

## Doubting God

What is doubt? “Questioning and testing a belief or statement in hopes of discovering truth”

Is doubt good or bad?

-healthy unhealthy?

-sinful acceptable?

-where does doubt come from?

Philip Yancey, author of many books and one specifically about this topic, identifies a few reasons for doubt: “Sometimes I shy away for lack of evidence, sometimes I slink away in hurt or disillusionment, and sometimes I turn aside in willful disobedience” (p 38)

-Intellectual

-Logic, Reason, Arguments Against God

-Emotional

-Anger

-Disappointment

-Pain

Only focus on the Emotional side of doubt

The basis for all these are the expectations we have

What do we expect of God and how does He meet those expectations in any given situation?

So we can trace doubt all the way back to expectations. The progression goes something like:

1. False/Unspoken Expectations about God —> 2. Disappointment with God —>
3. Hurt by God —> 4. Angry at God —> 5. Doubting God

Let's work backwards to explain it all.

### **ANGER**

-is it OK?

-we're usually told it's not

-appropriate, or sinful? both?

-God can handle the anger

biblical anger/unbiblical

Theologically, we really don't have reason to be angry at God because we don't know His ways.  
-is there healthy anger?

Jeremiah in lamentations 3

- that is real anger
- where does the anger take him?
- why is this in the Bible?
- What is God trying to tell people by putting this in the Bible?

- what do you do with that anger?
- become bitter at God?
- what if you expressed that anger to God?

Ultimately, it's less about if you're angry at God, and more about where does the anger take you?

To bitterness, or remembrance of His faithfulness and love and grace

**DON'T BE AFRAID TO TAKE YOUR ANGER TO GOD**

-However, when you do, be honest about why you're angry

Don't just tell God you're angry, say that you're hurt, confused, or disappointed. Be honest with him.

This is the next step down:

### **HURT**

The majority, if not all, of anger comes from pain

- stub your toe in the middle of the night and accidentally say a bad word?
  - you experienced pain, respond in anger
- someone criticizes or insults you, you yell back at them or in more extreme cases physically punch them
  - you experienced pain, respond in anger

Sometimes is not personal pain, but the pain of others

- someone close to you is diagnosed with a illness/loses a friend/parents divorce
  - though you are not on the receiving end of this pain, you empathize with your friend and feel secondary pain
  - you become angry at whomever you feel is "responsible"

Tend to take our pain out on God either passively or intentionally

- passively is a slow withdrawing from Him
- intentionally is cursing God and rejecting Him

### **DISAPPOINTMENT**

Why do we become disappointed with God?

What about disappointment? This relates more to expectations, the foundation of disappointment and doubt

## **EXPECTATIONS**

-What are expectations?

Something we anticipate and believe God will do

We all expect something from God and then measure Him against these expectations

-some are known to us and we are aware of them

-others are unspoken and we are unaware

-these are the ones where doubt comes from

Two examples of slightly different expectations and the outcome they bring:

1. I expect God to hear every one of my prayers

2. I expect God to answer every one of my prayers in a way that I can see His answer

The result?

1. When I pray I do know I'm not praying in vain

2. When I pray and do not see any difference, I question if God heard or cares about my prayer

Big difference and our expectations of God determine how we interpret circumstances

-Do we expect God to heal us when we're sick?

-Do we expect God to use sickness to foster dependence on Him?

Examples: What do we expect God to do with evil? Sin? Persecution of others? Poverty?

Sickness?

Summary statement: We are angry at God because we are hurt and disappointed in how He has seemingly failed to meet our expectations

## **MEME BREAK**

Back to our beginning progression:

1. False/Unspoken Expectations about God —> 2. Disappointment with God —> 3. Hurt by God —> 4. Angry at God —> 5. Doubting God

Once you reach anger, doubt occurs

-Two forms of doubt at this point:

1. Doubt that leads to rejection

2. Doubt that leads to re-evaluation

1. The first one is really a continuation of anger, expect people mask it with phrases like “I don’t understand why God would allow...”, “It doesn’t make sense if God is...”

Really, these are all about expectations

-They hide their disappointment with logical doubt

Anger at God often leads to disbelief. however, there is an inherent problem with being angry at God and not believing in Him:

HOUSE CLIP:

2. Doubt that leads to re-evaluation is beneficial

-Causes you to look at God and yourself, examining where the disconnect is

This doubt does question God but is founded more in confusion/disappointment than rejection

-an earnest searching for truth

It is this doubt that leads to belief

Doubt is the watering grounds for belief to flourish

SOOOOOOO

How do we change the expectations we have of God?

-Ultimately, we get our expectations from the Scripture

-God says He loves everyone and wants everyone to come to salvation, but this does not mean that every person will experience God and believe in Him

-God says He is good and all powerful, but this does not mean He is going to stop all evil from occurring and take away pain

Do we expect things of God based on our personal comfort?

Or based on the Scripture?

Is doubt good or bad?

-the answer is yes. it can be the point of rejection, but it can also be the point of greater understanding and dependence on God

Doubt is a fine line to walk, so it is crucial to let others know and continually dialogue with mature Christians and other people who can encourage and empathize with the healthy doubt and recognize the unhealthy doubt

Yancey: “I feel sad for lonely doubters; we all need trustworthy doubt-companions” (p 46)

Final Yancey quote p. 42 “Reading the biographies...than does his church”

GROUP DISCUSSION

-Talk about a time you were angry at God

-where did the anger take you?  
What did you learn?