



I
DOUBT
IT



Touching Lives
with James Merritt

I DOUBT IT

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Series Summary

This series is both for believers and unbelievers. It is for those of us who believe, but who also find ourselves saying, “Lord, help my unbelief!” It is also for those who don’t believe because of their doubts. So often the church discourages people from expressing their doubts or shames people because they have doubts. But the truth is, even the strongest believers in the Bible had doubts. And those doubts are what we’re going to dive into on a deeper level in this series.

The Benefit Of The Doubt

I Doubt It | Week 1 | John 20:19-29

INTRODUCTION

There is a difference between doubt and unbelief. Doubt asks questions while unbelief won't even listen to answers. In this message, we are going to study a man in the Bible who had such a problem with doubt he was even given the most famous nickname of any disciple. He is called "Doubting Thomas." I feel sorry for Thomas because I think he has gotten a little bit of a bad rap. He was a doubter, but he teaches us how to deal with doubt. He is able to starve his doubt and feed his faith and he shows us exactly how to do this. If you're struggling with doubt today, I would encourage you to take notes on these five steps.

NOTES

KEY POINTS

1. Find The Cause

The first thing to do is to honestly ask yourself, "Why am I doubting? What is causing me to doubt?" Doubt is merely a symptom of a deeper issue. And if we're going to overcome our doubt, we must first figure out what's causing us to experience doubt. Once you identify the cause of your doubt, many times you will find either the reason is not a valid reason or it may be a good reason that really has a good answer. From that point, you can take the second step.

2. Specify The Problem

If you are afraid of what people might think if you have doubts, don't be. Too many believers have a "Don't ask, don't tell," policy when it comes to the struggles they have with their faith. But the reality is that the church should be a place where doubts go to die. You should have confidence that there's no doubt that God cannot answer. So whatever problem you're wrestling with, whatever doubt is weighing on you, specify it to God. That choice will lead you further down the path of victory of your doubt.

3. Certify The Facts

The reality is that doubt is a feeling. And feelings must always be confronted with facts. Somebody said it this way, "When does doubt become unbelief? Answer: When you let it." The only way you can justify a doubt is to certify the facts.

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

The Benefit Of The Doubt

I Doubt It | Week 1 | John 20:19-29

We know what Thomas meant when he said, “Before I am going to believe it, I’ve got to see, I’ve got to touch it, and I’ve got to feel it.” In other words, he wanted to investigate. He wanted to do his homework. He wanted to find the facts. And we need to do the same if we’re going to overcome our doubt.

4. Ratify The Evidence

One of the reasons why a lot of people won’t confront their doubts is because deep down they are afraid their doubts are true, that what they believe has been wrong, and that maybe there is no foundation to their beliefs after all.

I want to assure you that the only faith that God wants us to have is faith that is fortified by the facts. There is no doubt that any skeptic or any questioner can ever come up with that God hasn’t already thought about and that God cannot address. You don’t have to check your brains at the door of Christianity in order to become a follower of Jesus. You can ratify the evidence of your faith.

5. Testify To The Truth

So far, we have been talking about Thomas and his doubts, but now, this is where you and I come into the story. In today’s key passage, Jesus was talking about us – those who have not seen, and yet have believed. That is you and me. I’ve never seen Jesus. I’ve never touched Jesus. I’ve never felt Jesus, but I want to tell you through the power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God and the testimony of people whose lives have been changed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I know Jesus. I love Jesus. And because of that, I can testify to the truth of who Jesus is. And you can do the same. When we do this, we will be filled with faith and drained of doubt.

NOTES

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

The Benefit Of The Doubt

I Doubt It | Week 1 | John 20:19-29

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What doubts do you struggle with in your walk with Christ?
2. What do you think the cause of that doubt is?
3. What evidence of your faith gives you confidence in what you believe?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Taking God At His Word

I Doubt It | Week 2 | Jeremiah 37:17; John 17:17

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Today, we are going to be addressing this specific doubt that so many people have: “I doubt the Bible is the Word of God.” If that is a doubt you’re struggling with, you should at least consider the case of why 2 billion people absolutely believe the Bible is the Word of God. My point is this, “The word of God is as good as God’s Word.” Jesus Himself believed you not only could take the Bible as God’s Word, but God is as good as His Word because he said, “Your word is truth,” (John 17:17). So, if the Bible is God’s Word, there are certain reasons why we should believe it is when we examine it. Let me give you five of those reasons right now.

KEY POINTS

1. I Believe The Bible Because It Is Historically Reliable

There are mountains upon mountains of historical evidence that back up the reliability of God’s Word. It would take up way too much space to list all of those pieces of evidence here. But if you’re struggling with doubting God’s Word, I would encourage you to do some research on the historical reliability of Scripture. For now, I’ll leave you with this quote from a man named Dr. Nelson Glueck who is still considered the greatest modern authority on Israeli archeology. Here is what he said, “No archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference...Archeology continues to confirm a clear outline or an exact detail of historical statements in the Bible.”

2. I Believe The Bible Because It Is Scientifically Compatible

I am not afraid to make this statement because even though the Bible is not a science book, but by logic itself, if it is God’s Word, and if it is truth, then the God of history is also the God of science. Therefore, you would expect the book to be not just historically reliable, but scientifically compatible. There are many principles of modern science that were recorded as facts of nature in the Bible long before science ever confirmed them experimentally. There is a tremendous overlap between science and the Bible almost from the very beginning. This should give us confidence in our faith and in God.

3. I Believe The Bible Because It Is Prophetically Fulfilled

There is no other book anywhere on this planet that can match the staggering accuracy of foretelling future events like the Bible. Thirty percent of the Bible consists of prophecy.

Taking God At His Word

I Doubt It | Week 2 | Jeremiah 37:17; John 17:17

To this point, fixed prophecies have never been shown to be false, though some are still yet to be fulfilled. In fact, the prophecies are so specific and so detailed they have to be exactly fulfilled. Many of these prophecies speak of things of which there was no likelihood they would ever come to pass. Many times they predicted the very opposite of what you would normally expect. Furthermore, the fulfillment of the prophecy often did not even take place until the prophet had already died. In the Bible two-thousand prophecies have come to pass. You can't find anything like that in any other book in the world. What fuel to our faith!

NOTES

4. I Believe The Bible Because It Is Thematically Unified

If you chose ten different people from the same city with the same culture, with the same educational level, speaking the same language apart from each other, never talking to each other, never consulting with each other think about one controversial topic – let’s just say the “meaning of life.” What are the chances they would be absolutely from end-to-end totally in agreement? You know what that number is? Zero. Now, with that in mind, think about the Bible. Here is a book that consists of sixty-six books all wrapped into one. It was written over a period of 1500 years by 40 different authors living on three different continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa), and writing in three different languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic). These words were written by all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds, education levels, and walks of life. They wrote on many controversial topics...on every moral and ethical issue you could imagine. But when you read this book, you don't feel like you are reading sixty-six books; you feel like you are reading one because there is a unified theme. And that can only happen when God is involved.

5. I Believe The Bible Because It Is Personally Transforming

I have never come across a book that has transformed so many people's lives. Sure you'll hear of a book every now and then that is getting popular and helping people. But in a year or two, you stop hearing about that book. But the Bible is not that way. The words in Scripture have been impacting people's lives for thousands of years. It's never been forgotten. It's never gone out of style. It's never been proven wrong. Year after year it continues to do transformative work in the lives of the people who read it. And that should give us confidence and hope that we can take God at His Word because His Word is truth.

Taking God At His Word

I Doubt It | Week 2 | Jeremiah 37:17; John 17:17

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Have you ever researched the historical and scientific proof of the Bible? If so, what have you learned?
2. How is it possible that the Bible has a unified theme and message when it has so many different authors from so many different backgrounds and time periods?
3. How has the Word of God personally transformed your life?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Yes, God Is

I Doubt It | Week 3 | Romans 1:18-20; Psalm 19:1-4; Psalm 139:13-14

INTRODUCTION

As we continue to address different doubts that people struggle with, today we're going to tackle the existence of God. I love the way Albert Einstein said it when he stated, "You look at this world and you will see outstanding evidence for God." I am going to show you today why I believe that is true and that he knew what he was talking about.

KEY POINTS

1. Look At The Physical World

Almost three millennia ago, a king by the name of David wrote a psalm in Psalm 19. C.S. Lewis called this psalm, "The greatest poem in the psalms and one of the greatest lyrics in the world." The psalm is really very simple. God has spoken loudly enough that everybody can hear Him, and God has shown Himself clearly enough that everybody can see Him. You don't have to look very far. All you have to do is just look up. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1). The entire universe is like a gigantic billboard where God announces 24/7, "I am here! I exist!" So when we're doubting the existence of God, a great step to take is to look at the physical world around us.

2. Look At The Biological World

One of the greatest pieces of evidence that God exists is what you see in the mirror every day. In another Psalm David wrote, Psalm 139, is a statement about his body that is true of every human body. He said, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made..." (Psalm 139:14). Our bodies are absolutely amazing. It's mind-blowing how they function and how they were created. And when we take the time to bask in the amazingness that is the human body, we are pointed back to the existence of our God.

NOTES

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Yes, God Is

I Doubt It | Week 3 | Romans 1:18-20; Psalm 19:1-4; Psalm 139:13-14

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What evidence do you see of God's existence in the physical world?
2. What are some specific ways you're made in the image of God?
3. How does God define goodness?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Yes, God Loves You

I Doubt It | Week 4 | Romans 5:8

INTRODUCTION

Many of us remember the song, “Jesus Loves Me.” If you remember the song you know that famous line, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” I want to change that slightly and give you this sermon in a sentence. Here it is, “God loves me, this I know, for the cross shows me so.” In a book called “Romans,” an apostle named Paul wrote down one of the most incredible sentences in the entire Bible which forever puts to rest the question as to whether or not God loves us. God’s love is not just a “say-so” love. It is a “show-so” love. I can say with 100% confidence, “Yes, God loves us, for the following reasons...”

KEY POINTS

1. The Cross Demonstrates God Loves Us Uniquely

True love doesn’t just say, “I love you.” True love is always visibly expressed. It is always tangibly demonstrated. Jesus Christ hanging on the cross is God’s love for everyone to see. The cross tells us loud and clear that God loves you like nobody else loves you.

The love of a mother for a child, the love of a husband for a wife, or the love of a child for a parent doesn’t compare to the love that God has for us. There are broken-hearted young men and women around the world today who cry themselves to sleep because someone once said these words to them, “I don’t love you anymore.” God is the one being that can never say that and will never say it. The cross demonstrates that God loves us uniquely.

2. The Cross Declares That God Loves Us Unconditionally

God does not love us because we deserve His love; He loves us in spite of the fact that we don’t. God doesn’t love us because we are lovable. After all, we are not. God doesn’t love us because we love Him...because there was a time when none of us loved Him. Thus, as sinners long before we became saints, God loved us not when we were for Him, but when we were against Him. That means because His love is not dependent on what we do, how we act, or whether or not we reciprocate, His love will never change.

NOTES

Yes, God Loves You

I Doubt It | Week 4 | Romans 5:8

3. The Cross Displays That God Loves Us Universally

You can measure the value of a gift in two ways: by what it cost the person who gave it and by the worthiness of the person who received it. In other words, the more a gift costs someone and the less the recipient deserves it, the greater that love is. That is why, according to those two standards, the love that God demonstrated, declared, and displayed at the cross is so unique, so unconditional, and so universal. What did it cost? The death of God’s Son. Who were the recipients of the gift? Ungodly sinners who deserved just the opposite.

That is why preaching the gospel and sharing the good news with people is the greatest most exciting privilege in the world, because I can look anybody, anywhere, anytime, at any place, right in the eye, never blink, never hesitate, never stammer, and never stutter, and say, “God loves you.” God loves you despite who you are or what you have done. God will take you where you are, accept you, pour out His love on you, change you, adopt you, form you, and give you his grace, take your guilt, give you his salvation, and take your sin all because He loves you.

NOTES

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Yes, God Loves You

I Doubt It | Week 4 | Romans 5:8

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is one example of how God loves you uniquely?
2. How do you feel knowing that there's nothing you can do to make God love you any more or any less?
3. How does knowing that God loves us universally motivate you to share the gospel with others?

Good God Almighty

I Doubt It | Week 5 | Psalm 119:68

INTRODUCTION

A man named Aleph wrote the longest chapter in the Bible: Psalm 119. In this psalm, he makes a very bold statement about God. “You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees” (Psalm 119:68). He said unequivocally, “God is good and God does good.” So why should we believe him? I can tell you in one simple sentence. There is good because God is good. On the other hand, let me put that negatively. If there is no God, there is no good. With that in mind, I want to give you some reasons why we should believe in Good God Almighty.

KEY POINTS

1. God Is Good Because He Can Determine Good From Evil

If you eliminate God altogether or if you eliminate a good God, you run into a brick wall. Because once you admit the existence of evil, you have to admit the existence of good. What is evil but just the negative of good things? When you say somebody is immoral, unjust, unfair, or dishonest, it is because there are people who are moral, just, fair, and honest. You see both evil and good, but once you introduce good you have to introduce God.

2. God Is Good Because He Can Direct Good And Evil

God is in control of everything. He is all-powerful and therefore He knows that God could forbid evil from ever happening to anybody. If God is the Sovereign Lord, that means nothing happens to us unless God either causes it or God allows it. We know that no matter how good we are, bad things still happen to us.

Now, oftentimes, God does keep bad things from happening to good people. He kept the lions from eating Daniel. He kept the fire from frying Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He kept the giant Goliath from breaking David in half! So we know He can do it, but He doesn't always do it. But just because He doesn't always keep those bad things from happening doesn't mean He isn't good...which leads us to our next point.

NOTES

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Good God Almighty

I Doubt It | Week 5 | Psalm 119:68

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How would you define good and evil in your own words?
2. When was a time in your life when God derived good things from bad circumstances?
3. Based on what you learned in today's message, how would you answer the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

He Gets Us

I Doubt It | Week 6 | Hebrews 4:14-16

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to all the fights that we face, all the failures that we have, and all the faults that we battle, we have a Savior who is absolutely perfect and who can bring sympathy and empathy to help us deal with how we feel. Simply put, whatever you are going through, Jesus will get you through. In today's key passage of Scripture, we are told three facts about Jesus that let us know that this is true. Let's dive into those facts now.

NOTES

KEY POINTS

1. Jesus Feels What We Feel

There is one thing that Jesus has in common with every person who has ever lived or ever will live and that is He was a human being. If you had seen Jesus, He would have looked like a human being. If you listened to Jesus, He would have talked like a human being. If you traveled with Jesus, He walked just like a human being, because He was a human being. And as a human being, He felt all the emotions we feel. He was tired, sad, angry, happy, frustrated, hungry, lonely, betrayed, forgotten, and the list keeps going. He experienced life fully as a human, so He understands all the things we feel.

2. Jesus Faces What We Face

Just like Jesus feels all the things we feel, He also faces all the things we face. The hardship, the struggle, the trial, the temptation. The only difference is that Jesus faced all of those things and never sinned. Jesus took everything that Satan could throw at Him and still never gave in. He never yielded. Therefore, He can help us in our temptation because He knows what it takes to withstand it.

3. Jesus Fights What We Fight

Even though He is not here with us, Jesus is still fighting for us. He has opened the door for us to go into the very throne room of God anytime we want to, and when we do, we will find exactly what we need when we face temptation, whether we beat it or not. We will find mercy and grace because Jesus is fighting for us.

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

He Gets Us

I Doubt It | Week 6 | Hebrews 4:14-16

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How does it feel to know that Jesus can empathize with your feelings?
2. What is a temptation you've been struggling to beat recently?
3. What is one practical step you can take this week to enlist Jesus' help in fighting this temptation?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Only One Way

I Doubt It | Week 7 | John 14:1-6

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What differentiates Christianity from other religions?
2. How do you feel knowing that your behavior is not what gets you into heaven?
3. Who is someone you know who doesn't yet have a relationship with Jesus that you can share the gospel with this week?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

There's More To Come

I Doubt It | Week 8 | Job 14:14; John 11:23-26

INTRODUCTION

Many people have doubts that there is life after death. But in this message, I'm going to show you why I believe there is more after this life than this life. Yes, there is more to come because death is both an end and a beginning. As we look at what the Bible has to say and what Jesus had to say about life after death, we'll learn three things. Let's dive in.

KEY POINTS

1. Death Terminates Physical Life

One day, whether you burn your body or bury it, it doesn't matter. It is going to turn to dust, and it is going to disappear. This is God's way of letting us know that at the end of the highway called "life," there is an exit ramp called "death." You have to take it, you will get off this road, and your life will end. That forces us back to this question, "Is there life after death? Is there more to come or is the end the end?"

2. Death Translates To Spiritual Life

Whether you are a Christian or not, you are going to live somewhere forever. We are living in a world you can see, but also in a world that can't see. For those of us who are believers, we are going to receive a brand new body that will live forever, and the truth is, with few exceptions, we all want there to be life after death.

That desire is not just a false hope. It is not just a dream. It is not just a figment of our imagination. Death does indeed translate into spiritual heaven. Yes, our bodies will return to dust, but the spirit that God has given to all of us will live forever somewhere.

3. Death Can Celebrate Eternal Life

If you are a believer and you die you go into the presence of God. If you are an unbeliever and die you will be forever out of the presence of God. This reality should be at the root of why we share the gospel with others. For believers, death is only the beginning. It's the start of our eternity spent with Jesus. And don't we want everyone we know to be there with us? Don't we want heaven to be a more crowded place?

NOTES

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

There's More To Come

I Doubt It | Week 8 | Job 14:14; John 11:23-26

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Is there anything about death that scares you or makes you nervous? If so, what is it?
2. What excites you about spending eternity with Jesus in heaven?
3. How does thinking about death motivate you to share Jesus with those who don't know Him yet?
