

How Can I Doubt My Doubts? (Part I)

Matthew 28:16-17: (KJV) *16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.*



Everybody doubts. So, is this a good thing or a bad thing? The answer is a resounding yes! Doubt can be a godly tool of necessary and righteous caution just as easily as it can be an ungodly tool of imperfect human judgment and destruction. Appropriate doubt, which is fact and integrity-based, is an early warning system that can keep us focused on and engaged in the most important things. This kind of doubt is a welcome addition to our lives and should be counted on. By the same token, highly charged doubt that is primarily fed by feelings and personal preferences needs to be examined and adjusted according to higher godly standards. So, how can we learn to doubt the doubts we should doubt without doubting the doubts that undoubtedly protect us?



Dictionary definitions include:

1. Being uncertain of belief or opinion.
2. To deliberately suspend judgment while we seek additional information.

We've heard the expression to have "nagging doubts" - these can be good to stop us when something doesn't seem right. It is important to question why we feel this way.

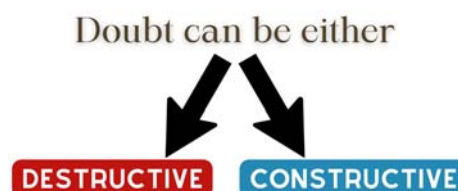
In any and every case of doubt, there is always something we don't know or something we don't trust that provokes our doubt. Are our doubts helping us to look at our faith so we can have more trust in God?

Typically, we look at doubt as an opposite to faith:

Hebrews 11:1-2: *1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval.*

We will suggest that there are some levels and kinds of doubt that are symptoms of a lack of faith - an inverse correlation - the more doubt you have, the less faith you have. The more faith you have, the less doubt you have. However, we will also suggest there are some levels and kinds of doubt that are a part of faith growing into absolute trust.

Doubt can be either destructive or constructive. It's important to dig under the surface.



DOUBT QUESTIONS

We came up with a list of questions to ask ourselves in order to better understand the origin of our doubt so that we can decide what to do with it.

- WHAT OR WHOM AM I DOUBTING?
- IS THIS DOUBT PRIMARILY BASED ON MY HEART BEING TROUBLED?
- IS THIS DOUBT PRIMARILY BASED ON MY MIND NOT SEEING OR UNDERSTANDING?
- WHAT BRINGS THIS DOUBT TO MY HEART OR MIND?
- DOES THIS DOUBT HELP OR HINDER MY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE?

As we said, doubt can be **DESTRUCTIVE** or **CONSTRUCTIVE**. Sometimes doubt is good and leads to solid truth and faith.

Doubt can have both **CONSTRUCTIVE** and **DESTRUCTIVE** elements working at the same time. We will develop that further in this two-part series. These questions are designed to be mirror questions to check where we are. What is causing our doubt? If we can isolate the cause, we can begin to understand how it works.

Let's begin where doubt was introduced to humanity.

We're going to talk about Eve, whose doubt came as a result of deception. Forget all you know about Satan. To Eve, he would have been Lucifer, a representative of God. In **Ezekiel 28:11-16**, Lucifer is allegorically described as the *king of Tyre*. You were ...full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ...You were in Eden, the garden of God. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. That word *anointed* has the sense of expansion, outspread, that is with outstretched wings. So, we believe Lucifer was placed in Eden to protect Adam and Eve as a covering angel.

We are not told why he took the form of a serpent, but Genesis 3:1 says:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?

Satan asked a question. Why? He was testing what Eve knew and what she believed to be true. Why? So that he could subvert the authority of God's command and replace it with his own leading. He had an agenda and asked this question, knowing full well the answer. The question was structured in such a way to plant a seed of doubt: *Did God REALLY say this to you? Hmmm, well, that's odd, isn't it?*

Let's look at Eve's immediate response:

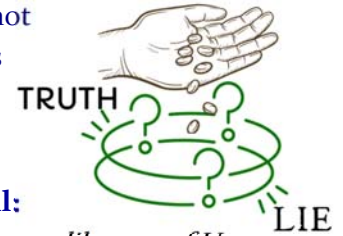
Genesis 3:2-3: *2 The woman said to the serpent, From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.*

Eve knew the answer. She knew where the tree was and not to go near it.

Up to this point she had no reason to challenge the answer, until the next statement:

Genesis 3:4-5: *4 The serpent said to the woman, You surely will not die! 5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*

Satan's response was powerful and affirmative. *You surely will NOT die!* He makes a plain, strong statement. Eve would have looked up to Lucifer in this scenario. She was seeing an authority giving her an affirmative statement that says death is not going to happen. The seeds of doubt were planted! How? Satan's response was a partial truth mixed with a serious lie.



The truth was expressed in the power of the tree of life in conjunction with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

Genesis 3:22: *Then the LORD God said, Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.*

When God says, *the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil*, that was the truth. Satan told the truth in **Genesis 3:5** when he promised Eve the result of eating from the tree would be the knowledge of good and evil. Satan's lie was a blatant omission of God's command not to eat from the tree, and that death would absolutely come as a result of their disobedience.



Satan quotes a partial truth (they would gain the knowledge of good and evil, but prematurely, before they were ready for it) and then continues with his lie (they would not die).

Here is what God does to fulfill what He said would happen as a result of disobedience:

Genesis 3:23: *Therefore the LORD God sent him out from the Garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.*

To be cut off from the tree of life was to be cut off from eternal life. Adam started the dying process. In 2 Peter 3:8, we learn that *a day to the Lord is as a thousand years*. Adam lived 930 years – not even that one “day.”

Satan acknowledged part of what God said, but left out crucial pieces of it. It is said that an effective lie always has a little bit of truth in it. We know who invented that technique!

We can see why doubt arises here. An authority figure in the Garden is giving Eve unexpected information. There is a reasonableness to her doubt. But what is the most important thing?

With this new “knowledge,” Eve made a choice:

Genesis 3:6: *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*

Satan had her eating right out of his hands, so to speak. Her doubt led to sin, misery and death.

What kind of doubt was Eve’s doubt? Should she have doubted her doubt?

Let’s go through our list of Doubt Questions.

DOUBT QUESTIONS

- **WHAT OR WHOM WAS EVE DOUBTING?**
 She was doubting the Almighty God. She knew God’s instructions because she was able to repeat them, but Satan contradicted God’s consequences and made it seem to Eve like God was lying or holding back pertinent information. She had no experience with anyone contradicting God.
- **WAS HER DOUBT PRIMARILY BASED ON HER HEART BEING TROUBLED?**
 It seems like Satan manipulated her emotions in order to lead her astray. Our feelings generally manifest before we think or reason things out.
- **WAS THIS DOUBT PRIMARILY BASED ON HER MIND NOT SEEING OR UNDERSTANDING?**
 No - she told Satan exactly what God said, and even added that she wasn’t supposed to touch the tree – that part wasn’t in the original command, so maybe it’s what Adam told her just to make doubly sure they weren’t tempted to go near it. This tells us she understood the instructions.
- **WHAT BROUGHT THIS DOUBT TO HER HEART?**
 Lucifer was the protector of the Garden of Eden, that “covering cherub” – so she likely saw him as someone in authority if she knew he was the serpent. We aren’t told why she wasn’t shocked a snake could talk, so there’s a lot of conjecture. In any case, she took the word of a created being instead of going back to her Creator to ask for clarification. She accepted new information without asking why it would change.
- **DID THIS DOUBT HELP OR HURT HER LIFE EXPERIENCE?**
 Obviously, the tragic results affect us all to this day. This was absolutely **DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT**. She doubted God. She allowed Satan’s influence to override the command of God. God is always our highest authority.

We can see that when we ask these five questions, it opens up the doubt and makes it plain, simple and straightforward. We present what we are doubting and why. And then here are the consequences. We can see the internal workings of our own doubt.

It is so important for us to be able to ask questions like this so we can understand when we should be doubting our doubt.

Eve's doubt was DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT as it was stimulated by evil deception:

2 Corinthians 11:3: *But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his **craftiness** <3834> (or “trickery” in some translations), your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*

Craftiness/trickery: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3834

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1. craftiness, cunning; 2. a specious or false wisdom

Specious: superficially plausible, but actually wrong: "a specious argument" misleading in appearance, especially misleadingly attractive.

Is anything in our society “especially misleadingly attractive”? Satan has used the exact same trap over and over again for thousands of years – and mankind keeps falling for it! Eve's doubt was instigated by Satan's “superficially-plausible” and “misleadingly-attractive” lie of a direct contradiction of the word of God.

Satan will try anything to plant doubt no matter how simple or outrageous. Sin is misleadingly attractive; peer pressure of society and those in our close association reinforce our doubt of what is right and wrong, as the lines are blurred more and more.

We can look at **DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT** and pinpoint all the reasons why it is destructive. This gives us a reason to have constructive doubt about sin, about Satan and all these things that are outside of the lines of godly righteousness. So we need to really focus and clearly understand how all this works together.

DISMANTLING DOUBT and fulfilling our faith:



The example of Eve is a stark and clear message regarding doubt. Simply stated we are to never doubt God, even when the supposed evidence brought before us seems to be compelling. Any and every time we are being provoked to doubt the word of God we are being provoked to stand for sin and evil.

While that is an important statement, it is also an oversimplified statement - how do we know if we are doubting the words of God? We have all these Christian denominations with different understandings of the word of God. As a result, we need to dig deeply into the word to see how it harmonizes with itself. Then we can be sure that we are not doubting the word of God, but are in fact doubting the traditions of men.

Even though doubt is a common part of our lives, we need to be aware that it can also be a tricky part of our lives as well!

Eve's doubt experience was unique because there was only God and Satan.
What about other doubt experiences that include our own life issues?

Eve's experience definitely establishes a simple and straightforward baseline of any other doubt challenges that come our way. Our next example is another **DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT** account that features the complex issues of imperfect human beings dealing with their hard life experiences.

All doubt, whether it is **CONSTRUCTIVE** or **DESTRUCTIVE**, stands upon "building blocks." We will look at this closer with our next examples.

DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT: A prime example of this is Israel after their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. As a massive group of people, they developed serious doubts as a result of several hard tests regarding their physical circumstances. These tests revealed underlying discontent and mistrust. We will examine just one instance.

Remember, as they left Egypt, they had been meticulously led every step of the way by a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. God literally directed their every step.

In **Exodus 15:23** at Marah, the water source was bitter. God gave instructions to Moses to add a piece of wood to make it sweet so they could drink the water. Everybody was happy. Just two chapters later in Exodus, they run into a similar problem.



This next account is the Israelites' SECOND murmuring for water:

Exodus 17:1-2: *1 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin (this was a place in eastern Egypt), according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink.*

This would not have been an unusual issue – 3 million people in the wilderness with no map of rest areas to be found! We would expect this to come up with a large group of people and livestock in a desert. This difficult circumstance would rightfully cause insecurity.



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: Physical needs change our emotional state and therefore alter our capacity to think with our logical minds. This is the destructive building block of **deep need**.

When we have deep need, especially physical needs, we need to be on our guard to recognize this can be a prime area for doubt to flourish. This is a **DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT**.

2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said to them, Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?

Moses is saying, *Don't argue with ME; we are in God's hands, not mine!*

Managing thirst is no easy matter. Cattle needing water is a circumstance of importance. Children being thirsty is a matter of high-level urgency! Moses' response indicates that he had assured them of God's care. Perhaps he reminded them that this was not their first water emergency – God had taken care of them in the past.

That is the message Moses is sending: *Why do you test the Lord?* God HAS us! Haven't we seen that already? This is where Moses stands, but the masses are demanding water.



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: Physical needs provoke us to a demanding attitude and often press us to reject logical or experiential reasoning. This is the destructive building block of **arguments and demands**.

When we have a deep physical need, we get argumentative and demanding. This blinds us to logical reasoning, and doubt easily builds where it does not need to.

We need to be a little sympathetic because they are thirsty and trying to explain to their kids why the water skins aren't full again. A mob mentality is starting as people are loudly starting to panic – this is a legitimate need! This is a severe hardship! Think of the last time you were really hungry or thirsty. It's uncomfortable, and all you can think of is that you need food or water– now think of being trapped in the middle of nowhere with no ability to get water and no rescue plan.

We do want to pause and realize they had a serious challenge because there were all those people and no evidence that there was any water nearby. They look to the left and to the right and in front of them and there is nothing. What were they going to do? We need to appreciate the reality of this particular doubt.

Exodus 17:3: *But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?*

We wonder how close Moses was to dealing with complete chaos from the people. There is grumbling, and now we are seeing another level of **DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT**.



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: Now the people resort to absurd conclusions. *Why... have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?* This is an absurd conclusion because miracle after miracle, God brought them to safety, guiding their every step. But they are physically in great need. They mix their very real concern with a belittling of God's protective power. This is the destructive building block of **irrational accusations**.

When we, in our doubt, go down the road of irrational accusations, it is hard to recover because we are so over the top that nothing real actually matters. The Israelites are getting more and more angry and demanding. They have become irrational at this point.

This wasn't just "entry level" grumbling. The Bible commentaries on this are very sympathetic to the panic of the people.

(Source: Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers) "Nothing but a very lively faith, or an utter resignation to the will of God, could have made a people patient and submissive in such an extremity."

(Source: Biblical commentary by Albert Barnes) "...the severity of the trial, the faintness and anguish of thirst in the burning desert, must not be overlooked in appreciating their conduct."

Their deep need caused the people to become argumentative and irrational. With us, it could be extreme need or something like chronic pain. We can start to doubt God's care for us, even though He has led us this far. We can see that happening here.

Moses feels the frustration of the people and sees that his very life could be in danger:

Exodus 17:4-7: *So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me.*

Moses asked God for help - good for him! Whenever Moses found himself in a situation, he turned upward and took it directly to God. He takes his concern directly to God! No doubt, no hesitation, just faith and trust! He is worried. There is chaos developing amongst the people to the point where he feels they are getting ready to stone him.

God's response is precisely what it should be:

5 Then the LORD said to Moses, Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink...

Moses has absolute faith and trust in God's will. This destroys any hijacking influence that destructive doubt may be positioned to seize in our hearts and minds. The battle, especially if the doubt is toward God, is in looking for our faith. Where is our trust in relation to our doubt? Moses did not have doubt. It is interesting that God tells Moses to use his staff, *your staff with which you struck the Nile...* Remember what happened when he did that? The waters turned to blood. God instructs him to take the staff, strike the rock and the water will come forth. This staff that is the symbol of the power God was given Moses to protect, guide and nourish the people. God continually comes through.



We see absolute faith and trust in Moses:

...6 And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

A new name was given to this place: *Massah and Meribah*. Massah meaning "testing" or "temptation" because they tempted the Lord here, and Meribah meaning "quarreling" or "strife."

After all God had done to get them out of Egypt and safely to this point, giving them a cloud and fire to follow to direct every step, and even making it so that their shoes and clothes miraculously never wore out (**Deuteronomy 29:5**), they still questioned whether the LORD was with them?

Our friend Tom (who has been on the podcast several times) comments about the severity of the trial and those Bible commentaries being so sympathetic to the lack of water.



“The Israelites shouldn’t have just been quiet about their need for water. But there is a proper way to reverently approach God with their needs. Disrespectfully attacking Moses was not the right way. Moses even said they were putting God to the test, or tempting Him. There is a great contrast between this approach and a humble request. Also notice there was no gratitude expressed after the miracle of striking the rock.”

We have a clear picture of what **DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT** brings us to, and it’s not pretty. God took care of them in spite of the destructiveness of their doubt, but they shouldn’t have expressed their needs so disrespectfully. Moses’ actions were exactly in line with his faith. This shows us that he believed (had faith) enough to act (trust) in exact accordance with God’s instructions.

What kind of doubt was Israel’s doubt? Should they have doubted their doubt?



- **WHAT OR WHOM WERE THE PEOPLE DOUBTING?**
 They were doubting Moses, but ultimately were doubting God. This was absurd based on all the miracles performed on their behalf to bring them to this point.
- **WAS THIS DOUBT PRIMARILY BASED ON THEIR HEARTS BEING TROUBLED?**
 They were physically overwhelmed so much so that the evidence they had of God being with them didn’t make a difference. They were in panic mode, and hearing their children cry and seeing their animals suffer would have contributed to their lashing out. Desperation can be a danger point for us as well!
- **WAS THIS DOUBT PRIMARILY BASED ON THEIR MIND NOT SEEING OR UNDERSTANDING?**
 Their logical thinking was shut down from physical need, or they would have responded like Moses instead of, as Moses put it, “tempting God.” Again, there was a correct, respectful way to approach God through Moses with their needs.
- **WHAT BROUGHT THIS DOUBT TO THEIR HEART OR MIND?**
 A very real need, as they were thirsty and hungry. But they always seemed to have an underlying root of bitterness and doubt that sat right below the surface. They were quick to give up and blame God.

▪ **DID THIS DOUBT HELP OR HURT THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCE?**

This was **DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT** because of their demands and accusations, to the point of wanting to kill Moses, an irrational action which would have in no way provided food and water for them. Killing him wouldn't have solved the problem!

The very last verse in the book of Matthew gives us the reason we should not doubt God through Christ:

Matthew 28:20: *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*



When we feel overwhelmed, we have this plain promise from Jesus. He is with us, and we do not have to doubt our sonship if we are closely following him.

Jesus is our cloud and our pillar. God put him there, just like God put the cloud and the pillar for the Israelites. Jesus is here for us. When we have doubts, we need to look upward for the guidance that will bring us forward.

DISMANTLING DOUBT 
and fulfilling our faith:

This one example of Israel's destructive doubt is a powerful warning about how our own physical needs can subvert our ability to stand firmly upon the solid foundation of Christ. How aware am I of the sometimes-subtle influence that my humanity can have on my direction in life?

The influence of our humanity can be subtle, and therefore, dangerous. Satan's lie included the subtlety of partial truth. When doubt overrides our faith or we doubt God's motives and care for us, we have to be careful.

DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT can be like a contagious virus. Let's be sure to understand what makes it spread and build our immunity against it!

We have just discussed two dramatic examples of destructive doubt. What are the major differences with constructive doubt?

CONSTRUCTIVE DOUBT almost sounds illogical. Can doubt really be a vital tool in learning how to truly walk with God through Christ? The answer is a resounding YES! As we will see, God can and does use our human doubts to help us see the ability for His power and providence to unfold in our lives. We are going to change our focus now to looking at how doubt can help us and build us up.

CONSTRUCTIVE DOUBT: Gideon was a strong yet humble man chosen by God to lead Israel against the mighty Midianite nation. He had no idea what he would be capable of in God's service, so God provided him two important events to reveal his position. These experiences turned Gideon's doubt into trust.



We will look at two significant "doubt events" in the life of Gideon. The first event is in **Judges 6:1-6**. Israel was disobedient and as the scripture says, *they did what was evil in the sight of the LORD*. For worshipping fake gods and other evil acts, God had allowed the Midianites to overpower the Israelites for seven years, attacking them, raiding their camps, stealing and destroying all their food, leaving *no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox or donkey. They would come in like locusts...and came into the land to devastate it*. The sons of Israel finally cried unto the LORD (apparently it took them seven years to finally ask for help), and He sent a prophet to remind them that it was God who delivered them from Egypt out of slavery, and yet, in spite of this prophet, they were not obedient. Israel was getting further and further from God.

We find Gideon threshing wheat in a winepress to try to hide it from the Midianites when an angel of the LORD visited him:

Judges 6:12-15: *12 The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior. 13 Then Gideon said to him, O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?... But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.*

Gideon is minding his own business, threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites. An angel of God appears and calls him *valiant warrior*, saying *The Lord is with you*. Gideon's initial response is not to the *valiant warrior* part - it is to the statement that the LORD is with them. He is living with big trouble all around him affecting all of Israel, so how could the LORD be with them!?

There is **CONSTRUCTIVE DOUBT** here because Gideon is trying to figure it out. He is not complaining, he's looking for an explanation.



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: Gideon immediately asks why. He does not complain, shout or demand, but simply states the truth of Israel's condition. This is the constructive building block of **questioning with the intention of learning**.

14 The (angel of the) LORD looked at him and said, Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you? 15 He said to Him, O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."

Are You sure You're talking ME? But as we will see, Gideon doesn't use his insignificance or insecurities as an excuse for inaction. His response is, *I'm not sure You have the right guy...* but he was still willing to listen. He had doubts, but they are **CONSTRUCTIVE DOUBTS**.



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: Gideon's response is doubt built upon truth and personal humility. He knew his position within Israel, that he was the least favored. This is the constructive building block of **understanding reality**.

This kind of reasoning is simple but so overlooked in many instances where we have doubt. We abandon such logic and step-by-step thinking. Gideon is showing us how to doubt constructively.

Judges 6:16-17: *16 But the angel of the LORD said to him, Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man. 17 So Gideon said to Him, If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me.*

Gideon didn't expect this. He came here to hide and thresh his wheat, and now he's being told he will deliver Israel? He needed a confidence booster. He wasn't ready for this!

So far, Gideon:



- questioned with the intention of learning,
- put understanding reality into place,
- and now he's looking to verify.



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: Gideon now seeks **verification**. He has humbly questioned and comprehended his proposed task in light of his physical circumstances. This is the constructive building block of **acceptance**.

He's beginning to accept that this day is not going to end the way he thought it was. This day is taking a turn that is dramatically different, and he needs to dramatically respond to this dramatic difference.

Gideon needed reassurance that he could handle the assignment God was giving him. This was a legitimate concern! Gideon showed great respect, and God was patient and didn't chastise him for this additional need and request. This is why Gideon was the one chosen. His heart and mind were right, along with his ability to lead.

Next, Gideon prepared meat, unleavened bread and broth and brought them before the angel.

The angel then miraculously produces fire to consume the meat and the bread:

Judges 6:21-23: *21 ...Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. 22 When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face. 23 The LORD said to him, Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.*

The LORD gave Gideon the assurance of peace that Israel would not continue to be overrun or destroyed by the Midianites. After seeing the angel of Jehovah, Gideon was spared from death. He built an altar to commemorate this event and named it, *The LORD is Peace, or Jehovah-Shalom (Judges 6:24)*. Shalom means wholeness in all of life, completeness, welfare and safety.

Jehovah was bringing peace and sanctity back to Israel, and Gideon could go confidently into battle. His faith is so strong that he builds the altar as a peace tribute before he even goes into battle! He knows now God is here for him, and the people have essentially already been delivered. It's as good as done! Gideon recognizes this is the first step of the nation becoming godly again, and he is given the privilege of leading that effort.



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: Gideon is on board. He knows he is called to do God's will. His legitimate doubt has been guided into godly obedience. This is the constructive building block of **trust in action**.

We see Gideon starting to take action. He not only accepted the responsibility, but he marked his acceptance of this responsibility with praise and honor by building the altar. He has trust and takes action, enabling him to move forward to the next step.



Here is the second "doubt event" with Gideon we are going to review. Now the showdown begins (**verses 33-35**). The Midianites and Amalekites set up camp around the Israelites with 135,000 warriors. Gideon gets the message out to other tribes, and 32,000 men are assembled to fight for Israel.

Gideon is new at leadership and has a need to be sure:

Judges 6:36-38: *36 Then Gideon said to God, If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, 37 behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken. 38 And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water.*

135,000 of the enemy to 32,000 Israelites - these aren't great odds! But Gideon wasn't doubting God; he was doubting his own capacity to lead this victory. He needed reassurance that he was capable of doing what God wanted.

In other words, "Help me rise to the challenge. I've never done this before."



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: **CONSTRUCTIVE DOUBT** - Gideon's need for assurance is plainly met, though as we shall see, Gideon would need more. This is the constructive building block of building **personal confidence in God's direction**.

It is one thing to have theoretical, book knowledge, or historical precedent of God's direction in the past, but to have personal confidence in God's direction is what Gideon is working on.

Gideon asked to reverse the test to make sure the result was unmistakably supernatural:

Judges 6:39-40: *39 Then Gideon said to God, Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground. 40 God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.*

Even though the first test worked, Gideon is being called to do something magnificently greater than he could have ever imagined in his wildest dreams. He is asked to deliver Israel from an overwhelming foe, and he just doesn't have the confidence. So he asks God for one more test because he was still worried. He still had doubt.



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: Gideon was not looking for guidance from God, as God had already told him what to do. He simply needed his confidence in God's direction to be sealed. This is the constructive building block of **confirmation and assurance**.

There are times we have to build personal confidence in God's direction. Then we have to have confirmation and assurance that says, *Yes, this is the direction I should go. Nothing is going to stop me; I am moving forward.*

Christians today will “put out the fleece” when they want God to make a clear decision for them. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a clear sign for every decision we had to make? But should we be testing God and looking for direct answers? We don't want to have an attitude of challenge, like Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness and saying, *If you are the son of God – knowing full well he was – command that these stones become bread* (**Matthew 4:1-11**). Or a typical atheist challenge: *If God is really there, He should talk to me right now.*

If God chose Gideon, that meant he could win the battle. As Christians, we want to follow God's will and not our own. If He called us to follow in His son's footsteps, He knows we can do it. He doesn't call those who don't have the ability to be faithful.

We must be careful not to misapply “putting out the fleece.” It's not meant to have God show us whether we should go left or right. It's to ask the LORD to help us establish the confidence in ourselves that He has shown us to do what He has already put before us. This was Gideon saying, *This is bigger than I feel I can handle. Can You help me gain that self-assurance?* He asks for self-assurance in humble reverence for the guiding hand of God.

We might be inclined to misappropriate Gideon's requests. This was a specific circumstance. Gideon wasn't looking for guidance - God already told him what to do. He was looking for confirmation and assurance. He needed to be sure in order to fight a war. We shouldn't be “putting out the fleece,” trying to direct God to make a decision.

DISMANTLING DOUBT

and fulfilling our faith:



Sometimes our doubts are a constructive call for better understanding. God understands the doubt, frailty and weakness of our imperfect humanity and He will if we let Him, patiently guide us to grow into tools of His glory. What kind of doubts am I struggling with? Am I willing to let God build me into a tool of His glory?

This is what Gideon was willing to do through his doubt and why it was so incredibly powerful.

Seeing how Gideon's doubt grew into sound and powerful trust is inspiring. This can help us reframe our own doubts and seek that same growth.

Gideon's constructive doubt surfaced when God called him to work.
Can we have that same constructive doubt after being in God's service?

Yes, it is not only possible, but likely. We are learning that all doubt is not destructive. Sometimes our doubts simply need to be fed the required nourishment to grow into deeper trust. To begin to illustrate this, we want to look at the experiences of John the Baptist and his own doubts.

Gideon's doubt was at the beginning of his experience. We will see that John the Baptist's was toward the end of his experience.

John was a GREAT PROPHET of God. At the appointed time he preached:

Luke 3:3-6 selected verses: *3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight... 6 and all flesh will see the salvation of God.*

John knew he was that voice, and he knew that voice was to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. John had a clearly-defined purpose, and he went after that purpose with everything he had.

He sure wasn't like Gideon in that John had complete confidence in God's will for him. He was afraid of no person or circumstance as he prepared the people to receive Jesus.

The beginnings of Gideon were **complete doubt**. The beginnings of John were **complete confidence** in God's power. There is a dramatic difference, but doubt plays a part in John's life later on. But for now, John takes this clarity and boldly speaks as no one had spoken in the last 400 years – as a direct mouthpiece of God!

There were 400 years between the last words of the Old Testament in the book of Malachi and when the New Testament begins. No prophets were sent to Israel during this time and Greek influence began to corrupt Judaism. John had a lot of work to do in order to get the people ready to receive their Messiah!

His message was one of brutal honesty with no allowance for excuses - he got right to the point:

Luke 3:7-8: *7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, We have Abraham for our father, for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.*

John is talking to the crowds and to specific people in the crowds. *Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.* In other words, have your life produce that which is godly, in humility, to say, I'm a sinner. That's what Israel needed to be able to look back and see. They needed to look at themselves and say, *We are broken. We are very broken. We need God and we need Him here and now.*

Do not begin to say to yourselves, We have Abraham for our father - John is bold here! The Matthew account (**Matthew 3:5-9**) indicates he is talking specifically to the scribes and Pharisees with the people listening as well. He calls them *a brood of vipers*, basically a family of snakes. In other words, don't deceive yourselves into thinking that God is compelled to accept you as those who are specially chosen. While the gospel message went to the Jewish people first, the call to follow Jesus would soon be offered to the Gentiles.

When John's disciples had questions about the rising popularity of Jesus as John's rival, John responded in a doubt-free way:

IMPORTANT

John 3:27-30: *27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, I am not the Christ, but, I have been sent ahead of him. 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.*

John had a humble, beautiful, powerful and clear understanding of his role and embraced it with his whole heart. He realizes that he is the introduction for Jesus, and that's what he is there to do. He has this joy about it! Again, there is no doubt to be found in this great prophet.

John knows his mission is for a limited time and for a limited purpose. He is not number one and has no desire to be. He was showing the people the need to repent for their sins and get their hearts and minds in the right attitude so that Jesus could take it from there.

He was clear, confident and godly in his thinking and teaching. There are no doubts here! So far, so good! Time passes. Fast forward, and John is now sitting in prison.

He is alone, it is dark, dirty and suddenly his life looks very different, and his work is stopped:

Matthew 11:2-3: *2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, Are you the expected one, or shall we look for someone else?*

This is shocking and sad. This beautiful heart who was so clear and confident is now questioning everything he thought he knew about his entire life's work – he is questioning his mission, his whole reason for being. Did he make a mistake? Was there some still greater and true Messiah coming?

How could such a dramatic change in thinking happen to the greatest prophet of all? His disappointment was likely from his Jewish expectations as to the manner of Christ's coming, thinking Jesus would publicly announce himself with power and authority and bring honor and dignity to Israel and all associated with the Messiah.

He had a picture in his mind of what was to happen, and the picture is not happening. Suddenly serious doubt appears.

Was John's doubt **CONSTRUCTIVE** or **DESTRUCTIVE**? We believe it was **CONSTRUCTIVE**. The drama of John's doubt teaches us that none of us - no matter how accomplished we may be in doing God's work - are exempt from questioning circumstances. John was questioning the circumstances - *I'm here in this dark prison. Why? If you're the Messiah and you're setting up a kingdom, why am I here? What is happening?*

He wouldn't have expected his work curtailed so suddenly by sitting in prison. His circumstances seemed unreasonable and unexpected.



Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: John's expectations of Messiah and God's kingdom did not dovetail with the reality and patience of God's timing. John had a vision in his mind of what should be. God's plan was different than that vision. John's doubt was the constructive building block of **reassessing one's perspective and expectations**.

This is an enormous lesson for us because we can have a sense in our own hearts and minds of what should be happening. When it doesn't, we start to doubt God. We should be reassessing and doubting *self* so that we can fit back into God's providence.

Unfulfilled expectations can create doubt and even fear. This is doubt in extreme circumstances of life - "experiential doubt" - that wouldn't normally happen. It is marked by confusion and second-guessing everything we thought we knew. Some of us go through shocking changes – betrayal, divorce, sickness, death – even discovering that what you thought you understood scripturally was incorrect. Extreme doubt sets in that can end up bringing us either closer to God or, sadly, farther away.

When this happens, do we blame God and move away from Him? Or, do we instead restructure our personal expectations and accept that what He permits is for our highest spiritual welfare? It's not His fault; it's His plan.

Jesus' answer to the question from John's disciples was laden with hope, prophetic fulfillment and personal blessing:

Matthew 11:4-6: *4 Jesus answered and said to them, Go and report to John what you hear and see: 5 the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. 6 And blessed is he who does not take offense at me.*

In other words, *Tell John what you see with your own eyes. You see the work of the kingdom right before you. It is exactly what is supposed to happen, how it is supposed to happen, when it is supposed to happen and why it is supposed to happen. It is all good. This is Jesus' comforting message to John.*

Blessed is he who does not take offense at me – in other words, tell John not to allow his faith to stumble in respect to me.

After sending this answer back to John, Jesus testifies to the crowd of the faith, strength and greatness of John.

Jesus makes a plain statement – John was a prophet, appointed specifically by God to send them salvation. Salvation arrived through John bringing them to Jesus:

Matthew 11:7-10: *7 As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces! 9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.*

John's doubt did NOT undermine his message. It did NOT undo the work he had done! His doubt was a needed growth experience.

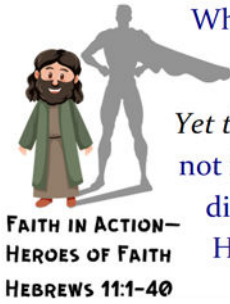


Defining Doubt's Building Blocks: John's doubt was not destructive. He only needed to hear from Jesus himself that God's plan was at that moment unfolding exactly as it should. John's doubt was the constructive building block of **trusting God's will in unexpected circumstances**. That is where faith grows the most!

John grew through that doubt and was deeply encouraged by that knowledge, as we see what happens next.

Jesus then captures the glory of John the Baptist, his absolute faithfulness and the privilege of his work:

Matthew 11:11: *Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*



What an amazing thing for Jesus to say - *there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist.* John was the last of the faithful under the Jewish favor.

Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he – and yet, John was not invited to become one of the disciples of Christ, nor one of the apostles, neither did he live until Pentecost to share in the blessings there poured upon the faithful.

He belongs to a class described by Paul in **Hebrews 11:38-40**. He was in a class with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets, of whom the apostle says, *They without us shall not be made perfect.* He did not receive a heavenly reward because he died before Jesus, but still he was great.

He was great in the sight of God, and we believe he grew in his faithfulness in the darkness of that prison cell until the end of his life.

DISMANTLING DOUBT and fulfilling our faith:

Jesus' own words assure us of John's complete faithfulness. This speaks volumes as to God's compassion upon our own doubts, even if we have been disciples for a long time. The doubts of those who are living faithfully are stepping stones to a faith that has an ever-growing trust in God's directing providence in our lives.

Our faith must grow into a kind of trust that says doubt is a stepping stone because it's a learning experience. This is what John and Gideon taught us, so let's do what they did.

Doubt can be a tool, but it can also be destructive. How am I going to identify my doubt, and what am I going to do with it?

Next week we will focus on Christian doubts, looking at the different levels of doubt revealed in the New Testament and how they help us see how to build trust when we have doubt.

**So, how can I doubt my doubts?
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...
...Think about it!**

All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.



Next episode

Join us next week on **September 25, 2023**

Episode 1302: How Can I Doubt my Doubts? (Part I)



@christianquestionsministries



cqbiblepodcast

Text CQREWIND to 22828

to receive our Weekly Newsletter, Show Notes and Study Questions

Bonus Material and Study Questions

Recommended additional study:

Ep. 1210 – Whose Voices Are You Listening To?

Identifying what we hear, its affects and how to rise above the fray

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1210-voices-influence/>

Ep.1298 – Who is God? (Part II)

Honoring God's name, and how He was described in the Old Testament

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1298-who-is-god-part-ii/>

Ep. 995 – What Made John the Baptist So Special?

Uncovering "greatness principles" in the life of John the Baptist

<https://christianquestions.com/inspiration/995-made-john-baptist-special/>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube:

- **Why didn't God stop Satan from tempting Eve?** https://youtu.be/JyUjpX1akCU?si=c3p_UVAqlyf3A7RB
- **How did Gideon defeat his enemies?** <https://youtu.be/NLSpXLtHcnQ?si=fUdn6dfTFplcdHK9>
- **Why does God let bad things happen?** <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=f56VOwh9I2U>
- **Who is Satan?** <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeZgRyBUYG8>
- **What does the Bible say about Satan?** https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=7_1WRtylBys

Doubt Word Study

These New Testament words are listed in a general order from the lightest or least obstructive doubts all the way to blatant unbelief:

Doubt: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #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

The King James Version translates this word as doubt 5 times, judge 3 times, discern 2 times, contend 2 times, waver 2 times, in a miscellaneous way 5 times

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to separate, make a distinction, discriminate, to prefer; 2) to learn by discrimination, to try, decide 2a) to determine, give judgment, decide a dispute; 3) to withdraw from one, desert; 4) 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 scriptures below are from the King James Version:

Matthew 16:3: *And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern <1252> the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

Matthew 21:21: *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.*

Mark 11:23: *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 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.*

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

Acts 11:2: *And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended <1252> with him.*

Acts 11:12: *And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting <1252>. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house.*

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

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

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

1 Corinthians 4:7: *For who maketh <1252> thee to differ <1252> 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?*

1 Corinthians 6:5: *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: *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not **discerning** <1252> the Lord's body.*

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

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

James 1:6: *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.*

James 2:4: *Are ye not then **partial** <1252> in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?*

Jude 1:9: *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: *And of some have compassion, making a **difference** <1252>.*

Doubt: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1365 *distazo*; from 1364 (which means twice); properly, to duplicate, i.e. (ment) to waver (in opinion)

The Kings James Version translates this word as doubt 2 times

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: to doubt, waiver

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

Matthew 28:17: *And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted <1365>.*

Doubt: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1280 *diaporeo*; to be thoroughly nonplussed

The Kings James Version translates this word as doubt 2 times, be perplexed 1 time, be much perplexed 1 time, be in doubt 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: to be entirely at loss, to be in perplexity

To be "nonplussed" is to be so surprised or confused that you are not sure how to react.

Luke 9:7: *Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was **perplexed** <1280>, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead.*

Luke 24:4: *And it came to pass, as they were much **perplexed** <1280> thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:*

Acts 2:12: *And they were all amazed, and were in **doubt** <1280>, saying one to another, What meaneth this?*

Acts 5:24: *Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they **doubted** <1280> of them whereunto this would grow.*

Acts 10:17: *Now while Peter **doubted** <1280> in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.*

Doubt: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #639 *aporeo*; to have no way out, i.e., be at a loss (mentally)

The King James Version translates this word doubt; doubt 2 times, be perplexed 1 time, stand in doubt 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to be without resources, to be in straits, to be left wanting, to be embarrassed, to be in doubt, not to know which way to turn; 2) to be at a loss with one's self, be in doubt; 3) not to know how to decide or what to do, to be perplexed

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

Acts 25:20: *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.*

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

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

Doubt: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #640 *aporia*; a (state of) quandry

The King James Version translates this word as perplexity 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: the state of one who is in perplexity

Luke 21:25: *And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with **perplexity** <640>; the sea and the waves roaring...*

Now we move away from differing levels of doubt towards more straightforward unbelief.

Unbelief: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #570 *apistia*; faithlessness, i.e. (negatively) disbelief (lack of Christian faith), or (positively) unfaithfulness (disobedience)

The King James Version translates this word as unbelief 12 times

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) unfaithfulness, faithless; 2) want of faith, unbelief; 3) weakness of faith

Matthew 13:58: *And he did not many mighty works there because of their **unbelief** <570>.*

Matthew 17:20: *And Jesus said unto them, Because of your **unbelief <570>**: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

Mark 6:6: *And he marvelled because of their **unbelief <570>**. And he went round about the villages, teaching.*

Mark 9:24: *And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine **unbelief <570>**.*

Mark 16:14: *Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their **unbelief <570>** and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.*

Romans 3:3: *For what if some did not believe? Shall their **unbelief <570>** make the faith of God without effect?*

Romans 4:20: *He staggered not at the promise of God through **unbelief <570>**; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.*

Romans 11:20: *Well; because of **unbelief <570>** they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: Thank yo*

Romans 11:23: *And they also, if they abide not still in **unbelief <570>**, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.*

1 Timothy 1:13: *Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in **unbelief <570>**.*

Hebrews 3:12: *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of **unbelief <570>**, in departing from the living God.*

Hebrews 3:19: *So we see that they could not enter in because of **unbelief <570>**.*

Unbelief: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #571 *apistos*; disbelieving, i.e. without Christian faith (specially, a heathen); (passively) untrustworthy (person), or incredible (thing)

The King James Version translates this word as that believe not 6 times, unbelieving 5 times, faithless 4 times, unbeliever 4 times, infidel 2 times, thing incredible 1 time, which believe not 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) unfaithful, faithless, (not to be trusted, perfidious); 2) incredible 2a) of things; 3) unbelieving, incredulous 3a) without trust (in God)

Matthew 17:17: *Then Jesus answered and said, O **faithless <571>** and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me.*

Mark 9:19: *He answereth him, and saith, O **faithless <571>** generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me.*

Luke 9:41: *And Jesus answering said, O **faithless <571>** and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.*

Luke 12:46: *The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the **unbelievers** <571>.*

John 20:27: *Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not **faithless** <571>, but believing.*

Acts 26:8: *Why should it be thought a thing **incredible** <571> with you, that God should raise the dead?*

1 Corinthians 6:6: *But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the **unbelievers** <571>.*

1 Corinthians 7:12: *But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that **believeth not** <571>, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.*

1 Corinthians 7:13: *And the woman which hath an husband that **believeth not** <571>, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.*

1 Corinthians 7:14: *For the **unbelieving** <571> husband is sanctified by the wife, and the **unbelieving** <571> wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.*

1 Corinthians 7:15: *But if the **unbelieving** <571> depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.*

1 Corinthians 10:27: *If any of them that **believe not** <571> bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.*

1 Corinthians 14:22: *Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that **believe not** <571>: but prophesying serveth not for them that **believe not** <571>, but for them which believe.*

1 Corinthians 14:23: *If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or **unbelievers** <571>, will they not say that ye are mad?*

1 Corinthians 14:24: *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that **believeth not** <571>, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:*

2 Corinthians 4:4: *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which **believe not** <571>, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

2 Corinthians 6:14: *Be ye not unequally yoked together with **unbelievers** <571>: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?*

2 Corinthians 6:15: *And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an **infidel** <571>?*

1 Timothy 5:8: *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an **infidel** <571>.*

Titus 1:15: *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and **unbelieving** <571> is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*

Revelation 21:8: *But the fearful, and **unbelieving** <571>, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1302: How Can I Doubt My Doubts? (Part I)

See:  CQRewind
SHOW NOTES

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1302-doubts-part-i/>

1. What does “doubt” mean? What is a positive aspect of doubt? A negative aspect? Is it good for our faith to have doubts? What are five questions we can use to help us understand our doubts? (Hebrews 11:1-2)
2. Who was Lucifer and what was his job in the Garden of Eden? In what way would Eve have known him? (Ezekiel 28:11-16, Genesis 3:1-6, 22-23, 2 Corinthians 11:3)
 - a. Describe how Satan led Eve to doubt God’s command to Adam.
 - b. Are Eve’s doubts reasonable? Explain.
 - c. What was the outcome of Adam and Eve’s disobedience?
 - d. Is there anything in your life that is “misleadingly attractive” or specious?
3. Using the doubt building blocks, describe in detail how the Israelites in Exodus 17:1-7 reacted to a lack of water?
 - a. How can we, like Moses, fight the “hijacking influence” of destructive doubt?
 - b. Use the doubt questions to analyze Israel’s doubt. Could Israel have framed their doubts constructively?
 - c. Have you ever had a time when your physical needs subverted your ability to stand on the foundation of Christ?
4. What was happening to Israel in the time of Gideon? (Judges 6:1-6, 12-17, 21-24)
 - a. How did Gideon build on his doubts so that they were constructive rather than destructive?
 - b. What did Gideon do to gain the assurance that he could do what God wanted him to? (Judges 6:33-40)
 - c. Have you ever “put out the fleece” to affirm that God wants you to take a certain step? How did it work?
 - d. How is “putting out the fleece” used incorrectly – explain the difference in interpretation.
 - e. What kinds of doubts are you struggling with? Are you willing to let God build you into a tool He can use?
5. What was John the Baptist’s “clearly defined purpose”? How did he differ from Gideon? (Luke 3:3-8, John 3:27-30, Matthew 11:2-11, Hebrews 11:38-40)
 - a. How did John’s doubts come about?
 - b. What did John send his disciples to ask Jesus? What was Jesus’ answer? How would that have been a comfort to John?
 - c. How did Jesus describe John to the crowd after John’s disciples left?
 - d. What must we build in order to use doubt as a stepping stone to grow in our experiences rather than use doubt as a destructive force?
6. Think over the doubts you have right now or have had in the past. Run each through the five questions to determine whether they were constructive or destructive for your Christian walk. How are you getting better at reframing destructive doubt into constructive learning experiences? What can you do differently?