



**How to Trust God Through Tough Times:
Navigating Through Life's Doubts**
North Lake Presbyterian Church
Dr. Denny Dennison
October 9, 2011

A Broad Range of Opinions

Q. Is it possible for faith and doubt to co-exist?

A. Mark 9:20-24:

20 So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.
21 Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. **22** "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." **23** "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." **24** Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"
Mark 9:20-24

"Reflective (Not Doubting) Thomas"

Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him. John 11:14-15

Therefore Thomas ...said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, So that we may die with him" John 11:16

"...and you know the way where I am going" John 14:1-4

"Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?" John 14:5

But Thomas...was not with them when Jesus came. John 20:24

Then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe. Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God! Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe. John 20:27-29

WHEN YOU CANNOT COPE

*How do we grow this new kind of faith
In the tough stuff of doubt?*

1. By risking and failing, not always playing it safe
2. By releasing and losing valuable things...not finding security In temporal things.
3. By questioning and probing the uncertain...not mindlessly embracing usual beliefs.
4. By admitting and struggling with our humanity, limitations, fears

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS AND CLASSES

Read John 20:19-31

1. What would you do if there were "network difficulties" and you missed the last two minutes of the "BIG GAME?"
2. Why are the disciples fearful now? Of all the things Jesus must have said, why does John record, "Peace be with you," three times? (verses 19, 21, and 26)? How does this relate to their fears?... to their being sent?
3. How does Thomas' personality compare with Mary's personality (vs. 13)?... to the other disciples (vs 9 and 19)? What conversations must have taken place in the week between verses 23 and 24?
4. How does Jesus deal with Thomas' doubt? What is significant about the way Thomas responds?
5. Where could you use Jesus' peace right now? Relationship? Fear?
6. What doubts or questions about God are you struggling with? What have you found helpful in dealing with doubts?

TRUSTING GOD IN LIFE'S CHANGES

Trusting God In Difficult Times Pt. 1

7. What has convinced you of who Jesus is?

