

TENSION

Trust leads to stronger faith & doubt leads to stronger faith

Icebreaker: Can you think of a time when God definitely answered your prayers? How does that help your confidence in God?

Pastor Dave tells us, in his introduction, that sometimes our reaction to doubts moves us away from authentic faith. He tells us that “doubts lead to questions, questions lead to answers, answers lead to truth, and Jesus said the truth will set you free.” “Instead of being a sign of weakness,” he says, “doubt can actually be something that causes us to dig deeper into our relationship with God and make our faith stronger.”

1. What is meant by trust? (Hebrews 11:1, Proverbs 3:5,6)
2. How can we increase our trust in God? (Phil. 3:13-15)
3. What do we mean by doubt? (Matt. 14:29-33)
4. How does the world look at faith? (1 Cor. 1:18, 21)
5. What happens to the believer who trusts in him? (Romans 15:13)
6. How can doubts excite the tension of our faith, helping us to grow stronger? (John 20:24-28, Mark 9:21-25)

• When in doubt, focus on WHO not HOW

Pastor Dave tells us that there is a difference between HOW, which reaches for certainty, and WHO, which reaches for Jesus.

A. HOW reaches for certainty

7. How does our world system promote certainty (evidence-based decision)? How can certainty undermine faith? (Heb. 11:1, Psalm 20: 7-8)

8. How are we as believers reaching for certainty, when we ought to reach for faith?

Pastor Dave quotes from the Institutes (John Calvin), saying “Surely, while we teach that faith ought to be certain and assured, we cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety.” In the Institutes, (3,2,17) Calvin gives us an example of that doubt in the life of David:

Scripture does not set before us a brighter or more memorable example of faith than in David, especially if regard be had to the constant tenor of his life. . . .When he rebukes the turbulent movements of his soul, what else is it but a censure of his unbelief? *Why art thou cast down, my soul: and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God. (Psalm 13:6)* His alarm was undoubtedly a manifest sign of distrust, as if he thought that the Lord had forsaken him.

9 . How does David show his uncertainty (doubt) of God’s plan?

10. What does David do to answer his uncertainty? In the end, how is his faith stronger? (Psalm 13)

B. WHO- requires trust and vulnerability. According to the sermon trust is highly relational, requiring interdependence and faith.

11. What does it mean to focus on the Who (person of Christ) rather than the

How? If we are to focus on the WHO, not the How, how might we begin to grow?
(Titus 2:11-14)

12. How does the testimony of others help us to focus on Who? (Hebrews 12:1)

Near the end of his sermon, Pastor Dave quotes C.S. Lewis in a moving quote. That quote is just the first sentence in a very moving paragraph. The paragraph is below:

Now Faith, in the sense in which I am here using the word, is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods. For moods will change, whatever view your reason takes. I know that by experience. Now that I am a Christian I do have moods in which the whole thing looks very improbable: but when I was an atheist I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable. This rebellion of your moods against your real self is going to come anyway. That is why Faith is such a necessary virtue: unless you teach your moods 'where they get off', you can never be either a sound Christian or even a sound atheist, but just a creature dithering to and fro, with its beliefs really dependent on the weather and the state of its digestion. Consequently one must train the habit of Faith. (Mere Christianity)

13. How have circumstances caused your faith to grow or diminish? (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

14. In the midst of difficult circumstances, is there a way we can choose to trust and grow? (Phil. 3:12-14)

"My struggle without you is lonely, so I cling to your control, and as I work through these feelings, please help me to let go, when I just want to know why." – Dave Flaig