

DOUBT AS A DOORWAY TO FAITH

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"Knowledge and doubt are inseparable to man. The sole alternative to "knowledge-with-doubt" is no knowledge at all. Only God and certain madmen have no doubts!" —Martin Luther

"Until you can question your faith, you have no faith. Doubt is, therefore, the crucible within which authentic faith is forged." —Jonathan Weyer

A. THE NATURE OF DOUBT

1. Three aspects of doubt
 - a. Intellectual: Question the truth (of something):
"Who can doubt the truth of that statement?"
Issue: Truth
 - b. Relational: Disbelieve (a person or their word):
"I have good reason to doubt him."
Issue: Trust
 - c. Confidence: To be uncertain
"I doubt my ability to do the job."
2. Two motivations for doubt
 - a. For the skeptic, doubt is a search for excuses.
There are skeptics who have genuine intellectual questions, but often those who raise questions do so as a smokescreen for moral impurity.

The wrath of God is revealed against those who ... suppress the truth by their wickedness...
(Romans 1:18)

Paul describes those who ... have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness
(2Thessalonians 2:12).
 - b. For the seeker, doubt is a search for reasons.
Genuine intellectual obstacles deserve a reasoned response in order to remove them.

Jude 1:22 *Be merciful to those who doubt.*
 - c. Proverbs contrasts the two motivations:

Proverbs 14:6 *The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning.*

Proverbs 15:14 *The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.*

B. THE VALUE OF DOUBT

1. DOUBT ENABLES US TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE VIEWPOINTS (Plausibility of Belief)

"Only the one who knows nothing doubts nothing." — French proverb

- a. Doubting one idea makes it possible to entertain another: it affects our "plausibility structure." [J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1997), p. 75]

- b. A person's plausibility structure is the set of ideas the person either is or is not willing to entertain as possibly true. Doubt creates a question in our minds about our current belief and opens us up to the possibility of another belief. Were it not for doubt, most of us would never have entertained the ideas that eventually brought us to faith.
- c. Apologetics is crucial to evangelism because it creates plausibility for the gospel.

2. DOUBT MOTIVATES US TO SEARCH FOR TRUTH (Content of Belief)

"If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties." --Francis Bacon

- a. God wants us to come to know the truth:
1Timothy 2:4 [God] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

3. DOUBT LEADS US TO EVIDENCE FOR BELIEF (Strength of Belief)

"If ours is an examined faith, we should be unafraid to doubt. If doubt is eventually justified, we were believing what clearly was not worth believing. But if doubt is answered, our faith has grown stronger. It knows God more certainly and it can enjoy God more deeply." —C. S. Lewis

- a. As we gain evidence for a particular belief, that belief is strengthened: our confidence level increases. This applies whether it is an issue of:
 - Truth — intellectual confidence in an idea
 - Trust — relational confidence in a person
- b. God wants us to be able to defend our faith.
This strengthens our own conviction and enables us to create plausibility for others:

1Peter 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. (Answer = "verbal defense, a speech in defense")*

4. DOUBT REQUIRES US TO TRUST THE UNSEEN (Leap of Faith)

"Faith is believing what you can't see because of what you can see." —KidStuf

- a. Since God will never answer all of our questions, faith requires we believe in spite of remaining doubts or questions. Why is this?
- b. Some things are beyond our comprehension:
Job 11:7-8 *Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave—what can you know?*