



Where is God?

An Essay on Doubt

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I tossed and turned in my bed, trying desperately to sleep. Questions chased themselves around my head. I tried to push them out, but they kept coming back—questions about God and His character, questions about religion and personal faith. Questions for which I had no satisfactory answers:

Where is God? Is He who Scripture says He is? If He is good, why is there so much pain and evil in the world? Why are there so many sincere people in other religions? Why did my friend's little brother die? Why don't I always "hear God speak" like other people say they do?

While doubts about God and faith come in different shapes and sizes, most of us deal with doubt at some point in life. Some of us wonder about God's existence. Others have no problem

believing that God is real, yet they wonder about His goodness, especially in the wake of a tragic loss or heartache.

Still others flounder through intense anxiety or depression, wondering if God cares and why He seems to remain silent. It's easy to feel that God—if He exists—is not good. As C.S. Lewis said after the loss of his wife,

“Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not ‘So there’s no God after all,’ but ‘So this is what God’s really like. Deceive yourself no longer.’”[\[1\]](#)

And as our doubts come in different shapes and sizes, so does the advice to deal with those doubts.

A few years ago, I heard a preacher talk about doubt. He told us what he told his children when they doubted. His advice to them was simple and straightforward: “Do not doubt! Don’t even entertain doubt. Push it away when it comes to you.”

While I understand his desire for strong faith in his children, I don’t think his approach is helpful *or* biblical. Yes, Jesus did rebuke His disciples on numerous occasions for doubting. But He was also willing to hear their questions. Jesus didn’t just tell Thomas to shut up and believe; He invited Thomas to put his hand in Jesus’ side.

So if stuffing our doubts isn’t the right way, what is? Here are a few responses that I’ve found helpful in my own faith journey.

Be Honest About Your Doubts

Doubt thrives in silence and secrecy. Because of this, we must be honest with God and ourselves about our doubt. Perhaps the best example of brutal honesty is in the Psalms. Again and again, the psalmist lays out his questions before God: “Will the Lord reject forever and never again show favor? Has His faithful love ceased forever? Is His promise at an end for all generations? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger withheld His compassion?” (Psalm 77:7-9 CSB)

David wasn’t afraid to ask questions and to lay his heart bare before God. His questions—earnest, honest, frustrated even—all come out. Yet it’s easy for us to fear this kind of honest doubt and the people who express it. As Philip Yancy says:

“Christians tend to be propagandists. We want to convince others, put on a good face, inspire. And we also tend to ignore the Old Testament, which is where many of the questions (and questioners) are. The Old Testament proves that God *honors* questioners. Remember, grumpy Job emerges as the hero of that book, not his theologically defensive friends.”[\[2\]](#)

God wants us to be honest with Him. Yet along with honesty *about* our doubt, we also need to be honest about *why we are doubting*. For C.S. Lewis, it was the loss of his wife. For the Psalmist, it was that evil people were thriving and not receiving immediate justice. But sometimes the reason isn’t as obvious, and sometimes we’d rather not admit it. More than one young man has gradually started doubting God’s existence after becoming involved in sexual sin.

After you’ve been honest with God and yourself about your doubts, be honest with a trusted person. Find someone who has the patience to listen. Tell them what you’re dealing with, and why.

Seek Out Stories of Faithful Christians

Hearing the stories of other faithful Christians often helps us to make sense of our own story. Pick up the *Martyr’s Mirror* and read the stories of those who suffered for their faith. Read and watch the testimonies of Christians in the Middle East.

And you don’t have to go back in history or across the world: the Christians close to you have testimonies as well. Sit down and listen to a seasoned Christian in your own congregation. Ask them about their spiritual life and their struggles with doubt.

While everyone’s story is slightly different, you will find that many people throughout history have walked a similar path to yours. It’s easy to think that your struggles are unique, but talking to others will change that perception. Find people who have come through the valley of doubt and share your struggles with them.

Don’t Wallow in Your Doubt

Although we should be honest about our doubts, doubt isn’t something to revel in, nor is it a place we should be contented to stay.

This goes against the predominant opinion today—doubt is cool in mainstream culture. Books, music, and entertainment all promote a doubt-driven, angst-filled, relativistic mindset. While it is true that Jesus is open to questions, He doesn’t promote doubt as a virtue. He rebuked Peter as

the disciple sank into the Sea of Galilee, and He told Thomas that those are blessed who can believe without seeing (John 20). And while David asks honest, even angry, questions in the Psalms, he nearly always comes around at the end of the Psalm blessing and praising God.

As Brad East says, doubt is ladder, not a home.^[3] Like the Psalmist, we should be open to asking and listening to difficult questions. We should wrestle with the big questions of life. But those doubts and questions are doors to something bigger. Doubt is not an end, but rather a means to an end. It is a path, not a destination.

Replace Absolute Certainty with Humble Confidence

In my own journey with doubt, I wanted complete certainty and unshakeable proof in God's existence and His goodness. I was able to move on from my nagging, persistent doubt when I shifted my perspective and recognized that life would be full of ambiguity and hardships and that my Christian journey would be one of faithfully believing in Jesus, a real person who is God, even through the times when it doesn't feel like I can prove His goodness. While there is good, solid evidence for God, Christianity is much more than that. It is a relationship.

We can tend to understand faith as believing with great intellectual certainty in hard truths. And while faith does include accepting certain propositions, it doesn't end there. Jesus is not concerned about whether we can scientifically prove everything He says; what He really wants is our faithful confidence in Him and His work in the world. He wants us to talk with Him, to ask questions, and ultimately to put our trust in Him.

Believing in God isn't, *"I feel one hundred percent certain all the time."* It is, *"God, I know there is evidence for You, even though I don't always feel or see it. I choose to believe in the light that I do see and trust You with the rest. I believe; help my unbelief!"*

Are you in doubt? Go to Jesus. Seek Him in prayer, in the Bible, and in the community of trustworthy believers. He wants to hear your questions and your doubt. But He also asks you to take steps toward Him, however halting they may be. He tells you to come and feel the wounds in His side, wounds that are there for you.

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^[1] C.S. Lewis *Signature Classics*, A Grief Observed, (HarperCollins, 2017).

[2] <https://philipyancey.com/q-and-a-topics/faith-and-doubt/>

[3] <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2024/02/doubt-is-ladder-not-home-questions-faith-faithfulness/>