

# 5 Day Devotion on Doubt

## How to Deal with Doubt

Hello! Thank you for downloading our five-day devotional on doubt. If you're reading this, it probably means you're searching for answers to some big questions. And you're not alone.

We all face doubt. It's a part of life for everyone, and it's confusing. It can steal our happiness, induce panic attacks, or even paralyze us from moving forward. Inevitably, questions about our own identity or struggles often leave us with questions about God.

When we're in pain, it's easy to wonder if God is even there. We wonder:

- **Has God abandoned me?**
- **Does He care about what's happening?**
- **Why would He let bad things happen to good people?**

These questions are scary. They freak us out because we're scared of the answer. What if God doesn't care? What if nobody cares? All of a sudden, we can start to spiral into fears and anxieties that make us feel so alone.

But despite how isolating doubt feels, the good news is you're not alone. Other people are asking the same questions. Even people in the Bible doubted God. Over the next five days, we will look at stories about doubt in the Bible. You will get practical answers to real questions and strategic action plans to overcome the doubt you're facing. Ready to get started? Let's jump in.



## Day One: On Days of Doubt, Remember

People in every generation have struggled with doubt. It's as old as the Garden of Eden and part of living in our sin-scarred world. But we do not have to be defined by doubt.

The author of Psalm 77 finds himself in deep despair to the point of doubting God's love and faithfulness. In this passage, the writer states:

*“Will the Lord spurn forever,  
and never again be favorable?  
Has his steadfast love forever ceased?  
Are his promises at an end for all time?  
Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?”* (Psalm 77:7-9)

These are big questions. The author prays day and night, crying out to the Lord. (Vv. 1-3). Can you relate to long seasons of despair? The psalmist, Asaph, says to God, “You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak” (v. 4).

Mental or physical anguish can leave us feeling like Asaph, hopeless and doubting, wondering if God has abandoned us. But Asaph doesn't stop there. He offers help to the doubting. After lamenting his anguish, he pivots in his prayer saying,

*“I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.”  
I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples”* (vv. 10-14).

In the midst of agonizing doubt, Asaph shifts his focus away from his suffering to God's mighty deeds. The rest of the psalm finds him recalling God's power. He remembers an event when God freed his people from slavery in Egypt by making a path through the Red Sea where the Israelites could run away from the Egyptian army. He says,

Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen (v. 19).

Remembering this history (Exodus 14) bolsters Asaph's faith in God's power to deliver him from present troubles. Asaph recalls that during the dramatic flight from Egypt, the people did not know how or when God would act on their behalf. They had to trust Him— something they repeatedly struggled to do. In our moments of trouble, isn't it easy to forget that God is still here, working on our behalf?

### Remember God's Deeds

The Children of Israel aren't the only ones with tales of God's faithfulness to look back on. When we look at the stories of God's faithfulness in the Bible, He kept every single promise to send the Savior. God has already done the hardest thing. He has paid the debt we owe so we can be reconciled to Him. In Christ, we look forward to eternal life in His presence where there is fullness of joy; at His right hand, pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). Do you trust Him? On days of doubt, look to God and remember,

*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* (Romans 8:32).

### Take Action!

• **Question:** What was Asaph's process to work through his doubt? How do you work through doubt similarly or different than Asaph?

✓ **Action Plan:** Write down a moment from your life when you know God was with you. Stick this somewhere you will see during a moment of doubt.

## Day Two: In Trials, Let Faith-Filled Prayers Drive Away Doubt

What does it look like to have your faith tested? It may look like Job losing all of his possessions, children, and health, or it may be less dramatic—a lingering illness, a job loss, frustrating relationships, or even something smaller. James understood the struggle and encouraged early Christians by saying,

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* (James 1:2-8)

Large or small, challenging circumstances can feel overwhelming. It helps to remember that God uses hard circumstances to test our faith for a purpose.

The psalmist David praised God saying, “You are good and do good; teach me your statutes” (Psalm 119:68). This is the same David who, while a shepherd, was anointed, king. He was living in the wilderness on the run from the current king, Saul, who wanted him dead. God promised to make David the king of Israel, but it was a future promise. In the waiting, David had many reasons to doubt God. But he testified in the songs he wrote, such as Psalm 119, that he chose to trust God. And God was faithful to His promises.

God’s ways *are* good, though they don’t always seem that way to us. That’s partly because we can only see our moment in time, from one very limited human perspective. God sees every moment in every age from His divine perspective. Not only that, He also plans every moment in every age to work “according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11). Also, God is inscrutable, which means God is beyond our understanding. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). Remarkably, in His lovingkindness, God invites us to ask Him, the all-wise God, for wisdom,

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.* (James 4:5-8)

How can we pray this way, asking with confidence, when we are so prone to doubt? By meditating on God’s faithfulness and growing in relationship with Him through reading the Bible and praying. The more we learn about who God is, the more we will know Him as perfectly trustworthy. “The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does” (Psalm 145:13, NIV). Follow the advice of Solomon, a man Scripture describes as the wisest who ever lived,

...do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you....Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:1-2, 5-6)

### Take Action!

• **Question:** When was a time in your life that a painful moment helped you grow? Did you see it at the time, or did you only gain that perspective looking back on the moment?

✓ **Action Plan:** Write down three circumstances that have caused you to feel doubt. Pray that God would help you see them with His perspective and give you wisdom.

## Day Three: Keep Your Eyes on Jesus

Peter's attempt to walk on water provides a helpful picture for how we can pray in faith. After the miracle of feeding multitudes with only a few fish and loaves of bread, Jesus sent his disciples off by boat and dismissed the crowds before going off by Himself to pray. Late that night, as the boat was being beaten by winds and waves, Jesus went to His disciples by walking on the water. Matthew picks up the action in chapter 14, verse 26,

But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Peter was walking on the water. But "when he saw the wind"—when he took his eyes off of Jesus, and fixed his gaze on the terrifying waves—he sank into the water. Why did Peter doubt? Because he shifted his gaze from the God, who controls the wind and the waves, to the fearful circumstances swirling around him.

When painful circumstances press in on us, it's easy to see them as what's most real, and most terrifying. They often block our view of Jesus. But we, like Peter, have reason to trust that Jesus is standing over and above all of our circumstances.

Before Peter set foot on the water, Jesus assured him. He said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." Jesus' commands—Take heart. Do not be afraid.—were grounded in His person and presence: it is I. That should have been enough for Peter. Add to that the fact that Peter was already walking on the water! He had every reason to keep on believing.

Jesus has assured us the same way. He said, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).

After Peter started sinking and Jesus saved him, Jesus rebuked Peter saying, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" But even His rebuke points back to His assurance. By asking "why did you doubt?" Jesus reminded Peter, and us, that when He is the object of our faith, we can escape the anxiety and paralysis of doubt. Even in the midst of life's storms we are free to trust Christ because He is with us, He is in control of all things, and He is trustworthy.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, Matthew records how Jesus reassured those same disciples, the ones who were in the boat, saying, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus' presence is a gift and a promise that we can stake our lives on.

### Take Action!

- **Question:** What situations cause you to take your eyes off Jesus and look at the waves instead? Is it relational conflict, financial instability, job stressors, fear for loved ones, health crises, or loss of control?

- ✓ **Action Plan:** Write down your specific waves that take your eyes off Jesus. Next to each "wave" write an affirmation that you can tell yourself to meditate on the truth of Scripture.

### Example—

I'm scared when my child does something foolish that might hurt their future. *(Wave)*

My children are a gift from God, and it is His job to protect them, not mine. *(Truth)*

## Day Four: Live By Faith

*I doubt the weather will cooperate. I doubt we'll get there before the store closes. I doubt these groceries will last till the end of the week.* Do these doubts sound familiar? We all have doubts; it's human nature. Living with doubts can be wearying, but some doubts are worse than others. Do you wonder if God is real? Do you doubt if you can trust Him? In light of your circumstances, do you question if God is good? The answers to these and similar doubts can be a matter of spiritual life and death.

It's been that way in every generation. Hebrews 11 recounts a group of doubt-filled people: Abraham took a second wife to try and help God's promise along; Sarah laughed in her old age at the idea that God would give her a son; Jacob deceived his father to receive his brother's inheritance; Moses killed a man; David committed adultery, and Samson followed the dictates of his lustful heart. These and other deeply flawed people make up the collection in Hebrews 11, but they aren't remembered here for those things.

Their weaknesses are not what set them apart, and neither are their exploits. They are held up as examples because "by faith" they believed in God and acted in obedience to Him. They are commended for their faith because "Without faith it is impossible to please [God], for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

### What is Faith?

Mockers say faith is a blind leap into the unknown. But that is not how the Bible defines it. "Faith," says Hebrews 11:1, "is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." *Assurance* and *conviction* are words of certainty. But how can we be certain of something we can't see? This is an especially big question in our materialistic age, where we've narrowed down what's real to what we can observe with our five senses. How do we know it's real if we can't see, hear, feel, smell, or taste it?

### The Gift of Faith

Paul wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is

not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8). We can't earn God's favor by doing good deeds. He sets His favor on us and gives us faith as a gift—that's what grace means: being given something we don't deserve.

How do we get this gift? Through the Word of God. "Now faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). This isn't a one-time hearing. Doubts about God's goodness should drive us back to God's Word. It is there, in the Bible and faithful preaching, that we find the words of life that build us up in the faith and help us know God and trust Him.

### Ask for Faith

If faith is a gift, what should we do when we struggle to believe?

The Gospel of Mark tells the story of a father who came to Jesus with desperate pleas for help for his son who was tormented by a demon. The father begged, "if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus answered, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." Though the father believed that Jesus was compassionate and willing to help, he didn't know if Jesus could do anything about the demon. In the face of this unbelief, what did he do? Mark tells us "Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, 'I believe; help my unbelief!'" (9:24).

This is the prayer of a man who knew he needed more belief that he already had. He asked Jesus to add faith to faith, to strengthen his belief in the One he believed in. We should pray this way, too. When faced with doubt, when troubled by despair, we should look to the Lord and pray, "I believe, help my unbelief!" Don't let doubt drown you. Look to God and ask Him for faith.

### Take Action!

• **Question:** When faced with doubt and confusion, it's helpful to meditate on the things *you do know*. What do you **know** is true about God?

✓ **Action Plan:** Did you know that you don't have to make yourself have more faith? God can give you the faith you need. The Bible is clear that you don't need much. Faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains. Listen to the song Give Me Faith by Elevation Worship today and pray for the faith you need.

## Day Five: Replace Doubt with Trust in God's Word

*The Bible tells us that God is good, trustworthy, just, loving, and strong. He protects and provides for his people. When doubt comes, these are the things we begin to question. Psalm 18 affirms these truths, though:*

*This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. (Psalm 18:30)*

*At root, doubt stems from distrust in God. Unchecked, doubts can multiply. But there's a way to pull the weed-like thoughts in your head that fuel anxiety and doubt.*

*Psalm 1 says the person is happy—blessed—who does not follow worldly wisdom:*

*Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law he meditates day and night. (vv. 1-2)*

This happy person “delights in the law of the Lord”—the Bible—and “meditates on it day and night.” When worldly thinking pops into his head, the man of Psalm 1 recognizes it and replaces it with the memorized Word.

When you are so familiar with God's Word that you can meditate on it at any time, you are well-equipped to fight doubt. Jesus lived this out when he defeated Satan in the wilderness with God's Word.

Satan tempted Jesus to doubt God's plan, forgoing the cross and seizing power and glory for Himself (Luke 4:1-12). With demonic flair, he twisted God's own words to try and defeat the Savior. But Jesus knew His Bible better than Satan did. He recognized the deceiver's tricks and used the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) to defeat the evil one. Jesus skillfully wielded the Word He had been memorizing since He was a boy.

### Memorize God's Promises

If Jesus needed the Bible to defeat doubts and temptations to sin, how much more do we? After receiving God's law, Moses commanded the people saying,

*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).*

In order for them to teach these words, the people had to know them by heart. Jesus needed God's Word in His heart to be ready in the wilderness. We need it too. We may have pocket Bibles, pen and paper, and smartphones, but the moment doubt strikes is no time to Google the Bible. It's then that we need God's promises to flood our minds.

### Speak to Your Soul with Truth

When you memorize Scripture, you are preparing to fight doubt. David wrote, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11).

What did David do with the Word? He talked to himself. Rather than letting his troubling thoughts have the last say, David told his thoughts to look to God, hope in God, and remember God. David rehearsed God's faithfulness, providing an example for us to defeat doubt. The next time you're flooded with doubt, say with David,

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God (Psalm 42:5).

### Take Action!

• **Question:** When you face anxious thoughts, do you talk back? You don't have to listen to your fear. Instead, speak the truth. What's a moment from this week this might have helped you?

✓ **Action plan:** Look up Psalm 4:8, Psalm 34:17, Psalm 50:15, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 11:28, John 16:33, and Romans 8:38-39. Choose one to memorize and work on committing it to memory.

## It Doesn't End Here!

What a journey we have been on together over the past five days! We hope that you've been encouraged to see so many people in the Bible who faced fear and doubt just like you. And even though it's never easy, God gave us the gift of Scripture to tell us what to do when doubts creep in.

Let's summarize what we've learned. When doubt comes, you should:

1. **Remember** what God has already done in the past.
2. **Pray** for wisdom and understanding in confusing situations.
3. **Keep** your eyes on Jesus instead of the "storms" around you.
4. **Ask** God to give you the faith you're lacking.
5. **Meditate** on God's Word when your anxieties are not based in truth.

Now you're empowered to have an action plan the next time you feel doubt. Because it's a part of life (even for people in the Bible), we don't have to be scared of it. Instead, we can recognize the feeling and have an action plan in mind so the big questions don't overwhelm us. God has given us tools to use (the Bible & prayer) that can act as an anchor when our circumstances feel like they might carry us out to sea. And even better, He promises that He will always be with us to help us when we are in trouble. There's no better news for people facing doubt!

Thank you for joining us in this five-day devotional and taking the time to learn about doubt. We would love to continue connecting with you and have more free resources available.



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