

July 24, 2016

## *Surviving the Summer*

*A series on surviving...and even thriving!*

*"I know how to survive..." Philippians 4:12a Voice*

### **"Surviving Your Doubts"**

*"But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind." James 1:6*

#### **A. Doubts come to all of us...**

*"It is not primarily a Christian problem, but a human problem...The root of doubt is not in our faith but in our humanness." –Os Guinness*

1. The Old Testament is full of those who doubted God: Sarah, Gideon, Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, etc.
2. The New Testament is full of those who doubted God: John the Baptist, Peter, the disciples, some of the disciples, Thomas, the early church, etc.

*"When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer." Psalm 94:19*

#### **B. Doubts come in different ways...**

1. Intellectual doubt
2. Emotional doubt
3. Circumstantial doubt
4. Salvation doubt
5. Willful doubt

*"Then Jesus told them, 'I tell you the truth, if you have faith and don't doubt, you can do things like this and much more. You can even say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen.'" Matthew 21:21 NLT*

#### **C. Doubts can be healthy ways to discover deeper truths about God...**

*"There are 3 kinds of people in the church. Those who are struggling with doubt right now, those who have no doubts now but will struggle with them in the future. And those who have no doubts and will never have any doubts because they are basically brain dead. If you are serious about your faith then there's going to come a time you've got unanswered questions about your circumstances, about the world situation or maybe why God no longer fits neatly into your little man-made box. Doubt doesn't mean you've lost your faith, it simply means you're trying to figure out how your faith works in this chaotic and sinful world. So instead of being afraid of doubt, why don't we let God use our doubt as a means of making us stronger in our faith and drawing us closer to Himself." Lee Strobel*

1. The father bringing his demon-possessed son to Jesus in Mark 9.  
*"How long has this been going on?" 'Ever since he was a little boy. Many times it pitches him into fire or the river to do away with him. If you can do anything, do it. Have a heart and help us!' Jesus said, 'If? There are no ifs among believers. Anything can happen.' No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the father cried, 'Then I believe. Help me with my doubts!'"*  
*Mark 9:21-24 The Message*

- a. There can still be doubts amidst belief.
  - b. God is still able to work, in spite of my doubts.
  - c. Use the faith that you have to believe God for more.
2. Thomas and his doubts in the Gospel of John.  
*"One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he replied, 'I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.' Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!' 'My Lord and my God!' Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, 'You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.'" John 20:24-29 NLT*
    - a. God's grace is bigger than our doubts.
    - b. Jesus doesn't criticize you for doubting.
    - c. Jesus speaks peace to those in doubt.
    - d. Jesus loves you too much to allow you to remain in your doubts.

#### **D. When doubts come...**

*"I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart." Mark 11:23 NLT*

1. Embrace the struggle rather than deny your thoughts.  
*"There's a difference between honest doubt and cynicism. Honest doubt really is looking for answers; it's seeking for personal understanding. But the cynic asks questions, not for the answers but for the response they get from the people they questioned. Honest doubt is never satisfied with its present level of belief, but cynicism revels in its unbelief. The doubter investigates to find the answer but the cynic is never looking for an answer since he's already made up his mind, there is none to be found. God welcomes honest doubt, but he stands against the cynic." Rodney Buchanan*

2. Search for wisdom in various ways: The Word of God, godly counsel, study, testimonies, etc. The tensions of doubts will help you grow.  
*"If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do."*  
*James 1:5-8 NLT*

3. Keep your focus on God rather than your doubts. (Self-doubt comes when we compare or focus on past failures.)  
*"And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise." Philippians 4:8 NLT*
4. When your heart is at peace, learn to treat doubts as temptations and resist them. Doubt can paralyze you. The enemy will use it as spiritual warfare, so be on guard.  
*"And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, 'God is tempting me.' God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else." James 1:13 NLT*  
*"There he told them, 'Pray that you will not give in to temptation.'" Luke 22:40 NLT*  
*"And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one." Matthew 6:13 NLT*  
*"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure."*  
*1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT*

5. Pray. Prayer is a key to peace and being prepared to handle our doubts. God wants each of us to be prepared to respond to the needs around us!  
*"Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it." 1 Peter 3:15*

Next week:

July 31 - Surviving Unhealthy Relationships

*"Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you."*  
*Ephesians 4:32*