

Doubt: The Silent Killer

“That thou doest, do quickly.” With his ears, Judas Iscariot heard Jesus speak those words, but he did not listen with his heart. For so many days, the question of Jesus’ identity must have haunted him. Was Jesus really the Son of God? Was He the promised Messiah? A continuous stream of doubts may have churned through his mind. What did it all mean? Yes, he had seen miracles—so many that they had almost become commonplace. When the chance came, how could he turn it down? This was easy money. The chief priests seemed so eager to make a deal. All he had to do was lead the soldiers to Jesus. After all, if Jesus truly was God’s Son, He would be able to deliver Himself.

How could Judas know what would come next? The disciples used faith to believe what Jesus had told them, but all Judas had left was doubt. Matthew 27:5 records the end of the sad story: “And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”

Extreme as this account is, it brings out a vital point: doubt will not lead to anything good. Admittedly, we do not know exactly what Judas was thinking, but the elements of doubt were evidenced by his actions. How could someone be with Jesus as much as Judas was, and then do what he did? It is possible he doubted Jesus’ identity and the authority Jesus represented. Faith in God has inestimable value. If we want to be true Christians, we must choose to forsake doubt and to be men and women of faith.

1. • Doubting God and having faith in God are curiously related. As Christians, we have faith in God, yet doubt often tags along as a nagging reminder to question the moves we make. When a person doubts God, faith is shoved aside, and visible evidence becomes a necessary prop for believing. It is vital that we resist doubt and take to heart the command, “only believe.” Consider the account of Peter in Matthew 14:25-31. He stepped out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus until . . . How did Jesus’ comment to him reflect the relationship between faith and doubt?

2. In our society, the level of trust has changed. Not locking your house used to symbolize a trust in your neighbors. Today, the multiple lock system on your door cries loudly, “I can’t trust. I don’t believe in people’s integrity.” Experience has taught us that locking our houses is the prudent thing to do. If you’ve been robbed once, you won’t forget.

In the same way, if we trust someone, only to learn that we made a mistake, we are not as ready to trust that person again. The reverse is also true. If we trust someone and they prove trustworthy, we are ready to rely upon that person in the future. Following up on this thought, describe why we can be assured that our confidence in God is not misplaced. Illustrate your description with specific examples from your own knowledge or experience.

3. At some point in life, most of us have thought: Nothing will ever change; This situation will never improve; These problems in my life will never go away. Think about it again! What were the circumstances surrounding you when you made your “Statement of Doubt”? Maybe you were burdened with the cares of this life, or were sick, financially overwhelmed, or fighting fatigue from too much work. Perhaps you were sensing inefficiency in everything you attempted, were disturbed about a problem on your job, or were frustrated by your children’s never-ending needs. When you had those discouraging thoughts, were you doubting God’s ability to reverse the circumstances? To forestall such thoughts from making inroads into your spirit again, list some unresolved areas of your life. Write possible remedies God might use in each situation, keeping in mind that God often works beyond our imagination. How can taking them one by one and including God in your dealings with doubts make a difference?

4. It is possible for Christians, despite our sincere love for the Lord, to succumb to doubt. Satan won’t necessarily tempt us to doubt the existence of God or the truth of the Bible, but he often comes with doubts about our own relationship with God. He might cause us to think, Have I truly received my Christian experiences? Is God really with me? Was that actually the healing touch of God, or am I just feeling a little better today? If doubts like this come to mind, what are our options?

5. Since the beginning of time, when the serpent tempted Eve, doubt has rallied the troops of unbelief toward questionable activity. In other words, doubt can lead to sin. Consider the story of Achan, found in the Book of Joshua, chapters 6 and 7. Achan doubted what he knew to be right and did what his people had been commanded not to do. How remarkable it is that he witnessed the walls of Jericho fall and still had doubt! What were the results of Achan's doubt and subsequent disobedience? How might our doubts have repercussions on others?

6. Doubt may not be packaged in a way that makes itself obvious. If only it came with warning tags in bright fluorescent colors stating, **BEWARE OF DOUBT: MAY CAUSE PERMANENT DAMAGE TO FAITH!** How is doubt packaged? Let's look at one example: The Sunday evening church service has closed, and you make your way to the altar of prayer. While you pray, the thought once more comes to mind of something you feel the Lord wants you to do. No slower than the speed of light, every doubt harbored in the bay of questions fills your personal cove. You may think you're just being humble or that you're honestly assessing your own weaknesses. In actuality, you are doubting God's call or His ability to make you usable. How can you recognize this unwanted package of doubt and do away with it?

7. Doubt seems insistent on absolute facts, figures, and visible proofs, whereas, “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith depends upon God as our only resource. As we seek God for a specific experience or request, faith determines the course. Faith stabilizes, maintains forward momentum, and, if uninhibited, presses on to the finish line. Are your convictions deeply grounded in the faith required? Write your personal statement of faith. Be brief and specific.

8. Many years ago, Martin Luther discovered the amazing truth that “The just shall live by faith.” He trumpeted this message to a world darkened by doubt, and through his message, faith was reborn in the hearts of men.

Romans 10:17 tells us where faith comes from: “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Where does doubt originate? Doubt may present itself in a similar fashion to faith—we hear, by some form of communication, that God’s Word is not necessarily true. We should recognize that Satan is the originator of doubt. Review Genesis 3:1-6, and note that Satan said to Eve, “Ye shall not surely die.” This statement was not true, but as Eve considered what she heard, she doubted what God had said. Can you recall an incident when you doubted? What was the outcome?

Conclusion: Confidence in God has been challenged since the beginning by Satan’s subtle suggestions to doubt. Should we expect anything less, since we are so near the end of time? Do we accept doubt with all its defeat, or are we determined to flush it from its camouflaged security zone of “I’m only human”? Doubting God may be human, but trusting God holds great reward. Hebrews 11:33 begins by mentioning those “who through faith subdued kingdoms.” By faith, will you accept your assignment and rout out the kingdoms of doubt?

Key Texts

Genesis 3:1-6; Joshua 6,7; Matthew 14:25-31; 27:5; Hebrews 11:1,33; Romans 10:17

Other Scriptures Used in This Study

Joshua 6:18,19; Romans 8:28; 10:17; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:13; James 1:6; 4:7

Suggested Verse for Memorization

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? – Matthew 14:31