

Can God Fix This?
First Colony Church of Christ
Small Group Series Leader's Guide
Fall 2011

Doubt: I want to believe but...

Doubt can be a touchy subject among Christians. Often it is viewed as a problem of which one needs to be cured. Others view it as essential in a faith journey. However it is viewed, finding yourself in a state of doubt is not pleasant. Uncertainty can be stressful and can cause plenty of heartache.

We know that God is pleased when we trust Him. The writer of Hebrews tells us that "without faith it is impossible to please God." God wants us to trust Him. Jesus told His disciples to have faith and not doubt so that they could do mighty works for God. As Peter is getting wetter from sinking in to the sea after walking on the water Jesus asks him, "you of little faith, why do you doubt?" Faith is what God desires of His children.

We are human and not yet perfect, therefore we cannot have perfect faith. We will have doubt mixed in with our faith much like the father whose son was demon possessed in Mark 9. The man desperately wanted his son healed so he asks Jesus to do something if He can. Jesus responds by telling him the "Everything is possible for him who believes." The desperate father replies, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" His faith and doubt are acknowledged in the same breath. We must be honest enough with ourselves to say the same thing to God and allow others to feel the same way.

An action is not considered brave unless the person acting feels fear, chooses to overcome the fear and act anyway. In the same way, faith is not faith if the person knows without doubt that something is true. There must be an element of uncertainty that one overcomes in order to exercise his faith. When we continue in this exercise our faith is strengthened much like a muscle is made stronger through the difficult work of exercise.

The one struggling through a difficult period of doubt should not be chastised for their doubt, nor should they be rescued from their doubt. On the contrary they should be encouraged to fight through the doubt so that their faith may be strengthened. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:7 that it is not by certainty (sight) that we walk as believers, but instead it is by faith. We like certainty, but God prefers faith because it requires us to lean on Him and not trust ourselves.

As you prepare to lead this discussion with your group, spend a few minutes thinking about your own areas of doubt and uncertainty. Thank God for the opportunity to have your faith strengthened. Pray that those in your group who may be struggling with doubt would recognize the faith building state in which they are and would not be discouraged by doubt.

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Icebreaker:

All of us have a friend (or two or three) who exaggerates his or her stories. We learn very quickly when we hear these stories to be skeptical of yet another “fish” story. Tell the group of an exaggerated story that you have heard (or that you told) of which you couldn’t help but doubt the validity.

Discussion:

1. Some people are naturally very trusting and others are naturally skeptical. Which of these do you consider yourself? How do you think this personality trait translates into our walk with God?

*If someone is trusting of others, does that make them naturally trusting of God?
There is no right or wrong answer here.*

2. Read Mark 9:14-22. The father in this story wants Jesus to heal his son but is uncertain if Jesus can (or will). What kind of things in our lives might we doubt whether God can (or will) work on our behalf? Why do we doubt in these situations?

If the group is comfortable being open about themselves encourage them to be specific. If they aren't that comfortable allow them to talk in more hypothetical terms.

3. Read Mark 9:23-24. The father acknowledges his doubt but expresses his desire to believe. Is it common to experience faith and doubt at the same time? How do you feel when you find yourself with these opposing thoughts?

Every faith has a little doubt in the mixture. It can be frustrating but it is also essential or the faith would not be faith.

4. Ronnie said on Sunday that doubt can lead to stronger faith. What biblical examples can you think of where this is true? Have you experienced this to be true in your own life? If so, how?

Thomas, Abraham, Sarah, Elijah, John the Baptist

5. 2 Corinthians 5:7 states that we live by faith and not by sight. Why is it that God seems to prefer to leave us in the dark? How can our faith and doubt experiences allow us to help other people through their struggles of faith?

God is often content not to reveal the whole plan to us because he desires us to rely on Him. Anytime we struggle and find God faithful we can use that experience to encourage others.

Prayer:

1. Pray that we would learn to respond to doubt
2. Pray that God would strengthen our faith
3. Pray that we would be used to help those struggling in doubt

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