

### OVERVIEW

An important part of developing a mature and authentic faith is dealing with feelings of doubt. Doubt is impossible to avoid—it's the natural result of our God-given brains. How do I know God is real? Why should I believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Learning to deal well with questions like these is something every Christian has to be prepared to work through. In this lesson, students will look at examples of people in the Bible who experienced doubt and discuss how those people handled their struggles. They'll learn that in times of doubt, the best thing we can do is turn to God and seek his help.

### TEACHING

### OPENING QUESTION

- What do you think doubt looks or feels like?

### WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT

Everything had been perfect up until now. Creation was pristine, unblemished by sin. Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony with their Creator. But the serpent was "more crafty" than any of the other wild animals, and with his forked tongue, he whispered into Eve's ear. For the first time in history, the questions arose: *Do I actually have to do what God said? Why should I listen to him?*

Doubt was always inevitable. When God endowed Adam and Eve with his image and gave them the ability to reason, he also gave them the opportunity to choose: obedience or disobedience. The serpent whispered into this vulnerability, and doubt was born.

**Read Genesis 3:1–7 and Jeremiah 1:1–9.**

**Doubt is natural.** These two accounts show people who were very close to God. Eve walked side-by-side with God in the Garden, and Jeremiah was one of God's chosen prophets—he spoke God's words. Yet both people experienced doubt. It doesn't matter how close you get to God. Doubt is a natural part of life for people who have brains.

**What not to do with doubt.** When the serpent twisted God's words and led Eve into confusion, she could have turned to God for answers. Instead, she leaned into doubt and committed the first sin. Eve tried to make decisions in her own faulty reasoning, forgetting that God's wisdom is unsearchable and perfect.

**Now read Mark 9:24.**

**What to do with doubt.** When Jeremiah doubted his ability to do God's will, he asked for assurance. He knew that he couldn't do God's will in his own strength, but he trusted God's words and abilities to work through him. In Mark, we see a father exclaim "help my unbelief!" When we feel doubt creeping in, we should do as Jeremiah and the father did—go directly to God for help. Be honest with him about your doubt and ask him to strengthen your faith.

**FACILITATOR'S NOTE:** Historically, doubt in the Christian church has often been met with shame, anger, and a cold response. Encourage your students as they wrestle with tough questions and be a calm, comforting presence. You don't have to have all the answers—just be someone they trust to be honest with them. You should also encourage them to not become comfortable in their doubt. The goal should be to get answers from the Bible, repent of the lack of trust in God (that's what doubt really is!), and pray for their faith to be strengthened through their questions. The article "Does Your Doubt Dishonor God?" by Greg Morse<sup>1</sup> might be helpful in thinking through faith vs. doubt in a biblical manner.

## A SECOND LOOK

*Pick one of these illustrations to bring the topic to life:*

### **Option 1: Center of the Universe**

Galileo is famous for arguing that the Earth revolved around the sun, a belief that directly contradicted the commonly held belief that the Earth was the center of the solar system and everything revolved around us.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps most upset by this argument was the Catholic Church who felt that Galileo's claim challenged the authority of Scripture and was an offense to God. The Church feared that if scientific discovery claimed one thing and their interpretation of Scripture claimed another, people might start to doubt the validity of God's Word. In response to these fears of doubt, the Church condemned Galileo as a heretic and sentenced him to indefinite imprisonment. Talk about an unhealthy response to doubt!

### **DISCUSS:**

- Why do you think the Catholic Church was so harsh with Galileo and angry about his beliefs?
- How is doubting a church's teaching different than doubting God's Word?
- If you or someone you know have doubts about a teaching of the church, what's the best thing to do about it?

### **Option 2: Check the Records**

Did you know that Donald Gorske holds the record for Most Big Macs ever eaten? He's had over 26,000!<sup>3</sup> And did you know that on July 23, 2013, 867 people showed up to a music festival dressed as Superman?<sup>4</sup> They set the world record for Largest Gathering of People Dressed as Superman. Don't believe it? All you have to do is turn to the Guinness Book of World Records, where all sorts of crazy, unthinkable records are kept. If you doubt the truth of a claim, just check out the record books. The same is true for us as Christians. When you experience doubt, check out God's Word! What has he promised? And how has he fulfilled those promises? You'll see time and time again that our God is faithful.

### **DISCUSS:**

- God has done some pretty incredible things. What are some of the (almost) unbelievable stories of the Bible?
- Do accounts of miracles in the Bible encourage your doubt or strengthen your faith? In what ways?
- What are some of the promises in the Bible that show God's faithfulness?

## THE TAKEAWAY

When we doubt, the proper response is to go directly to God and ask him for help.

## APPLICATION

### DISCOVER

- When have you experienced doubt in regards to your faith, the Bible, or Jesus?

### THE BIBLE IN YOUR LIFE

Doubt is not just a modern problem. The Bible has plenty of examples of people who experienced doubt long before any of us were born. It doesn't matter how close you are to God; everyone will doubt to some extent at some point! Eve was the first doubter, but certainly not the last. In these passages, we see a bad way to handle doubt and some good ways.

Read Genesis 3:1–7, Jeremiah 1:1–9, and Mark 9:24, then answer the following questions.

### DISCUSS:

- Where do you think doubt comes from?
- Is doubt a sin? Why or why not? (Passages to help you answer: Romans 4:20–21; James 1:5–8)
- Why is it unhealthy to dwell in doubt for long periods of time?
- On a scale of 1–4 (4=the quickest), how quickly do you turn to God for answers when you doubt?

### APPLY IT

You're going to have feelings of doubt. If you haven't already, there will come a time in your life when you will ask *"Is this all real? Is God really with me? Did Jesus really die for my sins?"* When that time comes, how are you going to handle it?

#### BE SPECIFIC:

**What are you going to do?**

**When are you going to do it?**

**Is there someone who can keep you accountable?**

### PRAYER

Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks.

### A QUOTE TO THINK ABOUT

"If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things." – René Descartes<sup>5</sup>

## THE TAKEAWAY

When we doubt, the proper response is to go directly to God and ask him for help.

## WAYS TO FOLLOW UP

Here are some tools that you can use to follow up with your students throughout the week. For example, send any of the graphics included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

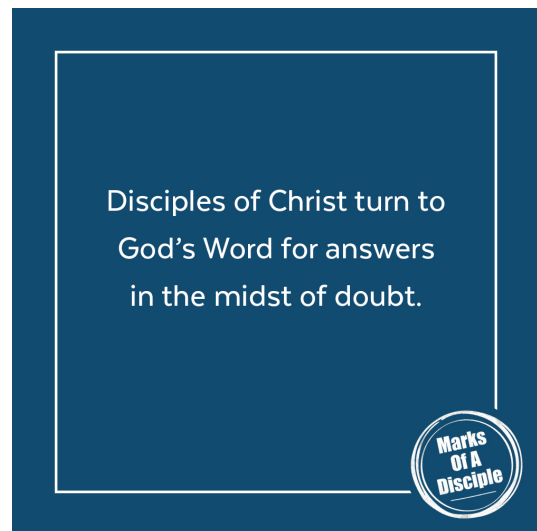
### MEMORY VERSE

"I believe; help my unbelief!"  
Mark 9:24 (ESV)



### MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Marks of a Disciple are a great way to figure out whether your students are growing in their understanding of God's story and how to connect it to their daily lives. As Scripture impacts your students' hearts, they'll begin to live differently and these Marks of a Disciple are a great guidepost to help them grow more Christ-like. Periodically check in with your students about one or two of these Marks of a Disciple that seem to be speaking to them specifically in this season.



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Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreats is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreats; neither does LeaderTreats vouch for their content.

<sup>1</sup> Greg Morse, "Does Your Doubt Dishonor God? What No One Says About Weak Faith," January 4, 2018, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/does-your-doubt-dishonor-god>.

<sup>2</sup> "Galileo is convicted of heresy," *History.com*, November 13, 2009, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/galileo-is-convicted-of-heresy>.

<sup>3</sup> Most Big Mac® Burgers Eaten In A Life Time," *Guinness World Records*, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/most-big-macs-consumed>.

<sup>4</sup> "Largest Gathering Of People Dressed As Superman," *Guinness World Records*, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/largest-gathering-of-people-dressed-as-superman>.

<sup>5</sup> René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, 1644.