

THE BLESSING OF DOUBT
Sermon series: “God on Trial –The Case for Christianity”
October 14, 2018 Matthew 7: 7-12
The Church of the Covenant

I think sometimes people are afraid to reveal their doubts and their questions. If so, this is a sermon for you. I think sometimes people think they have to have everything related to God all figured out, and that people like pastors will think less of them if they don't. I still haven't figured all this out and I've been a Christian most of my life and a Pastor for 35 years. By the way, we finally figure it all out when we go to heaven and see Jesus face-to-face. So we bring our faith and we bring our doubts, we bring our broken-ness and we bring our strengths, we bring our best moments and our worst, our trust and our fears, and we plunk it all down in front of Jesus every week asking the question –WHO ARE YOU LORD? AND WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE IN YOU? Questions are not bad; questions are how we learn and how we grow. So I hope as your pastor you would know by now that I am always up for a great conversation and that you will never turn me off toward you or think less of you if you ever express a doubt to me. That's what I'm here for...

Our scripture from Matthew 7 is a favorite of many people. Jesus says there: *“Ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”* (Matthew 7: 7) This doesn't mean because you ask God for a new car or a big house that God will give it to you. Because what Jesus is talking about here isn't about material possessions. Jesus is talking about FAITH. Jesus is talking about BELIEF. Jesus is talking about TRUST. We have faith and believe and have trust that the promises of Jesus are our promises and what Jesus has done through His life, death and resurrection He has done for us. That's asking, seeking and knocking in Jesus' name. So asking precedes receiving. Seeking precedes finding. Knocking precedes the door of faith being opened to you. The absence of God in your life precedes the presence of God coming and taking up residency in your heart. The question posed to God precedes the answer supplied by God. If I may say, the doubt we may feel from time to time precedes the FAITH. The question hurled at God precedes the answer. So questioning, or even doubt itself, is not bad, it is part of coming to FAITH in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not to check our minds at the door of the church when we enter in. Christianity is not about the suspension of our thought processes in order to believe. Quite to the contrary, it is about asking God for the answers to life that God alone can provide. And WILL PROVIDE if we but ask Him. Ask and you *will* receive, seek and you *will* find, knock and the door *will* be opened to you. As the Bible says elsewhere, *“We do not have because we do not ask”* (James 4: 2) It is okay to ask and question.

I think we sometimes make a mistake in relation to FAITH. We think FAITH is what we bring to the table where God is concerned. God does things. God's Word is true and active. We may experience Him in church and in life. And when we do then it is our job as human beings to believe in Him. We have FAITH in Him. We have to make decisions in relation to Him and if we do not then we do not believe and we have not FAITH. Not so. FAITH comes from God just as salvation and eternal life comes from God. No one believes without first God being active in

their minds. No one trusts without God being first at work in their hearts. No one experiences the presence of God without God first showing up in their life. God saves and then we have faith. NOPE. God saves and then God comes and enters into our thoughts and our heart and our soul, and THEN and ONLY THEN does God give us FAITH. See, FAITH is every bit a gift of GRACE as is His death on a cross and His resurrection and victory over death. Its His gift to us, not our gift to Him.

Soren Kierkegaard, the great Danish theologian, has a concept of the “leap of faith”. We suspend our doubts and our mind and jump across the abyss in order to believe. “Leap of faith –Yes. But only after reflection.” (Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kirkegaard). Respectfully, I disagree. No amount of reflection on our own apart from God will give us faith. No amount of thought will give us faith. We will remain stuck in our inquiries if we think it is only about making up our own mind. But we do not have if we do not ask GOD for the answers. So the way FAITH comes is not by our own self-reflection; it comes from our asking God to give us FAITH. Asking, seeking and knocking in order for God’s Spirit to shine in our hearts and illumine us in Jesus’ name.

So if you have been questioning God about something and for a long time then how do you ask in order to receive? Certainly, we can ask in prayer and receive. The sense of the words “ask, seek and knock” are to be continually asking and seeking and knocking. Its not like a one shot deal. Most people give up before they receive. Keep asking UNTIL you receive. You ask by reading God’s Word. I am amazed how few people read God’s Word even though there is no saving knowledge of God apart from scripture. How can we know HIM and how can we receive if we never read what He has written? You’re really not asking if you’re not reading God’s Word. You ask by worshipping God. The absence in your heart is filled only by the presence of the Living God, by Jesus coming in the power of the Spirit to live in You. Ask, seek and knock and it will be given unto you. You ask by participating in something like the *Come to the Table* fellowship dinners; fellowship with other Christians, putting yourself in the position to be discussing spiritual matters related to God, being willing to be transparent enough to question with others, all of this is asking, seeking and knocking, wanting in the depths of your heart to find answers for life’s deepest questions.

One of the great doubters in scripture is one of the disciples, sometimes referred to as “Doubting Thomas”. Thomas put God on trial after the death and resurrection of Jesus. He questioned the resurrection of the dead and that Jesus had returned from the dead just as He had promised. Thomas said: “Unless I place my hands into the wounded side of Jesus I will not believe.” Jesus is on trial. The truth of the resurrection is at stake. Jesus is being doubted and questioned by one of His closest disciples, not some distant Pharisee, but a close, personal friend. Someone who has walked with Jesus for three years of His earthly ministry. So he places his hands into the wounds of the Savior and believes. He says: “My Lord and my God!”. Come to Jesus today, doubting but also seeking just as Thomas did, and ask Jesus to show you His woundedness on your behalf. Have Him show you the cross and the pain He endured for your salvation and that FAITH might live in your heart by grace. Thomas questioned and doubted Jesus when Jesus promised to go on ahead and prepare a place for us that where HE

is, we shall be also (John 14) Jesus is promising a place of many mansions where we will join Him and live forever in eternity. But Thomas questioned and Thomas doubted. “How can we know the WAY, Lord, Jesus?” Ah, Thomas came and put himself in the position of hearing his answer. And Thomas asked the question, asking, seeking and knocking in Jesus’ name. Thomas doubted the cross and he doubted the resurrection. There it is –there is the prerequisite to FAITH. To this the Savior responded: *“I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.” (John 14: 6)* I am the answer to your question, Thomas. I am the antidote and the truth for your doubt, Thomas. You may trust me to get you to heaven because you have trusted me to get you through life. It is I, Jesus, who has walked with you every step of the way. It is I, the Lord Jesus, who will take your hand and lead you into eternity. And it is I, your Lord and your Savior, Jesus Christ, who will place FAITH in your heart that you may believe and trust in me to keep my Word and my promises to you. MY gift to you, whom I love. By the way, I think this story in scripture isn’t “Doubting Thomas”; I think its “BELIEVING Thomas”.

So, the jury is out. The Lord is on trial. Are His promises true? Is there eternal life in Him? What say you? Ah, but before you render your verdict please ASK, SEEK and KNOCK...and ask Him to bring FAITH to your heart. God loves seekers. Because I promise you, in your seeking you will find your truest self, your highest purpose in life, and your eternal home in a living, loving Savior and Lord. You know, maybe you’ve never asked Him the question before TODAY???? Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*

Again, I am indebted to Lee Strobel for the background to this sermon, as found in his book, “The Case for Faith”.