



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Summer 2018 Midweek Sermon Starter

Unit 2: No Doubt About It

Sermon Series Title: Biblical Answers for Basic Questions

Sermon 2 Title: Defeating Doubt

Bible Passage: Matthew 11:2-6, 12-18

Background/Context

In a post-modern world filled with cynicism and little faith in anything, it is easy for believers—even those who have been in church all of their lives—to have doubts about their faith. It is important for Christians to realize that doubt is like any other temptation—it is natural, and it can be overcome. Paul reminds us: “No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide a way out so that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). So, when doubt comes our way, we must not hit the panic button and doubt all we’ve experienced to be true. We need to trust that “God is faithful.” Today’s passage provides further guidance in dealing with doubt as we see one of the most faithful followers of Jesus deal with doubt and defeat it through faith.

A. Take it to Jesus
(Matt. 11:2-3)

Think about the person you believe would be the least likely to doubt Jesus. What makes you so confident in the faith of this person? A long history of service to God and His people? A track record of godly living and self-sacrifice? A deep and abiding fellowship with God? If he were among us today, John the Baptist would certainly fit this description and more. When our Lord spoke of His cousin, Jesus said: “Among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared” (Matt. 11:11). John prophesied about the Lord’s coming ministry (Matt. 3:11-12), stood in opposition to the Jewish religious leaders of the day (Matt. 3:7-10), and encouraged others to follow Jesus instead of himself (John 1:29-37). He also personally baptized Jesus and witnessed God’s Spirit descend on Him (Matt. 3:13-17; John 1:32-34).

So, it should come as a surprise to us when John expresses doubt in Jesus. Luke tells us that John had been imprisoned because he had rebuked Herod in his preaching (Luke 3:19-20). While in prison, it seems that John began to have doubts about Jesus. Perhaps he became discouraged and disillusioned. Perhaps he didn’t understand why Jesus wasn’t operating to fulfill God’s plan as quickly as John might have hoped He would. Whatever his reasons, John had the right response to his doubts. He took them straight to Jesus.

Application Point: What’s the source of your doubts? Do you find that you are more prone to doubt when you are immersed in God’s Word or distant from it? Like John, do discouraging circumstances or slower-than-expected developments bring uncertainty? Jesus is ready to answer. Just bring your questions to Him.

B. Refocus on Jesus’ Work
(Matt. 11:4-5)

How wonderful it would be to see Jesus' facial expression and body language or to hear His tone of voice in this (and other) passages. We should be careful not to read too much into a passage, but I find it interesting that there is little hint of irritation in Jesus' voice. If my most prolific follower was having doubts about me and was expressing them to others, I would be more than a little irked. But here we get yet another glimpse of the tender care and amazing patience of our Lord.

Jesus doesn't seem to rebuke John, but simply reminds him of what he already knew. If John needed reassurance about who Jesus was, all he had to do was look at the evidence. That should be proof enough. It's also interesting that Jesus used John's disciples to encourage John. They weren't to remind John of what he'd seen already but were to tell him what they had heard and seen themselves. Sometimes we are the ones doubting and need to be reminded to refocus on the evidence of what God has done in Scripture and in our lives. At other times, we may be the messengers, sent to bear witness to others about what the Bible says about Jesus. Either way, the simple solution for a heart hesitant to believe is this: focus on the facts of who Jesus is and what He has done.

Application Point: What evidence from your life or from Scripture serves as a reminder that God is exactly who He says He is? Why does this event or verse remind you of His presence and care? Don't let new questions sway your tried and true experiences with Jesus.

C. Expect Opposition (Matt. 11:6,12-18)

If there's one verse we would all do well to memorize, perhaps it is Isaiah 55:8—"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." John the Baptist was certainly not the first believer to get disillusioned and discouraged because God's plan didn't materialize how he thought it might. We can safely assume, though, that John didn't give in to doubt and discouragement, but took heart at the message Jesus sent to Him. Though we may not always understand what God is doing around us or His timetable, we are blessed if we continue to walk by faith regardless.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day were the antithesis of John, however. After John's disciples left, Jesus began to talk to the crowds about John. He praised his ministry and his determination. However, in verses 16-18 Jesus began to contrast John's growing faith with the lack of faith in so many others. So many of the Jews had witnessed John the Baptist's life and ministry. But instead of believing, they claimed John was possessed with a demon (v. 18). It was for this lack of faith that Jesus said they would one day be judged. When we follow the Lord, we should anticipate and not be discouraged by opposition; instead we can draw encouragement from the fact that the Lord tenderly cares for His own and justly judges those who choose not to follow Him.

Application Point: What opposition are you facing because of your faith? If it is there, be encouraged—you are experiencing what Jesus said you would. If it isn't there, you might ask yourself why the enemy doesn't see your faith as a threat.