Your Greatest Doubts and Fears

How to Keep the Faith When Facing Life's Toughest Questions

#1: Doubting Christian: What Role Do Doubts and Fears Play in the Christian Life?

Intro: Our World of Doubt and Fear

"The fear of loss is a path to the dark side." --Yoda

I. Definition(s) of Doubt

A. "Doubt" can cover a wide range of states of mind: anxiety, worry, fear, uncertainty, questioning, despair, unbelief

B. Some Definitions:

- "Lack of certainty about the truthfulness of Christianity, one's own faith, or how it applies to real life situations." (Gary Habermas)
- "Doubt is a state of mind in suspension between faith and unbelief so that it is neither of them wholly and it is each only partly." (Os Guiness)

II. Two Extreme Approaches to Doubt

A. Shaming Doubters

- Some churches treat doubters like second-class Christians, even as potential enemies of the faith; tough questions are discouraged and dismissed

- Biblical Response
  - God is compassionate toward doubters. Can you think of examples?
  - Doubting is a normal part of the Christian life—many of the great saints of old had doubts.

B. Celebrating Doubters

- Some churches treat doubt as the ultimate virtue; a sign of maturity is to be skeptical about everything you believe. "The Sin of Certainty"

- Biblical Response:
  - The Scriptures call us away from doubt and toward faith (Matt 21:21; Jas 1:6); God wants us to trust him with confidence
  - Doubt, left unchecked, can do real spiritual damage

III. Various Causes of Doubt

A. Unanswered Questions
- Some people have just never heard good arguments for Christianity!

B. Personal Suffering
- This may be the number one cause of doubts

C. Corruption in the Church
- "Christians damage Christ's cause more than his enemies and foes." John Chryostom

D. Unrepentant Sin
- Beliefs affect actions, but actions also affect beliefs

E. Irrational Worry
- Some of us doubt our faith because doubt everything!

IV. Battling Our Doubts

A. Don't Go It Alone

B. Study your Faith Deeply

C. Get Wise Counsel

D. Doubt Your Doubts

Class Schedule:

Jan 9: Doubting Christian: What Role do Doubts and Fear Play in the Christian Life?
Jan 16: If Christianity is True then Why do so Many Intelligent People reject it?
Jan 23: Does saying Jesus is the Only Way Make us Arrogant or Intolerant?
Jan 30: Some Non-Christian Are Kind, Wonderful and Happy—Does that Mean Christianity Doesn't Work?
Feb 6: Does the existence of evil and suffering in the world mean that God doesn't exist?
Feb 13: Some parts of the Bible seem morally troubling—are we sure it's a "good" book?
Feb 20: How Do I Deal with Depression and Anxiety About the Future?
Feb 27: Missions Week, Combined Sunday School
Mar 6: If Christianity is true, then how we do explain the bad behavior of Christians?
Mar 13: Isn't Christianity just the same as all the other religions? What makes it different?
Mar 20: What if the Gospels are just made-up stories? Is it possible everything we believe is a lie?
Mar 27: Lots of Christians are "deconstructing" their faith? Does that mean Christianity isn't true?
April 3: What do I do if Christianity Just isn't working for me?
April 10: What if I am Not a Christian? How Can I Know for Sure?