through every conceivable scenario of challenge and doubt. All we have to do is claim those promises as our own.

Let's go to Greg Tonkinson, who is a minister and shares a very difficult experience that led him to deep and grievous doubt.

(I)) The accident, Faith and Doubt, Greg Tonkinson, TEDx

• Rather when this car became a knotted configuration of plastic and metal, I was at home with my three children. It was a rather uninteresting Saturday evening, best I can recall. Kids were in the living room playing, dad was watching TV when our evening was interrupted by three knocks on the door. The rest played out much like a movie. "Good evening. Are you Greg Tonkinson?" I am. How can I help you? "Sir, my name is Officer Prather, this is one of our child case workers, this is one of our police chaplains. May we come in?" Sure. What can I do for you officer? "Sir, is your wife Leigh Ann Tonkinson?" She is, why? "Sir, you may want to sit down for this." No disrespect officer but if you need to tell me something just go ahead and say it. "Sir, at approximately 7:45 this evening your wife was killed in a car accident. She was at a stoplight, two miles from here and was hit from behind. Best we can tell, her neck was broken upon impact and her passing was immediate and painless, but sir, we are so sorry for your loss."

This became a cause for doubt. We will unfold this story as we go.

First, Jesus and his solo battle against the dark influences of doubt (temptations) and question while in the wilderness for 40 days fasting and praying:

Luke 4:9-13: (NASB) ⁹And he led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; ¹⁰for it is written, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you, ¹¹and, on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

The temptations came along at the end of the 40 days when Jesus was tired, hungry and alone. Satan was crafty.

Jesus was now confronted with a scriptural promise, quoted to cast doubt on his focus and mission.

Jesus could only have been tempted emotionally. He did not have intellectual doubt:

¹²And Jesus answered and said to him, it is said, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. ¹³When the devil had finished every temptation, he left him until an opportune time.

Jesus answers with Scripture. Satan left him only *until an opportune time*. Satan tried at three opportune times and three different temptations and failed. He was watching, waiting and looking to plant a seed of doubt. He tried to get Jesus from the inside. How did Jesus face temptation and doubt? He was a student of Scripture.



Do not make the Scriptures your students! That is what Satan did. Satan misapplied a Scripture and quoted it to Jesus with authority. Jesus, being a student of Scripture, took another Scripture and applied it correctly and crushed the misapplication. To manage our own doubts, we need to be a student of Scripture.



Jesus' fatigue did not win. His clarity remained because he knew the Scriptures, and his conviction endured.

Jesus knew it was a misapplication of Scripture.

 (\neg, \neg) What do you do now, Faith and Doubt Greg, Tonkinson, TEDx

• So, on March 6th, 2010, myself along with 10-year-old Caden, six-year-old Bailey, and 4-year-old Melia, began our journey of life without our wife and mother. It's been a journey of grief that has been burdened by an assortment of emotions including rage and anger, joy, hopelessness, frustration, even moments of serenity. But what has made this trek so especially demanding for me is that I'm a man of faith. Not casual faith, but a faith that has defined me for over thirty years. A "man of the cloth" if you will. My current occupation, my academic achievements, the way I raise my children, all have at their nucleus - faith. So, what do you do when your faith has been traumatized by such a traumatic event?

What do you do when doubt enters into the middle of our faith?

One of the big answers is "the promises" that are in the Scriptures. These can help us counteract our doubt in our lonely and harsh experiences:

We are focusing on emotional doubt at this time, so when we doubt, what is a good promise to claim?

<u>Ephesians 2:10</u>: (NASB) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

When we doubt, we need to repeat the words, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." God is making us!



Many years ago, when I was 21-years-old, I used to build fine furniture. When I would work on something that was intricate and complex, it would be at the top of my mind all the time. I once built a harmonica case for someone. He was a performer and had 52 harmonicas. He said he needed to have access to all 52 at once and he wanted it to be beautiful. I was troubled on how to accomplish this. To be able to work the workmanship, I went into a tunnel of thinking. I remember I was sitting at the dinner table and playing and arranging some blocks of wood on the side. All of a sudden, the answer flashed into my mind. I ran downstairs to the workshop. When the workmanship is something key, God pays close attention to that craftsman. That is a powerful promise.

When we feel alone:

<u>Psalm 34:18</u>: (NASB) The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.





We have Jesus' example and we have promises. What if those things are not having enough of a positive effect in our lonely and harsh experiences?

We can add the support of the brotherhood in fellowship. We can sing hymns. Music raises the spirit. Also, prayer and proper meditation. True meditation asks God for help and looks for answers from prayer to receive strength and direction to move forward. Worldly meditation empties your mind of all things which opens your mind to be susceptible for evil to enter in if we let our defenses down.

Now let's look at intellectual doubt. This James text uses the most common New Testament word for doubt:

Doubt: Strongs #1252 diakrino; to separate thoroughly, i.e. (literally and reflexively) to withdraw from, or (by implication) oppose; figuratively, to discriminate (by implication, decide), or (reflexively) hesitate

James 1:5-8: (NASB) ⁵But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶But he must ask in faith without any doubting <1252>, for the one who doubts<1252> is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.



When I first came to the Lord, I went to my first Bible conference and someone came up to me and asked, "What can I pray for you in your brand new Christian walk?" I answered, "I need wisdom and I need spiritual insight right away."

James is telling us, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God...ask in faith without any doubting. Do not ask with two lines of thought at the same time. Perhaps this is doubt caused by not knowing as much as you could or not acting on what you have and know already. Emotional doubt often causes a debilitating stop. Intellectual doubt causes retreat or hesitation.

⁷For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸being a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways. (James is saying we should ask in faith without doubting. Ask in faith with clarity.)

For more on double-mindedness, please see April 9, 2018, CQ Episode 1016: "Am I a Double-Minded Christian?"



Separated thinking is two lines of thinking going on at the same time or thinking that is uncommitted. We cut ourselves off from receiving blessing and Christian Questions ©2018 all rights reserved



enlightenment when we are experiencing intellectual doubt. Both emotional and intellectual doubt can have absolutely have dire consequences!

Does intellectual doubt respond to the promises of God in the same way emotional doubt does?

Intellectual doubt does respond to God's promises, but perhaps in a different way. Intellectual doubt needs a clear "why" or "how" while emotional doubt requires powerful assurance. In any case, all doubt needs clarity which is more intellectually based AND conviction which is more emotionally based.



We are working with four words:

In terms of doubt:	In terms of the REMEDY for doubt:
Intellectual	Clarity, especially on intellectual side
Emotional	Conviction, especially on emotional side

You cannot remedy any doubt without clarity and conviction.

 (\neg, η) Should we question the Bible, Should Christians Have Doubts, Impact 360 Institute

• But is it okay to question the Bible? According to the Christian worldview, God has revealed himself through the Bible and through the natural world. Because God is a rational mind, the natural world is structured in a way that is accessible to rational minds. Thus humans, created in His image, having rational minds, can approach the natural world rationally, asking good questions and searching for answers. In the same way also, the Bible being an expression of God's mind is structured in a way that makes it accessible to our minds. So, humans can approach the Bible rationally, asking good questions and searching for reasonable answers.

One of the reasons some people come to Christ and then fade away is because they come based on an emotional response and do not feed the intellectual side. They do not prove the Scriptures for themselves. They do not find truth, they just find peace and happiness. Peace and happiness need to be based on truth or it will not last.

> Clarity to combat intellectual doubt: First, practically compare who and where you were before Christ, to who and where you are now after being called. (The call itself provides personal clarity.)



This gives us strength to move forward. "Look where the Lord has brought me today from where I was." "Where was I, where am I?" In order to make progress, we must start with clarity.



<u>1 Peter 2:1-3</u>: (NASB) ¹Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ²like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

We should ask ourselves, "Do I believe God has called me and how much progress have I made?" If we are not hearing doctrine that is scripturally provable, then we ought to be listening to something else.

Second, realize that you did NOT sign up for vacillating and commitment to half measures:

James 1:22-24: (NASB) ²²But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

These are good remedies for intellectual doubt, not necessarily emotional doubt, because you are feeding yourself something concrete. *Prove yourselves doers of the word* - that is concrete.

(1))The process of honest doubting, Faith and Doubt, Greg Tonkinson, TEDx

• What do you do when you earnestly begin doubting the very subject, and that's with a capital S, that you've been promoting your entire adult life? One of the conclusions I've arrived at is this - when we talk about faith and doubt, I believe that honest doubting can be a normal experience for a person of faith. I think that's what makes this issue of faith and doubt so complex. Much more complex than the well-intentioned but rather insubstantial comments the kids and I received the days that followed the accident. Telling us that we were going to be okay or that she's an angel looking down on us. I believe that this complexity is derived from these fascinating brains we have. Brains that will spend the days that follow such a dreadful event trying to piece everything together as if somehow, we can prove in a courtroom setting that the event shouldn't have taken place, and if that's the case then history would have to be reversed and our suffering would cease. And so, we contemplate, we wonder, we fixate, we become consumed with the "what ifs."

He is describing one of the processes of grief.

For more on how to manage grief, please see March 5, 2018, CQ Episode 1011: "How Do You Find Your Way Through Grief?"

> CONVICTION TO NEUTRALIZE INTELLECTUAL DOUBT: KNOWING THAT WE ARE DRIVEN TO A HIGHER STANDARD.

Clarity is firmness of thought. Conviction is the fire of action. The fire of our actions must be based on clarity or it will fizzle out.



Precious promise of God:

<u>Psalm 34:15</u>: (NASB) The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry.

We can be assured that God hears us in our need to grow, change and gain spiritual wisdom.



Knowing what Christianity's call requires of us is a really helpful, doubtfighting step. What else can we do to deepen the clarity of our mission and inspire deeper conviction?

Consistent study, prayer, testimonies of how the Lord is teaching us lessons in our Christian walk. As we testify to the brotherhood we get feedback from them to make sure that we are spiritually focused. It also helps to observe others in their Christian walk. It is important to remember our "Ebenezer Experiences." In <u>1 Samuel 7</u>, God sent thunder against the enemy which confused them and Israel had the victory. In <u>verse 12</u>, Samuel took a stone and name it Ebenezer, saying *Hitherto hath the Lord helped us*, to remind all of the Israelites of what God did for them. We need to look back on our Christian walk and remember the times the Lord protected us or overruled an experience for us. This will strengthen us.

Thomas' doubt about the risen Lord is another example of intellectual doubt. Side Note - most doubt is a combination of intellect and emotion but driven by one or the other. We should understand if the doubt is primarily intellectual or primarily emotional.

Thomas' doubt was intellectual because he needed evidence:

John 20:24-29: (NASB) ²⁴But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples were saying to him, we have seen the Lord! But he said to them, Unless I see in his hands the imprint of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Thomas was emphatic that he needed physical evidence. How did Jesus alleviate Thomas's doubt?

²⁶After eight days his disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, peace be with you. ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, reach here with your finger, and see my hands; and reach here your hand and put it into my side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.

Clarity to combat intellectual doubt:

Sometimes the proof sought for overwhelmingly appears!



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²⁸Thomas answered and said to him, my Lord and my God! ²⁹Jesus said to him, because you have seen me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.

Jesus gave Thomas what he needed. He gently expressed to Thomas that he had the opportunity to have that conviction even before he appeared directly to him.

CONVICTION TO NEUTRALIZE INTELLECTUAL DOUBT: ONCE THE INTELLECT IS SATISFIED, CONVICTION CAN PLOW FORWARD!

Precious promise of God:

<u>Philippians 1:6</u>: (NASB) For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

God is building our characters in a precise way, to reach all the potential we can through Him.

Philippians 4:13: (NASB) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

God understands the human frame and gives us many ways to fight doubt.

What if we have a history that reflects a lot of doubts? How do we face it and learn from it?

This is a particularly difficult question for many. We look back on our experiences and see the flaws, see the faith that was immature and see the poor judgments and all of this can bring a whole new level of doubt. The good news is, thinking about these things can also bring a new level of faith as well. Let's go to a before and after accounting of the Apostle Peter for perspective and answers. It is important to recognize what causes the majority of our doubts (intellectual or emotional) and then act in accordance with the remedies.

(1) Prayer of doubt - part one, Faith and Doubt, Greg Tonkinson, TEDx

• I found myself with my highest grievances levied against none other than God Almighty. A unilateral prayer I had with God five days after the accident and as was recorded in my journal: "Dear God, the pain that is beginning to set in right now is so intense. I can't see your goodness. I know you're near, but I don't want that. I want my wife back. I wanted us to grow old and to die and to experience heaven together. So, what happened to that plan? Why was that plan so wrong? And why do you find it so appalling for me to want to watch my wife love on our kids for a few more years? And now that you've taken her God, when's it my turn? And how awful would it be if you decided to take me home and leave our kids without a mother or a father?...

He shows such honesty in his grief. At times when we do not know what to do we take it out on God.



Doubt: Strongs #1365 distazo properly, to duplicate, to waver (in opinion)

Peter walking on the water - doubts of emotion:

<u>Matthew 14:26-33</u>: (NASB) ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified...²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, take courage, it is I; do not be afraid. ²⁸Peter said to him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. ²⁹And he said, Come! And Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

Peter's faith is intact as he sees only Jesus and ignores the impossibility and the storm.

Peter HAD both clarity and conviction to combat emotional doubt!

³⁰But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me! ³¹Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and took hold of him, and said to him, you of little faith, why did you doubt <1365>? ³²When they got into the boat, the wind stopped.

Peter's clarity stayed. He said, *Lord save me!* His conviction waivered as he allowed his fears to ascend. His clarity made him have the instinct to reach toward Jesus. He turned away for a moment and then refocused.



(I)) Prayer of doubt - part two, Faith and Doubt, Greg Tonkinson, TEDx

• You couldn't have changed your plan by one minute? One minute and that stoplight wouldn't have been red. One minute. So, no I can't see your goodness. All I can see is you allowing my wife to be killed. All I can see is you allowing my kids to live without a mother. So, how wrong is that God?" That's a dangerous place to be - questioning and arguing with the God of all creation. And I think I would have been swallowed up in the doubt had it not been for the many examples that I found while reading, ironically, the Bible.

He acknowledged that he was not in a good place. What he did to rectify it was to stay in the Scriptures.



Did Peter fail or succeed in his walking on the water experience? What can we apply to our own doubts from Peter's?

He was the only one who got out of the boat. He was just frightened by the circumstances and his faith had not grown up yet. We need to keep our clarity strong and know our conviction can fail us, but we need to get back up. Jesus was a perfect man. Peter was not perfect, and we can all relate to that. The lesson of forgiveness helps us start anew. Could accepting forgiveness help us with doubt? Yes, but we need to live that forgiveness.

A hero is someone who, in spite of weakness, doubt or not always knowing the answers, goes ahead and overcomes anyway. – Christopher Reeve

That is conviction!

SERIOUS intellectual doubts faced and conquered. The Apostle Peter and the call to the Gentiles:

<u>Acts 10:17-20</u>: (NASB) ¹⁷Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius...appeared at the gate... ¹⁹While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men are



looking for you. ²⁰But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings <1252>, for I have sent them...

Peter was UTTERLY obedient to the vision. If anything ever gave him cause to doubt, it was the message that God was now giving him. His ability to overcome his own well-founded doubts led to his having the strength and leadership to help others with theirs.

<u>Acts 11:1-4</u>: (NASB) ¹Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ²And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, ³saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them. ⁴But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence saying...

He explained what happened. He was not shaken by it. He said this is what God opened up to us. He was able to confront serious social doubts of the whole group and put something bigger in place.

Clarity to combat intellectual doubt: Peter observed, absorbed and obeyed God's word!



Precious promise of God: Psalm 119:105: (NASB) Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

> CONVICTION TO NEUTRALIZE INTELLECTUAL DOUBT: PETER WENT WITH GENTILE STRANGERS WITHOUT HESITATION!

<u>Psalm 37:23</u>: (NASB) The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

Peter's steps literally were set up and established by God. God delighted in Peter doing something that was far out of his comfort zone and caused initial doubt.

> What about when doubt is not really big, but it causes us to pause, consider and even question? Christian Questions ©2018 all rights reserved

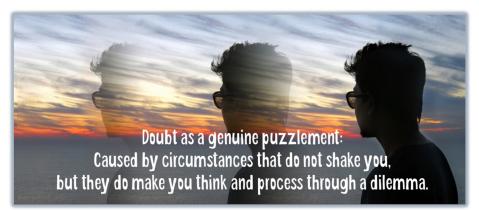


Just because we may not have enormous doubts does not mean we are exempt from doubting. Here again we will begin to see, that doubting, IF handled with spiritual maturity can be a productive tool of spiritual growth. Yes, we can and should strive to create a doubt-friendly mental environment.

(I))Ask good questions, Should Christians Have Doubts, Impact 360 Institute

• By asking honest questions and looking for answers we gain confidence in the Bible. The problem is not asking questions, the problem is <u>not</u> asking questions. Because, if you don't have questions you can't find answers. So, raise your doubts, ask good questions, search for answers, and grow in your understanding and confidence in God's word.

All doubt is not bad. It can be good to have doubt because doubt can lead us to further clarity. We can use doubt as a tool to grow or doubt can bury us. We need to decide which way to go.



This doubt can bring honor to God!

<u>2 Corinthians 4:7-11</u>: (NASB) ⁷But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

Clarity to combat intellectual AND emotional doubt:

Our lack and inconsistency are for the purpose of giving honor to God.



When we come to a crossroads and need to make a decision, the Lord will lead us in a way that will be a righteous decision.

<u>Isaiah 30:21</u>: (KJV) And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.



(1)) Doubt brings decision, Faith and Doubt, Greg Tonkinson, TEDx

Somewhere along the line though, the exhilaration of doubting him was replaced with a serious decision I had to make, a conclusion I had to arrive at. And that was either God was in control even of my trials and tragedies or that God isn't in control and will forever put up with my doubting and speculating, even change the course of history based on my suggestions. But if that's the case, then isn't it true that a higher power by definition ceases to be just that - a higher power but is reduced to a glorified peer, just with much cooler titles. This peace I had known because of my faith for over thirty years was being eroded and I wanted that peace back. So, I arrived at a significant crossroads, and that was either I'm going to spend my remaining days doubting God's plan or I'm going to spend my remaining days doing His plan.

What a wonderful experience of tragedy turned to something positive. What will I spend my remaining days doing as a result of my doubt? Doubting His plan or doing His plan? How we see God reflects the clarity. If the clarity is not there, the conviction cannot follow.

⁸we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; **perplexed <639>**, but not **despairing <1820>**; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

Perplexed: Strongs #639 aporeo; to have no way out, i.e. be at a loss (mentally)

Despairing: Strongs #1820 exaporeomai; to be utterly at a loss, i.e. despond

This doubt can stymie us, but it does not bring us to utter despair - Why?

¹⁰always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

CONVICTION

TO COMBAT INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL DOUBT: OUR AFFLICTIONS, DOUBTS, PERSECUTIONS AND DEFEATS ARE ALL FOR THE PURPOSE OF MANIFESTING JESUS IN OUR IMPERFECT SELVES!



To be able to get there, we must have clarity which is firmness of thought. Between clarity, fire of action - conviction, that is how we deal with emotional and intellectual doubt.

(I)) Make space for doubt, Faith and Doubt, Greg Tonkinson, TEDx

• Tragedy is universal. We're all in this together. Perhaps we would be better served if we opened up more spaces free of judgment. For people to come to and share their aches and anguishes and agonizes. Regardless of our religious dispositions, I've learned there is incredible power in understanding and empathizing with people who are in pain. And so, may we rejoice and weep together and may we do it well.





If doubt can be a faith development tool, is there a way for MY doubt to be helpful to YOUR faith?

No one is perfect. We all have highs and lows. We raise each other up from our doubts. That is how the body of Christ works as a team. It is powerful to rely on the Holy Spirit (God's power and influence) working in others to give us insight and to lift us up. We can look back and use our doubt as a tool to help others.



Finally, doubt used to create a dilemma: This next example of doubt is from those (the Pharisees) who are using their doubt as bait for fulfilling their own agenda...



The Pharisees had doubts about Jesus and they were using it as bait to create trouble:

John 10:23-26: (NASB) ²³it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴The Jews then gathered around him, and were saying to him, how long will You keep us in suspense? (Literally, how long will you lift up our soul?) If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. ²⁵Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in my Father's name, these testify of me. ²⁶But you do not believe because you are not of my sheep.

Such doubt is fed by pride and deceit and it will ultimately lead to judgment upon those who have it.

Two final promises to give us clarity and conviction in our overcoming of our doubts:

<u>Proverbs 3:5-6</u>: (NASB) ⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

<u>Matthew 6:32-33</u>: (NASB) ³²...for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Put God first in whatever the doubt or circumstances might be. Doubt is intellectual, it is emotional, and it is a combination of both. The recipe for dealing with it is always clarity and conviction. We need to understand where our doubt comes from so that we can do the right things to alleviate the troubles of that doubt and share it with others, so they can grow by it. Make doubt a tool.



So, how do we develop endurance? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions... Think about it...!



Join us next week for our podcast on May 14, 2018: Is the Hell of Christian Tradition Taught in the Bible?

Bonus Material!

The beginning of wisdom is found in doubting; by doubting we come to the question, and by seeking we may come upon the truth. – Pierre Abelard

Doubt can motivate you, so don't be afraid of it. Confidence and doubt are at two ends of the scale, and you need both. They balance each other out. – Barbra Streisand

Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is one element of faith. - Paul Tillich

Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will. - Suzy Kassem

People may doubt what you say, but they will believe what you do. - Lewis Cass

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence. — Helen Keller

Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies. – Mother Teresa

Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith. - Steve Jobs

The following is a word study on doubt. There are several words with several shades of meaning:

Doubt: Strongs #1252 diakrino; to separate thoroughly, i.e. (literally and reflexively) to withdraw from, or (by implication) oppose; figuratively, to discriminate (by implication, decide), or (reflexively) hesitate

KJV - contend, make (to) differ (-ence), discern, doubt, judge, be partial, stagger, waver

Translated as: doubt 5 times, judge 3 times, discern 2 times, contend 2 times, waver 2 times, miscellaneous 5 times

to separate, make a distinction, discriminate, to prefer

 to learn by discrimination, to try, decide
 to determine, give judgment, decide a dispute
 to withdraw from one, desert

to separate one's self in a hostile spirit, to oppose, strive with dispute, contend

5) to be at variance with one's self, hesitate, doubt



All uses listed here - the bold texts are where the word means some kind of doubt.

<u>Matthew 16:3</u>: (KJV) And in the morning, it will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowing. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern <1252> the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

<u>Matthew 21:21</u>: (KJV) Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt <1252> not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

<u>Mark 11:23</u>: (KJV) For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall <1252> not doubt <1252> in his heart but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

<u>Acts 10:20</u>: (KJV) Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting <1252> nothing: for I have sent them.

<u>Acts 11:2</u>: (KJV) And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended <1252> with him,

<u>Acts 11:12</u>: (KJV) And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing <u>doubting</u> <1252>. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

Acts 15:9: (KJV) And put no difference <1252> between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Romans 4:20: (KJV) He **staggered** <1252> not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

Romans 14:23: (KJV) And he that **doubteth** <1252> is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

<u>1 Corinthians 4:7</u>: (KJV) For who maketh <<u>1252</u>> thee to differ <<u>1252</u>> from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

<u>1 Corinthians 6:5</u>: (KJV) I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge <1252> between his brethren?

1 Corinthians 11:29: (KJV) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning <1252> the Lord's body.

<u>1 Corinthians 11:31</u>: For if we would judge <1252> ourselves, we should not be judged.

<u>1 Corinthians 14:29</u>: Let the prophets speak two or three and let <<u>1252</u>> the other <u>judge</u> <<u>1252</u>>.

James 1:6: (KJV) But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering <1252>. For he that wavereth <1252> is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

<u>James 2:4</u>: (KJV) Are ye <1252> not then partial <1252> in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

<u>Jude 1:9</u>: (KJV) Yet Michael the archangel, when contending <1252> with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.



Jude 1:22: (KJV) And of some have compassion, making a difference <1252>:

Doubt: Strongs #1365 distazo (dis-tad'-zo); properly, to duplicate, i.e. (mentally) to waver (in opinion)

Only two uses:

<u>Matthew 14:30-31</u>: (NASB) ³⁰But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me! ³¹Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, you of little faith, why did you doubt <1365>?

<u>Matthew 28:8-10, 16-18</u>: (NASB) ⁸And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to his disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid; go and take word to my brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see me... ¹⁶But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some were doubtful <1365>. ¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Doubt: Strongs #1365 dis (dece); twice

All uses:

<u>Matthew 14:31</u>: (KJV) And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou **doubt** <1365>?

<u>Matthew 28:17</u>: (KJV) And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted <1365>.

Doubt: Strongs #639 aporeo; to have no way out, i.e. be at a loss (mentally) KJV - (stand in) doubt, be perplexed

All uses:

John 13:22: (KJV) Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting <639> of whom he spake.

<u>Acts 25:20</u>: (KJV) And because I doubted <639> of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

<u>2 Corinthians 4:8</u>: (KJV) We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are **perplexed** <639>, but not in despair;

<u>Galatians 4:20</u>: (KJV) I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in <u>doubt <639></u> of you.

To be anxious - not really doubt but a similar emotion:

Doubtful of mind: Strongs #3349 meteorizo; to raise in mid-air, i.e. (figuratively) suspend (passively, fluctuate or be anxious) KJV - be of doubtful mind

Luke 12:29: (KJV) And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind <3349>.



