

LEADERTREKS **SERMON SERIES**

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ turn to God's Word for answers in the midst of doubt.

SCRIPTURE

GENESIS 3:1–7, JEREMIAH 1:1–9, MARK 9:24

SERMON OVERVIEW

An important part of developing a mature and authentic faith is dealing with feelings of doubt. Doubt is impossible to avoid—it's the natural result of our God-given brains. How do I know God is real? Why should I believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Learning to deal well with questions like these is something every Christ-follower has to be prepared to work through. In this lesson, students will look at examples of people in the Bible who experienced doubt and discuss how those people handled their struggles. They'll learn that in times of doubt, the best thing we can do is turn to God and seek his help.

OPENING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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ICE BREAKER QUESTION

- What do you think doubt looks or feels like?

MESSAGE

Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.

READ GENESIS 3:1–7 & JEREMIAH 1:1–9

POINT 1: **Doubt is natural**

Everything was perfect. Creation was pristine, unblemished by sin. Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony with each other and their Creator. Then the serpent, who was “more crafty” than any of the other wild animals, and with his forked tongue, he whispered into Eve's ear. For the first time in history, the questions arose: *Do I actually have to do what God said? Why should I listen to him?*

Doubt was always inevitable. When God endowed Adam and Eve with his image and gave them the ability to reason, he also gave them the opportunity to choose: obedience or disobedience. The serpent whispered into this vulnerability, and doubt was born.

The two accounts we just read show people who were very close to God. Eve walked side-by-side with God in the Garden, and Jeremiah was one of God's chosen prophets—he spoke God's words. Yet both people experienced doubt. It doesn't matter how close you get to God, doubt is a natural part of life for people.

POINT 2: What *not* to do with doubt

When the serpent twisted God's words and confused Eve, she could have turned to God for answers. Instead, she leaned into doubt and committed the first sin. Eve tried to make decisions in her own faulty reasoning, forgetting that God's wisdom is unsearchably deep and perfect.

ILLUSTRATION: Galileo is famous for arguing that the Earth revolved around the sun, a belief that directly contradicted the commonly held belief that the Earth was the center of the solar system and everything revolved around us.¹ Perhaps most upset by this argument was the Catholic Church, who felt that Galileo's claim challenged the authority of Scripture and was an offense to God. The Church feared that if scientific discovery claimed one thing and their interpretation of Scripture claimed another, people might start to doubt the validity of God's Word. In response to these fears of doubt, the Church condemned Galileo as a heretic and sentenced him to indefinite imprisonment. Talk about an unhealthy response to doubt!

Instead of trusting ourselves or fearing our doubts, we can work through them in a healthy way by turning to God, his Word, and trusted Christ-followers who are further along in their spiritual walk. God is greater than our doubts!

READ MARK 9:24

POINT 3: What to do with doubt

When Jeremiah doubted his ability to do God's will, he asked for assurance. He knew he couldn't do God's will in his own strength, but he trusted God's words and abilities to work through him. In Mark, we see a father exclaim, "help my unbelief!" When we feel doubt creeping in, we should do as Jeremiah and the father did—go directly to God for help. Be honest with him about your doubt and ask him to strengthen your faith.

ILLUSTRATION: Did you know that Donald Gorske holds the record for Most Big Macs ever eaten? He's had over 26,000!² And did you know that on July 23, 2013, 867 people showed up to a music festival dressed as Superman?³ They set the world record for Largest Gathering of People Dressed as Superman. Don't believe it? All you have to do is turn to the Guinness Book of World Records, where all sorts of crazy, unthinkable records are kept. If you doubt the truth of a claim, just check out the record books.

The same is true for us as Christ-followers. When you experience doubt, check out God's Word! What has he promised? And how has he fulfilled those promises? You'll see time and time again that our God is faithful.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Use this prompt to wrap up your message and leave your students with a challenge to apply.

- What do you do when you experience doubt?

LEADER NOTE: Historically, doubt in the Church has often been met with shame, anger, and cold responses. Encourage your students as they wrestle with tough questions, and be a calm, comforting presence. You don't have to have all the answers—just be someone they trust to be honest with them. You should also encourage them not to become comfortable in their doubt. The goal should be to get answers from the Bible, repent of the lack of trust in God (that's what doubt really is!), and pray for God to strengthen their faith through their questions. The article "Does Your Doubt Dishonor God?" by Greg Morse⁴ might be helpful in thinking through faith vs. doubt in a biblical manner.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Pick a few questions from below to discuss. Close with prayer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When have you experienced doubt regarding your faith, the Bible, or Jesus?
- Where do you think doubt comes from?
- Is doubt a sin? Why or why not? (Passages to help you answer: Romans 4:20–21; James 1:5–8)
- Why is it unhealthy to dwell in doubt for long periods of time?
- On a scale of 1–4 (4=the quickest), how quickly do you turn to God for answers when you doubt?
- God has done some pretty incredible things. What are some of the (almost) unbelievable stories of the Bible?
- Do accounts of miracles in the Bible encourage your doubt or strengthen your faith? In what ways?
- What are some of the promises in the Bible that show God’s faithfulness?
- How will you handle it when doubts arise about your faith?

PRAYER

Close by praying or invite someone to pray for your group.

Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.

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¹ “Galileo is convicted of heresy,” *History.com*, November 13, 2009, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/galileo-is-convicted-of-heresy>.

² “Most Big Mac® Burgers Eaten In A Life Time,” *Guinness World Records*, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/most-big-macs-consumed>.

³ “Largest Gathering Of People Dressed As Superman,” *Guinness World Records*, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/largest-gathering-of-people-dressed-as-superman>.

⁴ Greg Morse, “Does Your Doubt Dishonor God? What No One Says About Weak Faith,” January 4, 2018, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/does-your-doubt-dishonor-god>.