

Luke Lesson 48 Handout – Pushing THROUGH Doubt...

Websters dictionary says this about doubt

: to be uncertain about (something) : to believe that (something) may not be true or is unlikely

: to have no confidence in (someone or something)

Luke 1:18–20 (AMP)

¹⁸ And Zachariah said to the angel, By what shall I know *and* be sure of this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years. ¹⁹ And the angel replied to him, I am Gabriel. I stand in the [very] presence of God, and I have been sent to talk to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ Now behold, you will be *and* will continue to be silent and not able to speak till the day when these things take place, because you have not believed what I told you; but my words are of a kind which will be fulfilled in the appointed *and* proper time.

Some of us who have preached the Word for years, and have been the means of working faith in others and of establishing them in the knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, have nevertheless been the subjects of the most fearful and violent doubts as to the truth of the very gospel we have preached. Charles Spurgeon

Mark 6:17–20 (NASB95)

¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*; ²⁰ for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

Luke 7:18-19 (AMP)

¹⁸And John's disciples brought him [who was now in prison] word of all these things.

¹⁹And John summoned to him a certain two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord, saying, Are You He Who is to come, or shall we [continue to] look for another?

Lee Strobel – A Case For Christ – A case for Faith says this:

But – doubting doesn't mean you are not a Christian

Doubting means you are just human.

"Will you catch the virus of doubt?" You probably will.

The big question is, "How can you prevent that virus from turning into a terminal disease that ultimately kills your faith?"

1 John 5:14 (NASB95)

¹⁴ This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Matthew 6:33 (NASB95)

³³ “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

John 14:13–14 (NASB95)

¹³ “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*.

Lee Strobel says – doubt is like a virus that will get worse if we don’t get the right medicine.

Matthew 7:13–14 (NASB95)

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

John 3:16 (AMP)

¹⁶ For God so greatly loved *and* dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on)

Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life.

Psalm 116:15 (NASB95)

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones.

Revelation 21:4 (NASB95)

⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Romans 8:14 (NASB95)

¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Luke 7:20²⁰ So the men came to Jesus and said, John the Baptist sent us to You to ask, Are You the One Who is to come, or shall we [continue to] look for another?

²¹ In that very hour Jesus was healing many [people] of sicknesses and distressing bodily plagues and evil spirits, and to many who were blind He gave [a free, gracious, joy-giving gift of] sight.

²² So He replied to them, Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are

raised up, and the poor have the good news (the Gospel) preached to them.

Isaiah 35:3–6 (NASB95)

³ Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. ⁴ Say to those with anxious heart, “Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.” ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah.

Luke 7:23²³ And blessed (happy—with life-joy and satisfaction in God’s favor and salvation, apart from outward conditions—and to be envied) is he who takes no offense in Me and who is not hurt or resentful or annoyed or repelled or made to stumble [whatever may occur].

Isaiah 55:9 (AMP)

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Corrie Ten Boom says: “Often I have heard people say, “How good God is! We prayed that it would not rain for our

church picnic and look at the lovely weather!” Yes, God is good when He sends good weather. But God was also good when He allowed my sister, Betsie, to starve to death before my eyes in a German concentration camp. I remember one occasion when I was very discouraged there. Everything around us was dark, and there was darkness in my heart.

I remember telling Betsie that I thought God had forgotten us. “No, Corrie,” said Betsie, “He has not forgotten us. Remember His Word “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.” Corrie concludes, “There is an ocean of God’s love available-there is plenty for everyone. May God grant you never to doubt that victorious love-whatever the circumstances.”



Luke 7:23 ...hurt or resentful or annoyed or repelled or made to stumble [whatever may occur].

Philip Yancey, Reaching for the Invisible God: What Can You Expect to Find?: “Doubt is the skeleton in the closet of faith and I know no better

way to treat a skeleton than to bring it into the open and expose it for what it is: not something to hide or fear, but a hard structure on which living tissue may grow.”
--doubts can be the skeleton on which you build your faith.

Luke 7:24 **And the messengers of John having departed, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: What did you go out into the desert to gaze on? A reed shaken and swayed by the wind?**

25 **Then what did you go out to see? A man dressed up in soft garments? Behold, those who wear fine apparel and live in luxury are in the courts or palaces of kings.**

26 **What then did you go out to see? A prophet (a forthteller)? Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet.**

27 **This is the one of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall make ready Your way before You.**

28 **I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; but he that is inferior [to the other citizens] in the kingdom of God is greater [in incomparable privilege] than he.**

Romans 10:17 (NASB95)

17 **So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.**

Matthew 28:16–20 (NASB95)

¹⁶ But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. ¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful.

¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Christians Can't Ignore the Uncomfortable Reality of Mental Illness

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Our shallow responses send the message that our faith has no answer for this kind of suffering.

Amy Simpson

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Last weekend, the nation, and particularly the evangelical community, was stunned by the news that Rick Warren's youngest son, Matthew, had died by suicide after a lifelong battle with mental illness. We can't say what Matthew Warren—a young man with access to mental health care, a loving family, and a relationship with Christ—was thinking and feeling as he took his own life, but we can

honor this family's pain by considering how we interact with the people in our own lives who suffer from mental illness.

In the wake of his son's death, Rick Warren has already addressed the "haters" who celebrate his family's loss and blame Warren himself. For most people, such a response is unfathomable. To celebrate a person's tragic death takes a special kind of evil. But in responding to mental illness, even well-meaning people can do harm so easily.

Experts say more than 90 percent of people who die by suicide have a mental disorder; while most people with mental illness do not die this way, Matthew Warren is not the only sufferer to experience that impulse or to act on it. He's one of about 38,000 in the U.S. to die by suicide each year, and thousands more attempt to do so, imagine it, or live out a number of other frightening symptoms of mental illness.

People with mental illness sometimes behave in ways other people don't understand and can't make sense of. People with severe depression sometimes stay in bed all day, unable to manage the most basic motivation to move. People with anxiety disorders can be gripped by irrational or even unidentifiable fears that don't incapacitate other people. Those affected by psychotic disorders may see things that aren't real, hear voices that don't exist, and sometimes lose the ability to discern reality at all.

Sometimes people with mental illness mistreat or hurt the people they love—or themselves. Some who need medication stop taking it or won't start. Some who seem to be doing well suddenly start showing symptoms again. And yes, some try to end their lives. When they succeed, their loved ones are left with a gaping devastation that cannot be patched with a Hallmark card or niceties about God wanting another angel in heaven.

All of this can be hard for us to understand. I've done my share of trying. When I was a teenager, I tried to communicate with my mother, who suffers from schizophrenia, during psychotic episodes. I desperately tried to understand why she was so afraid and how to help her. Later, I tried to understand after she spent two years believing she was receiving special insights during church services—then she walked away from the church and into the occult. Another time, she was convicted of a crime and spent time in prison. These incidents were so far removed from her true character. My family agonized over them, but we couldn't prevent or "fix" any of them, any more than we could

understand them. And I still haven't understood what to do with my own emotions when I once again feel that old bubbling sludge of anger, pity, horror, and sorrow when one of the people I love most makes another terrible choice, repeats a mistake, or hurts other people—and may or may not be responsible for her behavior. If she isn't, who is?

Recently, I've spent a lot of time writing and speaking up on behalf of people affected by mental illness and their families. I want to see the church embrace these people as we never have before, in keeping with our mission in this life. People who have mental illness can be a difficult group to reach, as their symptoms, efforts to cope with pain, and even side effects from medication can cause behaviors that make us uncomfortable or even alarm us.

When we see symptoms of mental illness, here's how we often respond:

- Interpret their behavior through the lens of our own experience and assume their symptoms mean they're selfish, lazy, self-absorbed, undisciplined, or simply failing to trust God.
- Distance ourselves, hoping that something —prosperity, clean living, more faith, a strong family— separates us from them and guarantees we are not vulnerable.
- Ignore them and hope someone else will help.
- Reject them.
- Fear them, usually with no rational basis.
- Blame them for their problems and shame them into silence.
- Tell them to go get help and come back when they're "cured."
- Try to cure them with spiritual practices like Bible reading and prayer, which by themselves are inadequate for people who need medical intervention.
- Try to solve the problem with pat answers and unhelpful advice.
- Try to "fix" them with amateur counseling.

When we respond in these ways, we make ourselves irrelevant to people who need our help. We send the message that our faith has no answer or explanation for this kind of suffering. We suggest there is an easy answer to their suffering, yet it remains elusive to them for some reason, probably because they don't deserve it and we do. We imply that God himself is ready to walk away from people in pain. All this from people who mean well but just don't know what to do.

So what should we do? Here are a few better responses:

- If you don't know what it's like to live with a mental illness, acknowledge to yourself that you don't understand.
- If you don't know what you're talking about or you don't know what to say, be quiet—but be there.
- Recognize that many of your ideas about mental illness are based in superstition and inaccurate portrayals in pop culture.
- Get better information—read a book, attend a [NAMI workshop](#), do some research online.
- Understand the need for treatment and encourage rather than discourage it—refuse to belittle, mock, or demonize medical intervention.
- Resist the temptation to believe that people in treatment are having all their needs met; doctors and therapists don't provide spiritual guidance or loving community.
- Try to recognize yourself in the other person—not in a way that fosters fear for your own mental health, but in a way that nurtures compassion and connection.
- Differentiate legitimate from illegitimate fear—if someone presents a threat to self or others, call the police; if not, maybe you don't really need to be afraid.
- Draw boundaries and be consistent in enforcing them—you don't have to sacrifice your own health and join another person in an unhealthy place
- Acknowledge you don't have all the answers and can't offer easy solutions that are also true.
- If you're not a mental-health professional, acknowledge your limitations but remember no professional qualifications are required to be friendly and kind or to enter into a supportive friendship.
- Offer companionship, the dignity of a handshake and a smile, and perhaps even friendship.

As followers of Christ and as his representatives, we are called to follow his example. We are called to reach out to suffering people, to stick with them rather than shrink away. We are called to believe that no one is ever beyond hope, past the point where God's grace and love apply to them. God does not give up on people, even if they give up on themselves. After all, we are not called to have all the answers, understand all life's mysteries, or fix everyone's problems. But we are called to love.

Amy Simpson is author of [Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission](#) (InterVarsity Press). She also serves as editor of Christianity Today's [Gifted for Leadership](#). You can find her at www.AmySimpsonOnline.com and on Twitter [@aresimpson](#).