Is it okay to have doubts?

Zanesville, OH | November 25, 2018 | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:**

**Intro**:

* Maybe you have been is a situation where you began to question everything you ever believed, the things you were taught, and the things you have heard from others. Have you ever had doubts and questions about your life and your faith? Why I am here? Is God really alive? Is He active in His creation? Does hell really exist? Is heaven just a made-up place? Questions like this tend to attract negative criticism but they are good questions if we are seeking for the truth and it shows our desire for something more than ourselves. **It is okay to have doubts.**

1. **Doubts are a part of the human experience**
   1. As humans, we are built with and raised with a tendency to seek for something higher than ourselves. Such a path will lead to questions and doubts.
   2. One who shies away from asking questions and doubting some ideas, principles and beliefs will find themselves at the mercy of others going about life blindly and naively. Those who don’t doubt and ask questions depend on the identity of another. Jesus taught us to question things and to doubt the ideas and beliefs of some (cf. Matt. 24:4-5; 1 Jn. 4:1).
   3. When tragedies and disasters occur, it is most normal for one to question their faith and have doubts. Many of God’s people felt this way (cf. Psa. 10:1, 11; 22:1-2; 44:24). In a world where we are sometimes afflicted by painful circumstances, perplexed by dreadful situations, persecuted by enemies and friends and struck down by the arrows of the evil one, it is okay to doubt because this is a part of the human experience.
   4. We aren’t robots without feelings and emotion. Even though we may believe strongly and act accordingly we will have some doubts (cf. Job. 13:24; Matt. 11:2-6; Rev. 6:9-10).
2. **Doubts must be investigated thoroughly and fairly**
   1. Having doubts is not wrong and it’s not sinful. However, we must investigate our doubts and seek answers to our questions. If we intend to find real meaning and purpose it requires time and effort in fair investigation. There are two types of doubts here:
   2. **Honest doubt**
      1. These are those who question what they are taught and doubt beliefs and ideas until they have certain proof. They tackle their doubts head on looking for definitive proof, reason and logic of why they believe what they believe or why they do what they do (cf. Prov. 14:15; 1 Pet. 3:15).
      2. These individuals are not satisfied with cultural training (“cutting off the end of the ham”) but seek to find resolute, sound answers to the things that they were taught and raised in (2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Thess. 5:21).
      3. This doubt leads us to be aware of false teachers and misguided principles that are taught in schools, work environments, social circles, religious circles etc. It prepares us to watch out for our souls and the well-being of others (Matt. 7:15-16; Acts 17:11).
      4. The individual that is honest about his/her doubts will do whatever is necessary when faced with the truth no matter how hard or difficult it may be. Even if the truth is contrary to their feelings, they understand the need to obey it (Matt. 18:16-22).
   3. **Cynical doubt**
      1. This is the person who doubts because he rejoices in doing evil and his desire to establish an identity apart from God (Psa. 2:1-3). His doings are not with a right heart.
      2. The cynic goes around always questioning and doubting but he/she never seeks a resolute, logical, sound answers for that which they doubt or question. They question and doubt for jest and not for truth.
      3. This individual travels around putting doubts and questions in the minds of others (believers and honest doubters) for the sole purpose of creating havoc, chaos and division. They delight in the fall of others to their repudiated state (Prov. 6:19; 16:28).
      4. The cynic hardens their heart and mind so that even when faced with the complete and overwhelming truth they refuse to accept it. They may investigate simply to find errors rather than answers (Matt. 12:38-39; 16:1-4; Jn. 12:37-40).
   4. All doubts, no matter how strong or weak they may seem, are really just another set of alternate beliefs. As such, every doubt is a leap of faith and must be dissected and fully investigated in order to prove that which is true.
   5. If the skeptic doubts the existence and activity of God (divine being) then let he or she investigate those doubts fairly. If the religious person doubts that a woman can’t be a preacher, then he or she must fully investigate their doubts (2 Tim. 2:23).
3. **Doubts strengthen our Faith**
   1. Now, does this mean that we will find all the answers to our doubts and questions? No. But having doubts and questions does a beautiful thing for our spiritual lives. It develops our faith and the need to trust in God even more.
   2. **Abraham**
      1. Abraham is a bible character well known for his faith (cf. Heb. 11:8-12, 17-19). He did not achieve this level of faith overnight.
      2. It took Abraham quite some time to fully trust and depend on God. Consider the Egypt incidence (Gen. 12:10-20), the Sarai-Hagar story (Gen. 16:2-4), the laughing incidence (Gen. 17:15-17).
      3. In Genesis 22, we see how greatly Abraham’s faith has grown since chapter 12. The point is that through his doubts and God’s patience, he grew in his faith.
   3. **Gideon**
      1. Gideon doubted that God was with his people when they were being oppressed by the hand of their enemies. God was patient with Gideon on two occasions and his faith developed (Judg. 6:11-24, 36-40).
      2. In Judges 7, we now observe Gideon (a man of great faith; Heb. 11:32) doing exactly as God says without doubt and without questions. Through his previous experience he grew to trust God completely.
   4. **Thomas**
      1. Thomas was not ready to believe Jesus had risen from the dead unless he saw the evidence for himself. Jesus was patient with him and showed him the scars (cf. Jn. 20:24-28).
      2. Thomas wanted to fully investigate for himself his doubts to conclude whether or not what was told to him was true. This no doubt influenced the growth of his faith.

**When we doubt…**

1. We will not find all the answers to all our doubts and questions.
2. We must seek to be fair, through and honest with our thoughts, objections and questions.
3. The doubts and questions we do have can be answered through God and His word.
4. These experiences help to develop, strengthen and solidify our faith in God.
5. Sometimes we will distrust and doubt, but we must pray *“I believe, help my unbelief”* (Mk. 9:24).