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GUIDE Nº 14 OF 15 · FREE

When Doubts Come

Honest questions, hard seasons, and how to hold on

— MARK 9:24 (KJV)

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A letter to you, dear friend

Dear friend, let us begin by removing the shame: doubt visits almost every believer, including great ones. John the Baptist, who announced Jesus to the world, sent a doubting question from prison. Thomas, who walked with Jesus for years, doubted the resurrection until he saw. The father in our key verse cried out the most honest prayer in the Bible — 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief' — belief and doubt in one breath, and Jesus answered him with a miracle, not a rebuke. If your faith has been shaken by questions, suffering or silence from heaven, this guide is a safe place to face them.

You will learn the difference between honest doubt and stubborn unbelief, how to bring questions to God and to Scripture without fear, what to do when God seems silent, and how to hold on — practically, daily — until the light returns. Doubt faced honestly can become the doorway to a deeper, stronger faith than the one you started with. Many believers testify that their faith after the storm is worth more than their faith before it. Yours can be too.

Doubt is not the opposite of faith

Understand what doubt is. Honest doubt says: 'I am struggling to see how this is true — help me understand.' Stubborn unbelief says: 'I refuse to believe no matter what evidence comes.' The first is a wound to be treated; the second is a door being closed. God treats them very differently. To the honest doubter He comes close — He answered John's question with evidence, met Thomas with His wounds, and reasoned patiently with confused disciples on the Emmaus road, explaining the Scriptures until their hearts burned again.

Notice where doubt usually strikes: not at the centre of what you know, but at the edges of what you don't yet understand — suffering, unanswered prayer, difficult doctrines, the behaviour of some Chris-

tians, questions from clever unbelievers. The devil's strategy is to make the unknown 10 percent poison the known 90 percent. Resist that arithmetic. A man does not burn down his house because one room is dark; he brings a lamp into the room. Bring your questions, one by one, into the light of Scripture, wise counsel and prayer.

Also separate doubt from depression and exhaustion. Elijah, after his greatest victory, collapsed under a tree and asked to die — and God's first medicine was not a lecture but sleep, food, and gentle presence. Sometimes the most spiritual response to a doubting season is rest, honest medical or pastoral care, and the company of patient believers. Treat the whole person, as God does.

> *"And immediately the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."*
> **— Mark 9:24 (KJV)**

Bring your questions to the right places

Questions deserve answers, not suppression — suppressed questions ferment. Take them, in order, to three places. First, to God in prayer, by name: 'Lord, I do not understand why this happened. Show me what I need to see, and hold me while I wait.' Prayer does not always receive explanations, but it always receives presence — and presence carries a believer through seasons explanations cannot. Second, to Scripture: search the subject honestly (a concordance or Bible app helps), read whole passages, and let clear verses govern unclear experiences. Third, to wise people: your pastor, a mature believer, good Christian books. Choose counsellors who respect both the Bible and your intelligence — who answer rather than shame.

Keep a doubts notebook, as strange as that sounds. Write the question, the date, and — as answers come over weeks and months — write the answer and the date. You will build a personal record that God meets honest questions, which becomes armour for the next season. Many questions resolve not in one flash but layer by layer,

like a photograph developing. Give them time before pronouncing your faith dead.

One caution: do not feed your doubt a diet of mockery. In a questioning season, limit voices whose aim is to sneer faith away, just as you would limit junk food during an illness. This is not fear of questions — you are bringing your questions to strong places — it is wisdom about atmospheres while you heal.

> *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."*
> **— James 1:5 (KJV)**

Do this:

1. Write your top three honest questions in a notebook, with today's date.
2. Pray each one to God by name this week — presence before explanations.
3. Ask one mature believer or pastor one question this week.
4. Record answers as they come; review the notebook monthly.

When God seems silent

The hardest doubt is not intellectual; it is the silence of heaven in suffering — the prayed prayer with no visible answer, the loss that makes no sense, the long night where God feels absent. The Bible does not hide this experience: David cried 'How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?' and even Jesus cried from the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Your cry of abandonment has been prayed by God's greatest servants — and by His Son. You are not outside the family for feeling it; you are in its oldest company.

Hold two truths in that silence. First, feelings of absence are not facts of absence. God has promised never to leave nor forsake His own, and His promise outranks your midnight emotions — as the guide 'Sure of Heaven' teaches. The teacher is never more present

than during the examination; his silence is not his absence. Second, silence is not the end of the story. David's psalms of despair almost always end in remembered praise; the cross's cry ended in resurrection morning. Judge God by Easter, not by Friday. Your story is still being written by the same Author.

In silent seasons, live by routine and by memory: keep the daily habits small and unbroken, sing the old hymns whose words you once knew were true, and let the church carry the faith aloud around you when your own voice is weak. Borrow the family's strength shamelessly. That is what it is for.

> *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."*
> **— Psalm 42:5 (KJV)**

Be merciful to doubters — including yourself

Jude gives the church a beautiful instruction: 'And of some have compassion, making a difference.' Some doubters need gentle mercy, not debate; their doubt is grief wearing a question's clothes. Learn to be that mercy to others — listening more than lecturing, praying more than pronouncing. And extend the same compassion inward: speak to your own doubting heart the way a kind shepherd speaks to a frightened sheep, not the way a drill sergeant shouts at a deserter. Harshness has never yet argued a soul back to faith; love, truth and patience do it every week.

At the same time, Jude's compassion has a spine: rescue the doubter from the fire where needed — do not let 'being understanding' become watching someone drift into destruction without ever speaking truth. Mercy and truth are twins in God's house. Bring both, in that order, with tears if needed.

If your doubts centre on a specific teaching of Scripture that your church holds, walk the honest road: study it fully, hear the

best teachers on it, pray over it, and submit your conclusions to Scripture's authority as you grow. Believers have wrestled with deep questions for two thousand years inside the faith; you do not have to solve everything this month, and you do not have to pretend you have. Honest wrestling inside the house is faithfulness; the door stays open while you wrestle.

> *"And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire."*
> **— Jude 22-23 (KJV)**

Holding on — and coming out stronger

Here is the holding-on plan for a doubting season, gathered from everything above. Keep the habits, small and daily. Stay in fellowship even when you feel hypocritical for attending — you are not a hypocrite; you are a patient staying in hospital. Pray the honest prayer: 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief' — as often as needed, without shame. Feed on the Psalms and on Mark's Gospel, where Jesus meets doubters with wounds and breakfast, not rejection. And tell one trusted believer the truth about your season, so at least one other person is holding the rope with you.

Expect the light to return — usually gradually, like dawn, occasionally in a moment of sudden clarity in worship or in a verse that leaps off the page. When it comes, mark it: write the date, the verse, the relief. Your notebook of questions will slowly become a notebook of answers, and your faith will have something it never had before the storm: roots that have survived wind. Untested faith is a fair-weather plant; tested faith becomes an oak.

One day, friend — and it will come sooner than you think — a newer believer will sit where you are sitting now, afraid to admit their doubts aloud. And you will be able to say the words that heal: 'I have been there. Bring your questions. God is not afraid of them, and neither am I.' That ministry is being forged in you right now, in

this very season. Hold on. The dawn is not a rumour; it is a pattern with God.

> *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”*
> **— 1 Peter 1:7 (KJV)**

THE HONEST PRAYER — PRAY IT AS YOUR OWN

Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. You know my questions and my fears, and You have not turned away from me. Hold me while I do not understand. Give me light for the next step, patient friends for the road, and a heart that trusts Your character when I cannot trace Your hand. I will not let go of You, Father. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Verses to hold on to

Keep these verses near you. Read one each morning. Say it aloud. God’s Word will hold you on days when feelings are weak.

> *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”*
> **— Hebrews 13:5 (KJV)**

> *“Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”*
> **— John 6:68-69 (KJV)**

> *“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”*
> **— 2 Corinthians 5:7 (KJV)**

> *“Be strong and of a good courage… for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”*
> **— Joshua 1:9 (KJV)**

You are not walking alone

Dear friend, you have finished this guide — well done. Keep it near your Bible and return to it whenever you need it. Growth is day by day, and your Father is patient, present and proud of every honest step you take toward Him.

If you would like someone to pray with you, answer your questions, or walk with you in these first steps, our free Salvation Follow-Up team would be honoured to hear from you. Visit slgrace.com and open the chat — ask for the "Salvation Follow-Up" desk. It is completely free, and you will be received with love.

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May the Lord bless you and keep you, make His face shine upon you, and give you peace — today and all your days. (Numbers 6:24-26)