

## BATTLES CHRISTIANS FACE - WEEK 4: DOUBT

**Discuss:** in your experience, what leads a Christian to have doubts? What could be at the heart of the issue?

All Christians will battle with doubt, in some way, at some point in their life

Doubt not the same as unbelief. Doubt is not sinful, but it is serious.

- **Unbelief: sinful decision to turn away from God**
- **Doubt: open to God and wanting to believe, but finding it hard to**

### OVER TO YOU: Read John 20:24-31

Do you feel Thomas is justified in his doubts? (24-25)

What do you make of Thomas' response when his doubts are addressed? (26-28)

What about us then? (29-31)

### 1. Christian faith is reasonable

*V. 28: Thomas answered him: "My Lord & my God"*

- The Bible claims that the Christian faith is based on solid evidence: it is rational
- John's gospel: 7 "signs" – evidence that Jesus is Son of God.

*Luke 1: 3-4: Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*

### 2. Christian faith is faith.

*V. 29: Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*

- Not blind faith – but it is faith (1 Cor. 5:7 – we live by faith, not by sight)
- Not scientifically verifiable (but nor are most things that really matter)

### 3. Christian faith is vital.

*V. 31: "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"*

- Matter of life or death

### Assurance: Do I NEED to experience assurance of salvation?

#### (a) No. Only saving faith is necessary for salvation

John 5:24, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

#### (b) Yes. Assurance is possible and desirable

1 John 5:13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (Also 2:3, 3:14, 4:13)

## GETTING PRACTICAL: What can help if struggling with doubts

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### What is at the root of the doubts?

- Intellectual issue / unanswered questions
- Expectations of Christian life not being met
- Moral / lifestyle issue
- I just don't feel it (any more) – incl. temperament, mental health
- Bad experience (e.g. with other Christians)
- God's word/promises not matching up to what we see around us
- Suffering
- Lack of progress in our own lives (e.g. battle with sin)
- ...

### Discuss:

What would you help a friend struggling with these sorts of doubts?

## How to help: use those tools which God uses to work in us

### 1. The Bible

- Go back to basics
  - o As you struggle with questions, don't forget that of which you can be sure.
    - *Romans 10:9: if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
  - o Don't feed your doubts or let them take over.
- Right teaching from God's word
  - o Expectations of the Christian life
  - o Sin/moral/lifestyle decisions – examine yourself

### 2. Prayer

- a. I do believe – help my unbelief (Mark 9:24)
- b. And pray for others – whose feet may have "almost stumbled" (Psalm 73)

### 3. Other Christians

- a. Keep meeting rather than distance yourself from Christians (Heb. 10:24-25)
- b. Listen / be there. Jude 22: be merciful to those who doubt.

### Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

