

HOW TO HANDLE DOUBTS AND CONFUSION

Never be anxious about whether or not you are saved. By making yourself the center of that question your thoughts become centered on yourself and away from Jesus. Once you've committed your life to Him, trust Him, talk to Him, think about Him. Put every doubt and fear out of your mind. Here's how.

Young adults, especially, find themselves plagued by doubts. It has many causes. For example, they can't understand some things in the Bible and wonder if they'll ever understand. They may seem unable to get beyond those doubts. Here's something to hold on to: God never asks a person to believe anything without giving enough evidence on which to base one's faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of the Bible all can be accepted by the reasonable evidence He provides. God doesn't remove the possibility of doubt, for He wants us to have faith. Anyone who wants to doubt can find reasons to do so. Likewise, all who really want to know what is true will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.

Our minds are finite, and it is impossible for us to comprehend what is infinite. The most brilliant mind, the most educated person, will always face the ultimate mystery in the study of God. God's Word has many mysteries we'll never understand: how sin came into the world, how Jesus came to

earth as a man, how He was raised from the dead, how we are saved. These are all mysteries beyond our full understanding. But that's no reason to disbelieve them! We can't understand life in the physical world, even the simplest forms, so should we be surprised to find mysteries in the spiritual world that we can't fathom?

Skeptics love to argue that the many things in Scripture we can't understand are a good argument against accepting it as God's Word. But you can argue just as compellingly that its mysteries are the most persuasive argument for its divine origin. And, paradoxically, it shows us the way to be saved with a simplicity that anyone who chooses to understand can understand. The more we search the Bible, the deeper will be our conviction that these are honestly the words of God.

We all come to the Bible with a certain amount of pride, and it's humbling to realize that we are face to face with some things we can't understand no matter how hard we study. It's God's plan that the truths of His Word will constantly become clearer to us as we read them. Here's how that happens. He has given us His Spirit to guide our thoughts as we read the Bible. Shortly before His crucifixion, He told His disciples that He would send them the Spirit to guide them in their knowledge of truth. He said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. . . . He will take from what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13, 14). Your understanding begins as you study the Word, led by the Spirit, utilizing your God-given powers of reason and understanding. So open the book reverently; it is God's Word. Pray for the Spirit's guidance, and you will find yourself moving away from doubts.

But what if, despite all this, doubt continues to haunt you? Then it would be appropriate to ask yourself if your growing knowledge and understanding of God's will is interfering with something you like to do but have begun to realize is not part of God's will for you. If that proves to be

true, make the decision that your relationship with Jesus is more important than any part of your former way of life. The Bible has this invitation: “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). So keep “tasting” and find the blessing. Remember Jesus’ words: “Ask and you will receive” (John 16:24). Jesus wants you to be happy!

As you pass from death to life you will be able to say, “I needed help, and I found it in Jesus. He has met my soul’s hunger, and now the Bible reveals Jesus to me.” By faith we may imagine eternity and grasp the promise of God for increased intellect as the Holy Spirit possesses our humanity. Soon everything that has perplexed us in the providences of God will be made plain. As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: “Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).⁸¹

(For additional reading on this subject, we recommend *The Desire of Ages*, *Steps to Christ*, *The Story of Redemption*, and *The Acts of the Apostles*.)

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Why does God want to save us?
2. For whom was Jesus’ first miracle performed?
3. Why did the prodigal’s father place his own coat around his son’s shoulders?
4. Matthew and the rich young ruler both received invitations to follow Jesus. In what ways were their circumstances similar? In what ways were they different? Why do you think Matthew accepted Jesus’ invitation and the rich young ruler did not?
5. What can we learn about effective teaching from the story of the farmer planting seeds? How only can we “bear fruit”?
6. What are some of the conditions to answered prayer?
7. What is the basis of our forgiveness from God?

A Call to Stand Apart

CHAPTER

12

How to Handle Doubts and Confusion

(pages 64-66)

1. Why should you never be anxious about whether you are saved?
2. God never asks a person to (b__ __ie__ __) anything without giving enough (__vi__ __ __ __ __) on which to base one's (f__ __th).
3. True or False. God doesn't remove the possibility of doubt, for He wants us to have faith.
4. True or False. God's Word has many mysteries we won't be able to understand.
5. True or False. If we can't understand everything in the Bible, we should just discard it.
6. The truths of God's Word will constantly become _____ to us as we read them.
7. What have we been given to guide our thoughts as we read the Bible?
8. The Bible has this invitation: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." What does this mean to you?