

Faith Problems "Doubt"

The first thing I would like to do is define faith biblically because in this series we are going to deal with our "Faith Problems" *Hebrew 11:1 says Now **faith** is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* In other words your faith is "a confidence that what you believe is true and you feel so attached to that it impacts the way you live"

A "Faith Problem" is something that is standing in the way of you believing in a truth or acting on that belief.

Today's "Faith Problem" is Doubt—a feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction. Not sure something or not sold out to something.

There is a guy in the Bible that I feel like he kind of got a bit of a raw deal. His name is Thomas or better known over the last 2000 years as "doubting Thomas" The reason why I say he got a raw deal is because he was labeled by one account of something he said when he heard Jesus rise from the dead.

Imagine you were labeled by one thing you said or did and it was a negative thing? Drunk Dan, Annoying Alice, so much so that it gets etched on your tombstone. That's what happened to Thomas all because he doubted the resurrection of Jesus until He saw Him with his own eyes.

Background on Thomas...

-He shows up first the calling of the 12. Mark 3:13-18

-Then we see him again John's gospel chapter 11 in which Jesus finds out that Lazarus is dead so he says to His disciples that He wants to go to Judea. The disciples warn Jesus and say that the Jews that are seeking Him will kill Him. Jesus obviously not worried says that He is

going to go and Thomas jumps up and says to the other disciples in Verse 16 "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When they get to the house in Judea where Lazarus is dead, Martha his sister said to Jesus if you would have been here he would not have died. Jesus then tells her that He is the resurrection and the life. After that He weeps and raises Lazarus from the dead. Thomas witnesses this all.

-John 14 we see Thomas again when Jesus is telling the disciples about Heaven. Thomas asked Him in verses 5 "*Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?*"

Then Jesus said that famous statement in 14:6 "*I am the way the truth and life, no one comes to the father except through me*"

-Then the infamous passage in which Thomas doubts *John 20:24-31 So what happened to Thomas? Well he did not stay a doubter. When he saw Jesus He believed. Thomas doubted, his doubt was resolved, Did his doubt hinder his future faith?

Church tradition tells us that he preaches in ancient Babylon, where Iraq is today. He travels to Persia, present-day Iran, and continues to win disciples to the Christian faith.

Then he sails south to Malabar on the west coast of India in 52 AD. He preaches, establishes churches, and wins to Christ many people. When the Portuguese land in India in the early 1600s, they find a group of Christians there -- the Mar Thoma Church established through Thomas' preaching 1500 years prior.

Finally, Thomas travels to the east coast of India, preaching relentlessly. He is killed near Mylapore about 72 AD, near present-day Madras.

Tradition tells us that he is thrown into a pit, then pierced through with a spear thrown by a Brahmin. (http://www.leaderu.com/theology/doubting_thomas.html)

We will all experience doubts, these doubts can be a faith problem or can actually sharpen our faith if we handle them the right way. *The Christian Philosopher Paul Tillich said “Doubt isn't the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith.”*

So what do we do when we doubt? How do we resolve it? How can we use it in our faith for the future? How can they sharpen our faith? I am going to answer these questions by showing you how to **“Doubt your doubts”** *Tim Keller talks about Doubt in his book Reason for God...People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart skeptic.*

Believers should acknowledge and wrestle with doubts — not only their own, but their friends' and neighbors', such a process will lead you, even after you come to a position of strong faith, to respect and understand those who doubt.

In fairness, you must doubt your doubts. — you will discover that your doubts are not as solid as they first appeared.

For example something bad happens in your life and you start to doubt whether or not God is a good. So your doubt about God's goodness is forcing you to say that God is bad, or indifferent or uninvolved.

So if you stop there and live with that doubt you will have an inaccurate view of God.

So what do you do...doubt that doubt, How to **doubt our doubts**

-Learn- Think about the account we dealt with in John 11...Thomas witnesses the resurrection of Lazarus and before Jesus raises Lazarus He said in 11:25 *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,*

Then in John 14 when Thomas asked the pointed question to Jesus *"we do not know where you are going, we do not know the way"* Jesus answered in verse 6 *"I am the way the truth and the life"*

Maybe if Thomas would have paid closer attention when Jesus was teaching him he may have believed He rose before he saw him.

Last week I talked about Biblical Ignorance, maybe you are hearing God's Word but you are not really paying attention. You are like a kid playing video games and your mom is telling you to do something, you are not paying attention.

So in comes something that has caused you doubt and all those years you did not pay attention but now you are ready to ask the questions to learn.

Oswald Chambers said that doubt is not always a sign that a man is wrong; it may be a sign that he is thinking!

There may be an answer, there may not be...find out. Why not take some time out of whatever else you are doing and appease the doubts you have been having.

If you have a doubt, chances are someone before you had that same doubt and there is something out there you can read or listen to for help to get through the doubt.

Descartes said "Doubt is the origin of wisdom"

I believe the answers to our faith that are sufficient for life are found in God's Word *Romans 10:17 "faith comes by hearing the Word of God"*

So what does the Bible say about the goodness of God?

Psalm 100:5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

-Observe- there is an obvious difference between doubt and rejection. Thomas doubted the resurrection but when he saw Jesus He said "My Lord and my God" a rejecter would say that is an imposter. What should we observe? The world around us.

Back to the doubt about God's goodness

-Observe Creation, God said himself that His creation is "good" Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:20 also tells us that God's power is made known to us in His creation.

-Observe The faith of others- Job went through extremely difficult things. Seeing real life people get through amazingly tough situations because of their faith.

-Observe What Jesus did. The GOSPEL is a beautiful picture of the goodness of God. Why? because it deals with the bad in the world and shows us how good God is. HE took the punishment.

-Remember- Back to Thomas what did he say when Jesus was heading back to Judea? Lets go and die with Jesus. Thomas was excited, he knew Jesus was the way and wanted to stick with Him until the death. How did he go from that courageous, lay down your life type of follower to, "I can't believe that unless I see type of guy".

He went through a lot of stuff. He saw everyone turn on Jesus and brutally kill him. That must have been a terrible experience, he was so out of sorts that doubt took him over

Maybe things have been tough...

Marriage, lack of marriage, death of a loved one, sickness, financial problems, parenting problems, people bullying you, work problems. Maybe because of these things you are out of sorts.

Remember the good that you have received...where does it come from. If God is bad, indifferent or uninvolved, is the good that came about in your life just by chance but the bad is from God? That does not make sense.

So remember what you have learned, what you have observed and now take the leap of faith and...

-Believe- look at it this way, you have already taken a leap of faith to doubt and in your doubt you are believing something else.

I wish I could convince you but it must be a personal decision, a heart change, a peace about what you are doubting. *–Thomas Aquinas “For those with faith, no explanation is necessary. For those without, no explanation is possible”*

It takes a leap of faith to conquer your doubts because many deep rooted doubts, are doubts because on this side of Heaven we do not or will not have all the answers.

When we take these steps to doubting our doubts, I believe it will not be a problem for our faith but sharpen it.