

What Should I Do With My Doubts?

Matthew 11

Overview

Three steps in dealing with Doubt:

Step #1: Admit We All Struggle with Doubts

- If John the Baptist has the greatest ‘resume’ one can have, yet he deals with doubt
- The Bible is refreshingly honest at this point and presents numerous people who had doubts (Abraham, Job, the Psalms, Jeremiah, Doubting Thomas, etc.)
- Even non-Christians have doubts (e.g. Richard Dawkins *NY Times* interview)
- *Warning:* Just because doubt is common does not mean it is not serious; left alone, it can grow and loom and fester and choke out any faith

Step #2: Diagnose Your Doubt

- It is not enough to simply Admit our doubts, but we must seek to Diagnose our doubts
- 3 Types of Doubt
 - Intellectual: this is the type of doubt that asks for evidence
 - Jesus points John to the evidence (Is. 35:4-6; Is. 61:1) to show he is the Messiah
 - Emotional: this is the type that arises out of feelings, not out of facts; it focuses on the “what if”
 - Jesus shifts John’s mind from *sheer possibilities* to the *most likely probability*
 - Subjective, objective, and logical evidence all point to the truth claims of Christianity
 - Moral: this type of doubt arises from a critical heart and from a decision not to believe
 - The Pharisees say Jesus *isn’t* the Messiah because he *can’t* be the Messiah because they *don’t want* him to be the Messiah
 - For those genuinely looking to overcome moral doubt, Jesus points them to the sign of his death, burial and resurrection

Step #3: Examine the Faith Beneath Your Doubt

- Everyone lives by faith
 - John the Baptist had faith that God would bring the Messiah; his question arises out of faith (v. 3)
 - The Pharisees have faith in their own morality and reasoning; they say Jesus performs miracles by demonic agency (12:24)
 - Even Dawkins lives his life based on the “assumption” God is not there; that is a faith statement
- The difference is not if we have faith, or even how much we have, but the object in which it is put
 - Our own reasoning, feelings, efforts, morals, traditions, friends, etc. all fail
 - Putting our faith in one of these things equates to putting your faith in something you know is ‘broken’
- Placing faith in Jesus
 - We know Jesus is faithful because he did exactly what he said he would: live the perfect life, died on the cross in our place for our sin, and raise again on the third day

The Ultimate Cure

- Ultimately your doubts are not answered with cleverness, but Christ
- Jesus says a relationship with the Father does not come from being wise and clever or through human achievement; it's hidden from that way of thinking
- The Christian faith is not reserved for those smart enough to have all the answers, but for those humble enough to come to Jesus; he fully reveals God to us and brings us to God that we might find rest and joy.

Questions

1. Doubt is often difficult to talk about. Why do you think that is?
2. Why is it important to admit our doubts? How can we create an environment where doubts are welcome, but taken seriously?
3. How does the Bible encourage you or discourage you during moments of doubt?
4. What is the danger in doubting everything?
5. Of the three kinds of doubt, what type are you most prone to struggle with? How can you overcome that type of doubt?
6. How can we help someone who is struggling with 'Moral' doubt?
7. Why is it important to see that everyone lives by faith?
8. Why is it important to understand the ultimate cure for doubt is not cleverness, but Christ? How does this encourage you?
9. How can we trust that Jesus will not fail us?