

INTRODUCTION Let's look at Matthew 14. The disciples were out on a boat, and Jesus walks up on water. Disciples are freaking out like, it's a ghost. It's not a ghost, it is Jesus. It's the guy who's raised the dead.

And in Matthew 14, Peter says, ²⁸*“Lord, if it's you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”* ²⁹*“Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.*

³⁰*But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”* ³¹*Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”*

Why'd you doubt? What's interesting is everything Jesus could have said that he didn't say, for example, **“Peter, you're not disciple material after all.”** He didn't look at the other disciples and say, **“Can you believe that guy?”**

He asked him the question, **“Why did you doubt?”** And what's interesting is what did Jesus do whenever Peter doubted? Jesus reached out his hand and met Peter in his doubt. Jesus didn't reject him for his doubt, but he rescued Peter from his doubt.

In fact, when you look at scripture every time Jesus would encounter somebody who had questions or didn't understand or doubted, you'll notice Jesus took time, had grace, and had compassion for them.

Last week we looked at Thomas, he doubted and said, I need to see to believe. And Jesus gave him what he needed and he gave him proof.

We also looked last week at the disciples when they doubted, remember they were up on the mountain and some were worshiping and there's a resurrected Christ, some are doubting.

And Jesus looked at him right after they doubted and said, **“Go unto all the world and preach the gospel.”**

John the Baptist devoted his whole life and said, **"I'm preparing the way for Jesus."** And then he said, **"But I'm not really sure now that you are the Messiah."** He doubted and Jesus reassured him.

When Martha doubted, **"Jesus, if you had been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died."** And Jesus reminded her of his power.

Then there's a father of a demon possessed boy who doubted, **"I think you can, but help me overcome my unbelief."** Not only did Jesus heal his son, but Jesus strengthened his faith, powerful, emotional and personal connection that Jesus had grace for those who doubted.

I wonder how many of you might have some faith questions, might have some spiritual doubts.

Why are we so afraid to be honest about our questions in church? If Jesus had grace for doubts, shouldn't we?

DOUBT IS NOT THE ENEMY OF FAITH BUT IS OFTEN A PATHWAY TO A DEEPER AND MORE MEANINGFUL FAITH.

In other words, if you doubt that doesn't make you a bad Christian, it just makes you a human being and doubt isn't the enemy of faith. In fact, sometimes you have to push through your doubts in order to get the answers to be even closer to Jesus than you were before.

So, why do you doubt? Some of you would say, **"I doubt because I've got a spiritual question that I just can't find an answer to."**

Or you're reading your Bible and you come across something, **"It says this here, but over here it seemed to say something different."** And there's an apparent contradiction in your Bible that throws you for a loop. Can I really trust God if there's this contradiction?

Or you go off to college and meet some girl that's really, really nice and she's from another country and she's a devout Buddhist and you say, but Jesus is the only way to God.

And she says, **“Wait a minute, that's not fair. Look at the way I was raised. Surely Jesus can't be the only way to God.”** And so, you think, **“Well she's a nice person and so maybe what I was taught is wrong.”**

Or you experienced something really unfair, injustice in life and you can't reconcile. How in the world could a loving God allow that to happen to me or someone that I love?

You prayed and had faith and believed that God would heal somebody and he didn't. Or you were a little kid begging God to save your parents' marriage. And they ended up divorcing.

Or you looked up to a really strong Christian, someone that was very influential in your life, made a difference and loved you and helped point you toward Jesus.

And then they did something that was very, very sinful, hurtful, maybe even hurt you. And you think, how can I believe in God when someone that led me to him would do that? Why do you doubt?

But when you look at Jesus's character all through the New Testament, the way he treated people, the fact that what did Jesus do when Peter was doubting? He reached out his hand and pulled him up.

When you think about the loving grace-filled character of Jesus, I would raise the question, **why do you doubt? What if this question isn't an accusation but an invitation?**

What is deconstruction? A sincere examination of your beliefs, letting go of what's untrue to build on what is true.

There's something that's known as **lex talionis**, which is a Latin term which stands for the law of retaliation or the principle of retribution. If someone hurts you or commits a crime, then the punishment should be proportional to the severity of the crime.

Someone pokes out your eye, what should the punishment be? Poke out their eye. If someone knocks out your tooth, then the punishment should be equal, and you knock out their tooth.

Watch what Jesus says five different times in one sermon.

In Matthew 5:38-39, Jesus said, ³⁸*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ ³⁹But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.”*

Five times in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, you've heard it said but let me bring a little deeper explanation to what you think that you believe is the whole story.

And if there's any part of what you believe that's not consistent with who my father is, we're going to deconstruct what you don't believe and we're going to build on what is true.

And if you watch, Jesus had to do this with Peter over and over again.

In Matthew 16, Jesus said, I'm going to go to Jerusalem and to suffer and I'm going to be killed. And on the third day I'm going to be raised from the dead.

And Peter says, **“No, no, Jesus, never. That's not going to happen to you. That's not what I want. That's not my plan for you, Jesus.”**

And so, what does Jesus say to Peter? He says, ²³*“... you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”*

What you believe is not true to what my Father wants. And essentially Jesus is deconstructing Peter's wrong beliefs about Jesus as Messiah because Peter thought the Messiah would be a conquering king.

And yet Jesus came as a suffering servant. Peter thought that the Savior would rule with power and Jesus said, no, watch me lead with love.

So over and over again, you're going to see as Jesus looks at what Peter thought was supposed to happen and said, **“Hey Peter, let go of whatever isn't true. And instead, let's build on what is true.”**

So, you got a question, you got a hurt, you got an unresolved faith issue. How do you build your belief system? And the answer is, there's a song about it. You build it on the B-I-B-L-E.

Now, that's the book for me. ♪ I stand along the Word of God ♪ ♪ B-I-B-L-E ♪

You build your belief system on the B-I-B-L-E. The problem is you can go to the B-I-B-L-E with good intentions. But you have to remember, everyone reads the Bible with a bias.

Therefore, everything you believe about God may not be true. When a Christian hurts you, it doesn't mean God hurts you. And if a Christian hurts you, it doesn't mean the whole church is bad.

When you discover something that you believe isn't true, you pursue what is true. So, how do you interpret the Bible?

If you really want to understand who God is, just start in the gospels and read Jesus, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Read Jesus, pursue Jesus. Look at who he was because he represents the Father. Look at how he treated people. Look at how he loved, look at what he said.

Whenever somebody asks Jesus, what's the most important command? He said, **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.”**

So, you read everything in God's Word through love. And then you look at Peter when Jesus says, **“Why'd you doubt?”** He's not going like, why'd you doubt? Why'd you doubt? Read it through his love.

So, if you've been hurt and you're considering leaving the faith, or you know somebody who is, I want you to think about Peter and recognize he had real doubts.

Because three different times someone said, **“Do you believe in Jesus?”** And he said, **“No, I don't.”** He doubted.

But what happened after Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead? In John 21, Jesus comes to Peter and says, **“Peter, do you love me?”** And Peter denied Jesus three times. Three times! Jesus says, **“Do you love me?”**

And he says, **“Yes, I do.”** And then Jesus says, **“Feed my sheep.”** In other words, you're forgiven. Now go do what you're supposed to do.

And this is so special because who did God choose to preach the day the Holy Spirit fell and 3000 people were saved? Peter, the guy whose faith was built after his doubt and denial of Jesus.

About 30 years later, after Peter was forgiven, this is what he wrote.

He said this in 1 Peter 2:25, ²⁵*For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

How did he know what it was like to go astray? Because he went astray. How did he know what it was like to return to the shepherd? He had gone astray and returned because when Peter doubted on water,

Jesus reached out his hand and pulled it out of his doubts. And when Peter denied Jesus, he remembered looking back that Jesus loved him three times, forgave him.

And the same is true for you because doubt isn't the enemy of faith, but doubt is often the pathway to a deeper and more meaningful faith.

So, if you find yourself with real faith questions and you're sinking in your doubts, reach out to Jesus. Because he's reaching out to you, that doesn't make you a bad Christian, just makes you human.

And God is a good and loving God. He can handle your doubts and love you through them, and you can be closer to him on the other side.

PRAYER God, I pray for everyone who may be hurting or have real questions. Give them the courage to open up. And if they are believing something that's untrue or been hurt, God, give us the wisdom to let go of what's not true and build on what is true.

Jesus came not for the righteous, but he came for sinners. People like me and like you. He didn't come for the healthy, he came for the sick.

He had grace for the broken. And he forgave those who sinned. Who is Jesus? The Son of God. Perfect in every way. And on a cross, Jesus paid the price for our sins.

He died. And three days later, God raised him from the dead so that anyone who calls on his name would be saved, saved by faith through grace.

Those who say, **“I'm going to step away from my sins, my doubts, my fears and I'm going to put my faith in Jesus.”** When you call on Jesus, he hears your prayers and forgives your sins.

Those who say, **“I want to know Jesus, I give my life to Jesus. I'm calling on Jesus.”** If that's you, call on him. When you call on him, he hears your prayers and forgive your sins and make you brand new.

Pray Heavenly Father, forgive me of my sins. Jesus, save me. Be the Lord of my life. Fill me with your spirit so I could walk into your love and show your love and do your will. I trust in you. My life is not my own. I give it all to you. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

THE END