**Thesis:** Even the most faithful wrestle with doubt and unmet expectations. If we expect it to happen, we can be prepared to handle it. But allowing doubt to sit can be the downfall of our faith. When we feel doubt, we must seek Jesus rather than shy away from Him.

**Introduction:** You’re listening to the Jesus Podcast, a gospel stories told with cinematic flare and honest reflection. I’m Zak, your host from Pray.com. It’s good to be here with you as we unravel more stories of the power of Jesus in the lives of the outcasts. Take a moment to follow the podcast so you don’t miss an episode highlighting Jesus’ radical love.

**Context:** When the young Mary was pregnant with Jesus and excitedly awaited His birth, she visited her relative, Elizabeth. It just so happened that Elizabeth was also with child, who we know as John the Baptist. In *Luke 1* we’re told that as Mary approached Elizabeth, John *“leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit”*.

This moment was the first of many to demonstrate John’s adoration for Jesus. As John grew, it was clear he was destined to play a significant role in heralding the Messiah. John was given a unique ministry: To prepare people to receive Jesus. In the wilderness, he preached on the coming kingdom of God and Messiah and baptized many with water. But throughout it all, he made it abundantly clear that there was someone greater coming: One who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus begins His public ministry, He does so by being baptized by John. Later, as John is with his disciples and sees Jesus approaching, he boldly cries out, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who comes to take away the sins of the world!”

**Message:** Where we find John in our story today differs from the picture we see of him at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. The man who was once full of great joy at the coming of Jesus finds himself full of doubt regarding the Messiah as he sits in a cold, dark underground cell a year into his prison sentence for speaking out against Herod’s sin.

John, like his fellow Jews, longed for the day that God would send their Savior to free them from captivity. And when that Savior arrived in a fashion different than expected, it caused him to question. And if doubt about God’s plan can find its way into the heart and mind of a man like John, it seems that it can find its way into any of us. The realization that doubt can affect even the strongest faith is a sobering reality. One that may scare us. But Jesus wants to set our gaze on the truth of who He is, what He’s done, what He’s doing, and what He promises to accomplish in His good creation.

If you’ve ever experienced doubt in your faith, you know how hard it can be to overcome. And you know how quickly it can grow if left unattended. But the first step in dealing with our doubt is honesty. We don’t have to fear doubt when it creeps into our lives. We just need to be proactive about it.

Everyone wrestles with it. Doubts don’t make us weak. Doubts are opportunities to grow, reflect, and test our faith. Doubt is only dangerous when we feed into it. Doubt is a fork in the road, but we get to decide where it leads by choosing how we manage it. Think back to Nicodemus the Pharisee. When faced with uncertainty about who Jesus was, he didn’t mask it or avoid it. He found Jesus and asked him questions. And he was greatly rewarded for it as God grew his faith.

If you have doubts about your faith, don’t be alarmed. They’re going to arise. God isn’t surprised by it, and neither should you.

Face your doubts head-on and bring them before the Lord. Share them with your close friends, who you know will help you navigate them. And above all else, trust that Jesus will provide assurance. No part of Jesus wants you to doubt Him, which means He’s more than willing to help us get through them.

We see this in His openness to the question John’s disciples bring to Him amid the crowds. Rather than sending them away and allowing John to wallow as a used-up pawn, Jesus tenderly responds. In response to John’s question about whether or not Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus sends the messengers back to testify of the great work Jesus is doing throughout the region: *“The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor!”* There is tangible evidence that the power of Christ is at work.

Jesus is trying to open John’s eyes to see beyond his immediate circumstances. When we go through personal struggle, it can be easy to ignore the beautiful things around us. When we are suffering, it’s hard to celebrate the good in other people’s lives. But Jesus wants John to understand that his personal circumstances aren’t the only barometer for Christ’s faithfulness. How we feel is a poor measure for reality.

Those who judge the world based on their personal experiences alone will have a hard time in life.

When navigating your doubt, allow Jesus to reassure you by reminding you how He’s working. Ask Him to open your eyes to see how the Spirit moves in your life. And when the doubt sets in, ask those close to you to help you see it. There’s no shame in leaning on brothers and sisters in Christ. When we humbly and openly bring our doubts to Jesus looking for actual answers, He doesn’t berate us and isn’t bothered by it. He welcomes all of our thoughts, feelings, and emotions. He wants to take our greatest burdens and settle our souls with His truth.

Consider Abraham, the father of the Jewish faith. A man well into his old age visited by God with the promise that Abraham would be the father of a great nation. This was such a wild idea that Abraham that he falls down on his face and laughs. He doubted God’s ability to do what He promised. But God doesn’t forsake him and move on. He works through Abraham’s doubt so he could see the glory of God on display in amazing ways. God won’t forsake you in your doubts either. He wants to use your doubts as a catalyst to inspire greater faith so that you, too, can see His glory on display in fantastic ways.

One of the main ways God deepens our faith through doubt is by allowing us to grow in wisdom. Wisdom is the application of God’s truth in our lives. Anyone can hear the words of Jesus and remain unchanged, like the Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus’ time who allowed their doubt to turn into cynicism and rejection. But those who press into truth and ask God for the wisdom to see how it takes effect in their lives will be forever changed for the better. Jesus’ half-brother James says this in his epistle: *James 1:2 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”*

Trials, even the trial of doubt, can be seen as a joy, because it’s these very moments that God uses to strengthen our faith to help us persevere. The growth we experience in doubt helps mature us as God completes the work that He has started in our lives. And the key to seeing this happen is asking God for wisdom! And when you ask for wisdom, you can be sure that He gives it generously.

Don’t fear doubt. Face it. Don’t feed into it. Fight it. Jesus said in *Matthew 17:20 “Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”* God can take the smallest amount of faith within us and use it to move mountains. Not even our greatest of doubts can overcome the power of Jesus to fan the flame of our faith. Be reassured in the hope of the gospel and live in the truth that God has sent Jesus into the world that through Him we might have hope and life everlasting with Him.

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