

Why Your Faith Must Be Your Own

Years ago, I was so certain about my faith. I could spit out answers to questions by mining a verse. I had ideas about what a “real” Christian looked like, and based on behavior, I felt like a reasonable judgment could be made regarding salvation. Never mind that Scripture teaches that only God knows the heart of man (1 Kings 8:39). I may not have given voice to my thoughts, but my spirit sure was critical.

Somewhere along the way, questions began stirring in my mind. I observed a disconnect between the way so many in the church were living (me included) and the way Jesus, His disciples and the early church operated. Sunday school answers weren’t enough anymore, and I realized I didn’t actually believe some of the things I once professed.

I felt guilty—sinful—about my questions and doubts. My inner dialogue defeated me, but I didn’t feel as though I had the freedom to question the status quo. That was heresy, right? Who was I to question? And then the Lord spoke right to me through my pastor in a Sunday morning sermon that liberated my captive heart: “God isn’t offended by your doubts. You aren’t sinning if you ask questions. Questions and doubts might be evidence that God is wooing you, creating a path for you to know Him better, especially if you’re seeking Him for answers. God will exhaust any means to draw you to His side.”

Instantly, I was released from a stronghold of guilt. I found my questions to be the means by which God was calling me to a more intimate relationship with Him. There was a newfound freedom in my faith. God didn’t want me to rely on the faith of anyone else—not my husband, family members, friends or church leaders. To a degree, my faith up to this point was secondhand, an extension of the faith of others. But God

wanted me to know Him, personally and experientially.

This is why I love Thomas, a doubter, yet one of Jesus' 12 apostles. I can identify with his need to see Jesus with his own eyes following the resurrection. Thomas wasn't content to rely on the testimony of others. He longed for firsthand faith.

Eight days after the resurrected Christ had appeared to some of the disciples, He returned. He invited Thomas' touch and urged him to believe. Thomas recognized Jesus for who He was and is, and proclaimed Him as his Lord. Jesus revealed Himself to Thomas because He knew what Thomas needed. Then Jesus did something incredible: He extended a blessing for those who believe, sight unseen.

Yes, we can know God through His Word, experience Him in His creation and even see glimpses of Him in other believers, but the time to meet Him face to face hasn't come yet. I can hardly wait. {eo}

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