

Learning to Handle Disappointment and Doubt

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Introduction: Some of the most fearful moments in a Christian's life is when we realize that doubt is creeping into our hearts.

- A. The molding of the hearts of men involves great pain and struggle.
 - 1. Paul described the conflict his first letter caused within the disciples at Corinth. **(2 Cor 7:5-11)**
 - 2. There was pain experienced by both Paul and the Corinthians.
 - 3. As a result of an open heart the Corinthians was a conviction of sin and a strong understanding of God's truth that they had not previously known.

- B. Sadly many who experience the pain of guilt and the uncertainty of their convictions, do not end up at the same place the Corinthians did.
 - 1. Many of the Jews would have reasoned like Phillip when they heard the name "Jesus of Nazareth" and the possibility that He was the Messiah.
 - 2. The Messiah had to come from Bethlehem! **(John 1:45-46; 7:41-42)**
 - 3. For many people this planting of doubt was enough to end their struggle. When that struggle ended, so did their opportunity for eternal life. **(Jn 8:24)**

I. Our God provides us a path to certainty

- A. Can I know that Jesus is the Son of God?
 - 1. John wrote that we might believe and have life! **(Jn 20:30-31)**
 - 2. Luke said that one could "know the certainty" of the life and truth about Jesus. **(Luke 1:3-4)**
 - 3. The steps to belief will always be accompanied by obstacles and doubt.
 - a. Jesus' own brothers did not believe at first. **(Jn 7:3-5)**
 - b. They had to reason, test, and struggle. It was not an easy process nor was it a fast one!
 - c. In the end they came to believe in Jesus. **(Acts 1:14)**
- B. Can I know and stand upon "the faith?" **(Jude 3)**
 - 1. Here is where many battles are fought and where Satan has destroyed many.
 - 2. Some ask: "What in the Bible is "essential" and what is "non-essential?""
 - a. The answer for me and you is that I must stand upon what I understand.
 - b. I must maintain a purity of heart that will not compromise what I know.
 - c. This does not mean that I am perfect, or have perfect knowledge, but that I will keep a good conscience. **(Acts 24:16; Rom 14:20, 23)**
- C. Can I know that I am right with God?
 - 1. Satan will use the doubt of possible hidden sin and hypothetical sudden sins to make one experience guilt without possible relief. **(2 Cor 2:10-11)**
 - 2. We serve a God that has given us the ability to know where we stand. We must "continue to believe." **(1 Jn 5:13)**
 - 3. What is our God like? It is in Him that we trust and not in our own abilities and strength.
 - 4. A living faith will always repent when the way of the Lord is known "more

accurately.” (Acts 18:26)

D. Is there room for occasions of uncertainty?

1. John sought more information from Jesus! (Lk 7:21-23)
2. Consider the example of Habakkuk. (Hab 1:2-4)
3. Some of the most effective workers for Satan have in their pride been “certain” about that which should have filled them with doubts.
4. It is not weakness to recognize your own limitations by pursuing further study and prayer on a matter.

II. How Satan uses doubt

A. Satan’s goal is to deny the power of God’s word in our hearts.

1. Without the certainty that God’s word brings, a man cannot stand against Satan. (Rom 8:24-25)
2. Doubt should be a temporary state not a permanent one. It is like a doorway that you pass through. Satan wants you to live in the doorway!
3. Those who live in uncertainty do not yet have a living faith. (2 Tim 3:5-7)

B. Satan uses doubt to close minds. (Lk 7:33-35)

1. It is very easy to raise questions and doubts about anything!
2. Satan knows that throwing “clouds of dust” in the air will stop most from further study.
3. A “sound mind” will not be intimidated by these things.

C. Satan uses false teachers to paralyze and then destroy our faith. (Gal 4:16-17)

1. Often false teachers are good at diagnosing legitimate problems; however their solution is often worse than the problem itself.
2. False teachers will boast about your “spirituality” because you are unsure about an issue they consider “traditional.” They will try to separate you from brethren rather than bring unity through struggle and study. (2 Cor 11:4, 19-20)

D. Some try to advance their own “spirituality” by constantly introducing doubts and then attacking their “legalistic” brethren.

III. The heart that overcomes doubt

A. We cannot win the fight without a pure heart.

1. How did Nathanael overcome his doubt? (John 1:46-49)
2. There are many things that can divide our hearts and block answers that we dearly need. (James 1:6-8)

B. We must fight against the pride that looks at men and weighs the possible consequences of accepting a new truth. (Jn 5:41-44)

1. Men will often disappoint us. Those men may believe different things.
2. Let us never be of the mind to reject the truth of a matter because of the actions of a few hypocrites. (Rom 3:4)

C. It is my prayer that when you are tested that your faith will stand and grow stronger.

1. This is what Jesus said to Peter. (Lk 22:31-32)
2. What was the sifting like for Peter? It was for his good.

Conclusion: Will you begin to turn your doubts to certainty?