

Equipped to dispel with doubt

Doubt is something that most of us are familiar with in some form or another. There must be very few people who have never questioned whether or not something is true or who haven't felt a twinge of uncertainty about some of their beliefs. But there are occasions when our doubts can get out of control and we find ourselves in a faith crisis. Perhaps that's where you are right now. If so, here are some acrostic-based suggestions for dealing with doubt that you might find helpful.

Distinguish between doubt and unbelief. Doubt and unbelief are not the same. Doubt is often the expression of a struggling faith whereas unbelief is an obstinate refusal to take God at his word. For example, doubt arises in our mind when we try to make sense of why God acts in one way or doesn't act in a different way. On the other hand, unbelief is a product of our will where we make a deliberate decision to reject God's truth.

Offer your doubts to God. It can be hard to admit our doubts to ourselves and perhaps even harder to admit them to God. But, don't despair, he already knows your doubt and he's big enough to take it! The psalmist verbalizes his doubts by asking God, "*Why have you forgotten me?*"¹ and then "*Why have you rejected me?*"² Bringing your doubts to God demonstrates an element of trust in his ability to help you and verbalizing them can separate the real doubts from vague, unspecified feelings.

Understand you are not alone. One of the things I love about the Bible is that it doesn't sugar-coat reality. It tells the story of life as it is. This is why we're able to read about people who knew and loved Jesus Christ but who weren't immune from doubt. The imprisoned John the Baptist doubted for a time if Jesus really was the Christ³ while one of Jesus' closest friends, Martha of Bethany, momentarily doubted his care and concern for her.⁴ Doubt was initially expressed by Thomas, one of Jesus' disciples, when he was told that Jesus had risen from the dead.⁵ Doubt is possibly more prevalent among Christians than you imagine. Perhaps that person whom you think has got it all together is going through the same doubts as you.

Believe God's promises. One of the most frequent questions asked by a person with doubts is "*Why?*" Sometimes this question is answered and other times it isn't. I've found that when no answer comes, I have to remember that God's word is true and can be trusted. For example, the Bible says, "*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*"⁶ There are times when I might not feel it to be true but, because it's God's word, I believe it to be true.

Take responsibility for your thinking. Remember that doubts arise in the mind, the same place as our thoughts come from. It makes sense, therefore, to guard against doubt by guarding our thoughts. No-one can make us think thoughts we don't want to think. Like most things in life, what we think is largely our choice. So, how do we get our thoughts in order? Try this for starters: "*Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*"⁷ I'm not saying that all your doubts will immediately vanish if you follow through on this verse, but doing so will go some way to crowding these doubts out of the dominant position they might currently be occupying in your life.

¹ Psalm 42:9 (NIV)

² Psalm 43:2 (NIV)

³ Matthew 11:2, 3

⁴ Luke 10:40

⁵ John 20:25

⁶ Romans 8:28 (NLT)

⁷ Philippians 4:8 (NLT)