

Faith & Doubt: Strengthening Your Faith in Challenging Seasons

Kirk Personius – Spark Conference 2026

1) Why are we here in the first place?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism – written in 1446 & 1647 (that's a long time ago):

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever”

(dig deeper - Psalm 73: 25-26, Corinthians 10:31, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

Sometimes it seems that God makes it very hard to glorify and enjoy Him.....

2) How do we start to do that?

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Proverbs 9:10)

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7)

Fearing someone and being called a fool doesn't sound so good to me....

Deep reverence (awe) and respect for God’s power and authority, acknowledging His holiness and submitting to His will. If you acknowledge who God is, then it is indeed ‘foolish’ to ignore His guidance.

3) Why do we doubt God?

Often comes down to two things: We don’t understand and/or we hurt (emotionally or physically)

A personal story – “I am a broken person who is often confused, sad, and lonely”

A) We don’t understand

John 6:25-69 – Many Disciples Desert Jesus. Notice this comes after Jesus feeds the five thousand and walks on water (see John 6:1-24).

What are their expectations of what Jesus will do for them?

V53-54 “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day”

Can you imagine hearing someone say this, but you have no knowledge of the Lord's supper or that Jesus will die on a cross? I don't blame them for leaving....

V68-69 - Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Why does Peter come to this conclusion? Are you willing to trust God, based upon His character, when you don't understand something, and the answer is not coming anytime soon?

Take some time to think about these questions – you may have no answers right now.

B) We are hurt

2 Corinthians 12:1-9 – Paul's Vision and His Thorn.

Notice that Paul knows why he is hurting. V7 "Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited...."

It likely wasn't a little amount of pain. V7 "...I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me." This isn't a thorn from a rose bush. The Greek word for thorn could mean something as large as a stake

V7-8 Who placed the thorn? Who allowed the thorn to stay? (dig deeper see Job 1:8-22)

Is the right thing to do to just suffer? V8-9 "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me...."

Notice that Satan's purpose is sandwiched within God's will for Peter! (dig deeper see Hebrews 4:14-16, Job 38:1-21)

Why does Paul accept the pain and suffering? What does V9-10 mean to you?

Take some time to think about these questions – you may have no answers right now.

4) God may allow your doubts to remain unanswered, but He will always comfort you

A very personal story – "What have you been dreaming about.....Are you ready to go there?"

Psalm 91:1-6 - Under His Wings

V2 'I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Notice that David first understands God's character and is willing to trust Him

V4 'He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.'

In response to David's trust (or faith), God comforts and protects him

Take some time to think about when God has comforted or protected you.

If you have further questions about this topic, please feel free to contact me at <mailto:kep7@buffalo.edu>. Like most professors I might be a little slow to respond!