

Topic	Doubt
Reference	Matthew 9:14-29
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Speaker	Arnold Lim

I recently saw an Indian movie, PK. The movie is doing something which is very popular among millennials nowadays. It is a term if you're a younger person you will follow, they are doing what is called deconstructing faith. The word deconstructing comes from with deconstruction. The idea is that you should challenge everything about your faith and other things. Deconstruction is widely used everything.

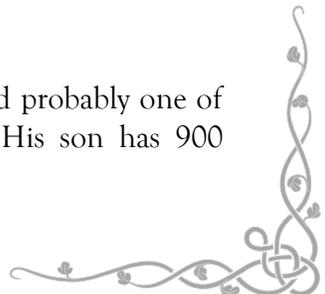
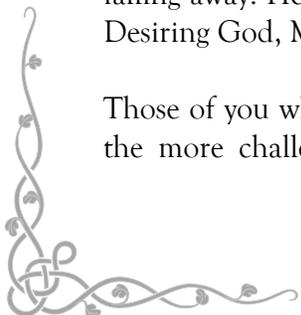
So why are you a Christian? Take it apart and take it apart, study it, deconstruct it and then reconstruct it back. Who are you to take your faith and assume is true and in a movie is challenging there are a lot of people who are religious are just basically superstitious. There are people who are pedaling religion, pedaling it for their own gain and religion plays on fear. And if there's really one God, which God is he because so many religions claim to say the same truth.

So deconstructing your fav requires one key item. What is that? And it's something we rarely talk about, it is this word 'doubt'. And the word is like a dirty word in Christianity. It is like, "hey this is a bad word". Joyce Meyer says, you need to fight it. You have dealt means you have no faith. So we're going to explore this. Now there's some truth to that. Let me explain why. What happens when you deconstruct your faith and you take it all the way. Let me explain some of you and know where I'm going with this. This is Joshua Harris, best-selling author. At the age of 21, he wrote his best seller. The foreword is by John Piper. The New York times calls him the guru of Christian marriages. He followed up with a few series of books and became basically known for marriage counseling. And he was a purity man. He taught heavily on abstinence, morality and purity. He's a graduate from Region Theological Seminary, one of the best. He was on the Board of Gospel Coalition. He has written a book on Old Testament theology and he was a senior pastor of a mega church called Covenant Christian Church. You don't get bigger than Joshua Harris. And you don't get more convicted. You don't get more Christian than him. Now, this is what happened few years ago, he said this. His marriage broke down and he wrote this,

The information that was left out of our announcement is that I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith in Jesus. The popular phrase for this is "deconstruction," the biblical phrase is "falling away." By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian.

This is not a guy who just comes to church and sit in the back. This was senior pastor of a mega church, graduate from a theological college, wrote books on theology, morally very conservative, abstinence purity, not a type of goal that goes around drinking and partying and he says he is no longer a Christian. That's what happen when you deconstruct and he's not alone and so today we take this very difficult topic of falling away. He joined the ranks of others. Another very well-known speaker, you will know him. He's on Desiring God, Moody college professor also gave up the faith.

Those of you who follow YouTube, the prodigy of Tim Keller also gave up the faith and probably one of the more challenging one. John Piper has got 1 million followers on his account. His son has 900



thousand followers. In 2017 he came back to the faith after reading the book of Romans, very much fanfare, the father say the prodigal has returned and very much publicized. The tragedy after coming back in 2017 he left again and he left with a vengeance. He is not the only family member of Piper that went astray, his own daughter in law after getting divorce of his other son also gave up being a Christian. There's something about very famous pastors and their children, you know, go and look at Tony Campolo and what happened to his son, all of them give up their faith. This is something I'm tracking and 900,000 followers in his TikTok account. He spends his TikTok account berating evangelism, everything. What evangelicals teach about hell, unfairness, mission trips and all these followers, majority of them are church people.

So today we deal with a difficult topic. We're going to deal with doubt in church. And I think it's a serious topic, and I want to say after the first service I got some private messages. I won't share it with people, but it's a real topic. And let me just ask, even if you don't struggle with it you think for your children, What happens when your son comes up to you or your daughter and says, you know what, mommy daddy, why is there so much suffering in the world? What do you tell them? Do you brush it aside? These things happen. So this is a real topic and I suggest if you look at the numbers of the declining numbers of the evangelical church, it is something we need to address. So we're going to deal with this this morning.

Now we went through the text. The text is quite straightforward. You have a scenario about a crowd and then you have a man in the crowd. You can imagine him. He brings the son to Jesus and then he backs Jesus basically heal my son Jesus. Before this, the main aim of the text says, you unbelieving generation how long was I be with you? He repeats it again, how long was I put up with you bring him to me.

Now the context of the story is important because before this we have the story of the transfiguration. Now transfiguration is important because on the mountain, Jesus meets Elijah and Moses and the text is trying to tell you Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament. So when the text comes after this, there is a connection with the Old Testament. You need to see the flow of it. So here's the point. Let me just give you example as we do this. He comes down the hill, if you follow text before that and Jesus is shining. On the mountain he is shining. He sees the crowd and he is very angry to crowd and he says, basically he's just has no patience. So let's go back in the Old Testament and which Old Testament texts foreshadowed this. Who went up a mountain, his face was shining, came down saw the crowd and was so angry he broke a tablet. Moses. All right. So we're going to parallel the two texts as we just go through this, you need to keep to this. And of course we have the story of the very famous line. **I do believe help my unbelief.**

And first thing people say that well, because of his honesty he was healed. That's not true. There's a misreading of the text. Jesus did not heal him because he responded, I do believe help my unbelief. You're not seeing this wrong. Why did Jesus heal is found in verse 25. This is the key, which people miss, when Jesus saw a crowd was running through the scene, people were running to see him heal, he basically quickly healed. We missed that. He quickly healed because he didn't want the crowd to see him here. Whoa, why. Shouldn't he be like all those makeup pastors in those healing rallies get thousands of people into the stadium, heal them site. He wanted the boy healed but he didn't want the crowd to see it. These are the details you have to pick up. So let's go to the text.

Doubt is not the enemy of faith and that is so important. And for what messages I got this morning, I think this is the key thing we're going to really go on today. Let me repeat. Doubt is not the enemy of faith. In fact, I'll tell you doubt sometimes is necessary to strengthen your faith. Number two, why believers doubt and then we'll try some general ideas on how to overcome doubt.

Let's take key text and then we will break into the context. There is first a rebuke, If you're able. Everything is possible for person who beliefs. And before that the man says, if you're able heal my son, and when you hear the word, if you're able ask yourself who else says this? The Pharisee says this. If you're able, the devil say that to Jesus. If you're able turn these stones to bread, you know? And so there is basically a test that I don't believe unless you do this. That's the kind of thing. So Jesus challenges and rebukes him, but the reply really breaks your heart with tears flowing the honesty. I do believe that's the first statement and here is the oxymoron, help my unbelief and the two are helped together.

I do believe, help my unbelief. So what we see is an honest struggling with faith. You see here's a problem with evangelical Christianity, it appears to be seen that if you express doubt you're not very godly man. You know, I was watching a podcast. I was reading from Joyce Meyer and she says, fight doubt, fight it. When you got doubt, come and fight it, almost like a psychological condition. You know what she's trying to tell you when she says fight doubt, she is saying suppress doubt. Anything suppresses comes back in space. And if you're watching today, you're having that be like some who WhatsApp me privately, talk to us. You can't suppress it, when you suppress it, it comes back in a very bad way. So you see the Bible tells us to love the Lord your God with all your heart, that emotional part, with all your soul, that is all your being. And here's the last one, the mind.

The mind is saying, you know what I can't understand Christianity. Why are we seeing the people who never knew Jesus? Are you saying they are all going to go to hell? Are you saying you have a good God and your good God is going to let someone, is hell literal are you saying that? Why is the old Testament so full of blood and people just got killed? Why is that so much suffering? I mean, these are real questions. And you cannot say fight it and suppress it and sometimes no matter how much people explain it, a person struggles with it. And so here's the first thing I just want to say, I'm going to be repeating this again and again. It's okay to doubt. Right.

In fact, what the text tells us the way to do your doubt is to take it before God, don't bury it inside. Don't talk to your friends or people take it before God and say Lord help my unbelief. In Matthew 11, Jesus tells the story about John the Baptist. According to Jesus, he is the pillar of faith. He is really a man, Jesus himself commence. And he's in jail now because he said something to Herod, which he didn't like it, threw him into jail. Verse 11,

After Jesus had finished instructing his 12 disciples, he went from there to teach and preach in the towns of galilee. WHEN John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come or should we expect something else?"

He is basically saying, are you the Messiah? Are you the Christ? He is doubting. He is doubting. This is John, the Baptist, the man who Jesus exalts as nobody greater born of women and he is saying, are you the Messiah or should we expect someone else? So if John the Baptist can doubt the very basic of his faith,

what about us? So here is the second thing. You can doubt anything. You can be an elder, pastor, leader, you can doubt anything. And the danger is to suppress it. And the story of doubt goes all the way back to the Old Testament to Abraham.

God told Abraham, you have children like the stars. He doubted that. The famous story of his wife, who basically said, at my age I can't give birth and she laughed when the angels told him, yes, you will give birth. She doubted, Gideon doubted, Moses doubted, Job struggled with doubt in his struggles. The whole narrative of scripture is about people struggling with doubt. So don't say you don't have doubt. The problem with the church is that people don't find it comfortable seeing it. That's our problem. It is not the you watching here don't doubt. You find difficult expressing it because it's an embarrassment because you know, I've been a Christian for so many years and I better not say it, but you have to express it before you end up like Joshua Harris.

So, this is what his ex-wife now said. She said,

My fundamentalist conservative Christianity experience taught me to ignore my inner voice. It's not possible to unpack this in one post using one scripture or angle, but early on, I learn to distrust and overwrite myself out of fear in an environment where those in authorities held tremendous control over leaders and church.

And that is basically a swipe at the church. That means if you're a Christian and you're in church and people tell you, you know, you don't believe you're going to go to hell, you are going to do this. Everybody's supposed to believe certain things, say certain things you want to be accepted, you suppress it. You suppress it. And she says for those out that who can relate, what was your experience? Do you learn to ignore your inner voice, your mind, body or spirit. And thank God she is still trying to process a faith. Her ex-husband has given it up. So here's the first thing I want to just ask all of you. Are you struggling with doubt? Are you struggling? It is what Shannon said you can't ignore it. Don't push it down. Bring it up, talk about it. And, and I don't believe that in a church of our size people don't have doubt. People just don't want to talk about it, and here is the other thing in particular, the statistics are showing young people are leaving the church. This is the book that came up in 2011 by David Kinnaman. He's from Barn. They do stats. He says, you lost me. Why young Christians are leaving the church and they gave six reasons. And the sixth reason is the final reason, the church feels unfriendly to those who doubt. Young adults with Christian experience say the church is not a place that allows them to express doubts. They do not feel safe admitting that sometimes Christianity does not make sense. In addition, many fear that the church response to doubt is trivial. Some of the perceptions is regarding include not being able to ask my most pressing live questions in church and having significant intellectual doubts on my faith.

Right now I want to reach out to young adults. Do you feel FBC is an unfriendly place to you? Do you feel you have pressing questions and you can ventilate to church? Do you listen to podcasts about anything? The LGBT issue, about justice, about pain and suffering and about hell. And you just say, I don't get it, but since no one is talking about it, I'm just going to bury it inside and I want to challenge you, that is not what God wants. This man came to God and says, I believe help my unbelief. And I want to challenge you to do that this morning.

You see faith is like a sweater. Scripture tells us to put on your new self. You become a believer. At one point you have euphoria, you go through a phase where you put on your sweater and wow. You know, wow! I feel like I'm just a new person I'm born again then people go through a few phases and they go to two extremes. On one, they go through the wilderness, they go through the wilderness so badly at one point they become agnostic. They won't tell you, but they become agnostic. They're not sure about your faith. They won't tell you. But you didn't think much just come to FBC, go to a Zoom meeting because you're not pastor, but you're not really sure why you believe, and you just stood at the back. If you're here again this morning, we would like to ask you to talk to us.

Some people have absolute clarity, you know, but they are clear on everything, God spoke to them and some of the things they tell you doesn't even make sense. You question whether it is scriptural, but we fire in the eyes God spoke to me that makes them fanatic. This is where skeptic saw, this is where gullible people are and this has a lot of pride, this has a lot of insecurity and both are not in what we call a vulnerable place. So let me add. Some of us, if you're in here, you need to process your doubts. If you're struggling, the question here is it is okay to doubt. Let us walk with you. If you're very convicted on your things and you could be a lot of things, can I say something which is offensive to those of you who have lot of clarity, you need to doubt more. You need that doubt to challenge your faith. Now that's quite offensive, right? You say, no, I have to be blessed assurance. My question to you is doubt what. And we'll come to that later on.

So here, the other thing we need to pick up a normal seller doesn't process faith in the same way, a scholar in Hebrew processes faith. And if you're not careful, FBC is going to become an intellectual church. Christianity had to reach ordinations. Here's a guy who wants to argue about Arminianism, Calvinism, dispensationalism don't know what an ism, ism, ism they want to discuss about, but both people would doubt. This man has a simple faith. He's not careful he becomes simplistic, from there it becomes superstitious. This one his interculturalism will become his idol. My fear with FBC is we are not here, we are gearing very heavily towards this. That is my view about it and we're turning the sermon so complicated that everyday guy listens to you. He doesn't get it. How many people understand Greek and Hebrew and can do the kind of contextualization. Yet the word of God should reach out to both. How do we do that? And with the text actually infers it and we will go to it.

Now why Christians doubt? Let me just go through a few and my challenge to you is that if you feel that some of this connect to you again we asked you at the end of the sermon reach out to us. Here is the first most obvious one and there is a website out there called ex-angelicals. I went into it by the way preparing this sermon was very depressing. Because it went with testimonies of a lot of people who gave up their faith. The website on it is. Number one, without close when undergoing times of great trials or temptations and of course the story tells about the boy, the father, having to take care of a boy who has an unclean spirit often throws him into the fire, into water to destroy him, try to imagine epilepsy. It just struggles and you have your right people who go through great trauma, they often will ask you was God there, that's the common thing. If God is so real why did he allow this to happen in my life? I mean, you heard that before. That is happening so often again and again and again, when people struggle they always say if God is so good, if God loves me, why did this happened in my life?

Here is the other flip side. The flip side is not their trials, it is temptations. Abraham when he left into and he gave his testimony back in 2-017. He said, you know, when he left the faith first time he gave philosophical for reasons he couldn't understand the Bible couldn't believe this. He said the real reason was very cruelly he wanted to go and get laid and drink a lot of beer. You can get it on a Tik TOK account. The real reason is he just wanted to go out there and parte, you know, so people struggle. So for example, if you are struggling with addictions, you have things you're doing that nobody knows you're struggling with same sex attraction. You are doing things which you have being told that, you know, the Bible says you shouldn't do, you have a conflict? You have guilt. You feel torn. So you either give up what you really like doing or love doing, or you give up your faith, which do you think is easier to give up. It's easier to give up your faith. And the way you give it up is you first compartmentalize it then you say is okay and then slowly it goes away.

Bart Campolo, which was Tony Campol son say, why progressive Christianity or liberal Christianity just dies out because you first start off by saying, you know what I don't believe what the Bible talks about LGBTQ, I just can't, and then from there you say that well is okay to marry gay people. And then from there it's a sort of ghost goes down and down at one point you just said, you know what? I don't, I don't think I need to be Christian. I just need to be a good person. So that's where the slippery slide goes.

Second one, when the social grouping you're in is hostile to Christianity. And now that's again, why? Because this is the key point of the text. You unbelieving generation. He takes a swipe at the entire generation there. You unbelieving generation. The question here is that, is he only talking about the scribes and the Pharisees or is he talking also about his disciples? Because, his disciples tried to heal and couldn't heal. Basically, what the text is saying is that, the reason why healing couldn't be done was because he was in an environment where people just had hardened their hearts and because of that, this father who wanted his son to be healed was very much influenced by that, and so he doubted. Everybody around him was doubting and so he comes before Jesus and says, if you are able.

And so I want to suggest again, the text throws you back to the incident on the golden calf, because there's a parallel there. The Old Testament is basically being foreshadowed in this text here, and we know the story, it says, let me read it to from Exodus 32:1-4

1When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods a who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

They run out of patience and so now make us gods. Now, here is the thing which is really surprising because basically what scholar says, Aaron was pressured. Aaron answered them. Here is the man who is going to lead the Levites

2Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, b Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Later on Aaron confesses this is something very evil and justice is done, but why did Aaron conceit to it. This is Moses brother because he was pressured. He was pressured and later on he says, let's have a festival. So social pressure does a lot of things to people. If you're in a certain group that believes in a certain things you will follow it, is the same both skeptics and gullible. You look at people. If you are in a charismatic church and the charismatic church tells you that you need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and most people were speaking tongue. You do a statistical count, most people in a charismatic church will believe that. You are in a church that says the tongues have ceased, you will believe that. If you're part of the church that believes that bread and wine is the real presence of God, you will believe that. You become part of that group, they call it group thing, only a minority would challenge it. Why do you think are 45,000 denominations? Everybody believes what there pastor, I called them gurus like the movie tells them to do. It is pressured.

So let me give you example right on this and this goes across the board. This is the painting by Pierre Brassau, is what you call an expressionist painting. You can get a link on Wikipedia, his paintings are up in museums, somewhere in the world. And there was an exhibition of his artwork and it's called expressionist paintings. And art critics they're the intelligent people wrote and one art critic wrote about his strokes are just so from the heart, they were powerful, in fact, majority of the art critics commended the work of Pierre Brassau as one guy who really lambasted the painting. But majority said that and well, anyway, his paintings are up in galleries. They were so, you know, they must be good. Let me show you how the artist looks like. The artist is actually a monkey. It was an experiment to see the art critics really don't know what they're talking about. They are pressured to write certain things because of the social grouping and you can get it on Wikipedia and out of all the art critics only one guy had the courage to say, this ark work is terrible. It looks like a monkey ruin. So you become a product of your grouping, we call this group thing phenomenon gain.

Now, why is this important? Whether, you know, it means whether you are a Christian or atheist, the group influences you. Now you may not think this is important. But I'll tell you for young adults and why we are losing our college students and our young adults is because of this. Let me show you statistics of thinking and these are the posts. I think this is Pew Research, very very credible.

In 1994, if you are a conservative Christian, you will go head on with the liberals. They are both on equal basis. But notice once you hit 2–4, there is a little bit of plateauing, there is no longer a logger head you know. Once you hit 2017, liberals and conservative Christians hold the same values. One end here says, no these are the people who will say who are very conservative, anti-abortion, anti-gay, anti-everything. You know, the world is in a mess. These are what people call conservative right wing, but I really would talk about this. This long plateau is telling you whether you're conservative Christian or you are liberal atheist, you hold the same values. And in this projection is going, it will mean this is going to stretch there and this is probably old people. These are younger people. It's going to be flatter. And what am I trying to tell you. I am trying to say that you put your kid in university and the lecturer is liberal, your friends surround you are liberal. They believe in gay rights, they believe in pro-choice. They believe in environmental issues. They say you Christians are narrow-minded, bigots, anti-vaxxers, there's a high likely chance your kids going to doubt and he is going to plateau and after a while it is just a slippery slide before he or she deconstructs his faith and tells you, I don't quite believe anymore.

So social grouping is critical. Here's a third one. When, what you understand from the word and what you see doesn't appear to match up. Now, what the text says is in verse 17, the man says teacher, I brought my son to you, but actually that's not really true. Because Jesus is up on the mountain. So, the man sees the disciples as extension of Christ, which is fair. I see your disciples. I've been told they've been going from town to town, casting out demons. I waited a long time and so I bring my son. So I asked your disciples with the extension of you to drive the spirit out, but they didn't have the power. What I was told about you, Jesus, that you had a power to do it. I heard that you been going from town to town, you heal, but what I see is not the same. So do we struggle from that. We read the Bible and you see the Bible says this, then you look around and you see science doesn't seem to show it. The Bible says that men were created from Adam and Eve, you read your biology book they tell you Darwin say something else. You know, it doesn't seem to match up. The Bible doesn't see anything but dinosaurs. The bible that the world was created x years, science tells you is billions years more, how do you reconcile the two. The Bible says, no, man is sinful. The world says, man is good and bad. And you struggle with that.

Let me take you on a personal level. This is again, we are just going to talk about Joshua Harris. His identity being a marriage counsellor. He wrote multiple books about purity and chastity and that in his faith which is fair if he abided by this, he will have a successful marriage and people looked up to him. So what happens when a Christian pastor who mix his identity from preaching about abstinence and purity and his marriage collapses. In his own words, he says that I used to ex-communicate people who are living immorally and so now ex-communicate myself because then he looks at other people who lead un-Christian lives and happy marriages and something people struggle. Right? You have some people who say I made these decisions for you Lord. I did this and I now am faithfully waiting and you wait and you wait and you wait. And the wait becomes very long and you look at non-Christians friends who appear to be happier than you. And then you struggle, Lord, why is it? They were disobedient and they have the life I don't have. Did you ever relate to that? I think you do. Right? And so we struggle with this. Coming very close to that is when what you understand from the word and the behavioral Christians don't match up. You see, in the end, people are stumbled not so much by the word but by how people behave. The flip side is when Christians behave very-very lovingly, people believe that's why John says by this all men know you're my disciples when you love one another. So the flip side goes both ways.

And so the danger is when you put your faith in people and not in the word of God, I want to stress this because are going to pick this up if we are going to point three. When you put your faith in people and not really in the word of God and in Christ alone. So some people come to church, they are lonely, they are hurt, they have loved and they feel warm, they feel accepted along the way they believe, but really they don't really believe they haven't surrendered their life to Jesus. They just like being in the company of people accept them because the world hates them or the world doesn't love them. So when they suddenly had problems with church, they began to fight with people, they get into trouble, they leave the church and we see this again and again. And of course for this father whose son was struggling, imagine how he feels like, I know the disappointment, my son is not healed. And what does he see? He sees the scribes and the disciples arguing. There he is in tears and people are just fighting over it. So stumbled. Now, I think that's conjecture by the fair point.

And so let me tell you things that stumble me. And I want to just say if you're an anti-vaxxer, you have a right. I'm not here to run you down, but I struggle with the way some anti-vaxxers behave, you know, and

a lot of anti-vaxxers are Christians. They are evangelical Christians in particular, you know, COVID 19 was supposed to be a time where the Christian Church should shine. We should be an example to what is suffering. Instead, our state the evangelical church is an embarrassment. We either become in denial. We say, we quote Psalm 91, God would protect us like the very famous megachurch pastor in Singapore, or we deny everything we say it is a Bill Gates conspiracy is this, you know, and we open our churches, even though doctors tell you, you shouldn't.

So when you see things like this and you see what's happening in India, I don't know about you. I get really upset and I get very stumbled. But maybe it is something we should discuss. And so let me just, end with this part when it is just your nature to doubt.

So, what am I trying to sing? Some of us just wired that way. Some of us believe anything, you know, God told me, so I have engagements with some people. You can't even talk to them. You want to lose an argument or you want the argument, just say the Holy Spirit told me so, with fire in the eyes they will tell you God told me so, and you cannot argue with them. Let me suggest a bit, people who are very on fire, they have pride. They can't see, it is a very subtle pride. And people who are skeptical are also proud. They both have pride. It require a lot of humility to say that

So let's go to overcoming doubt and here is where we try to balance off having healthy doubt and a blessed assurance, so scripture teaches two. Refine in the gospels, your faith has made you well. So there is the idea of faith what Hebrews tells us. On the other hand, doubt is helpful for you to cultivate a deeper faith. You need to have healthy doubt, so you ask all the right questions, you don't suppress it insight so that your faith grow stronger and to do that you need to overcome doubt, and so we recognize some of us are wired in a certain way, some of us are skeptical, some of us have bad trauma affects us. Some of us have bad experiences with Christians. Some of us look at the Bible and say, we don't get it, so let's go through this. All right. Number one, you have to distinguish what you can't believe and what you choose to not believe. There is a difference. Doubt is when you are struggling to believe, I believe that's active participant. That means I made a choice. I chose to believe, help my unbelief. That's called struggling. Unbelief is when you have decided not to believe, and some people they have really made up their minds not to believe, no matter what you say, they're just looking at what you say to cherry pick certain evidence to reinforce their position.

So let's go through again, some things about the text and I want to take you through the text now, you see, you notice that when Jesus does his miracles, the book of Mark is very particular about the way it is written that means sometimes he does the miracles where there is a lot of people, why? Because Hebrews chapter 2 says that the gospel is confirmed through signs and wonders, but there are certain times when Jesus does his miracles, he is very deliberate so that people don't see him. It is right all over the book of Mark. The question you ask yourself is why? Let me give you an example. Right off chapter 1, he healed somebody, don't tell this to anyone. Chapter 8, he healed somebody else, don't go into the village. Meaning don't tell anybody. And then again verse 29, don't tell anyone.

So when Jesus in verse 25 says when he saw the crowd was running, you know what he is trying to do, he is trying to heal so nobody would see. Why? You see in Jesus discernment he could see the crowd. Some people if you show a miracle it will strengthen their faith, some people you show a miracle is wasted on

them because they already made up their minds on what they wanted to see, and in the case of the scribes and the pharisees they were looking for somebody to overthrow the Roman Empire, so Jesus would not give them a sign and that is found in chapter 7.

So this is where the story of the golden calf comes in, because the story of the golden calf is interesting. The Israelites are not denying God rescued them from the Red Sea. What they have done is, they have distorted God to a God of their image. We want this God, let us make Gods in our image and the golden calf is basically the god Al, which is a Canaanite god of fertility. The whole idea is to do a distortion of God and after that Aaron has a festival and scholar says, it is actually a Jewish festival, is a distortion of God. So we go back to the basic principle of why Jesus does miracles and the function of faith and the priority of faith. He says this,

So I can preach, this is why I have come.

The miracles point to one thing, the Messiah, the son of God, the saviour. So let me just go through this. the question is, can you distinguish between what you choose to believe and what you struggle to believe. I give you an example, let just say you fight with your wife, you will struggle. In your fight with your wife you have a temptation to chose to believe your narrative, my wife is wrong, I am right. That is hardening of the heart. If you have a fight with the church, Peter is wrong, Arnold is wrong, maybe I was, I am right. We have this martyr attitude. If I have a problem in office, my boss is wrong. I was discriminated because I am not a Malay, you see our narratives. They call this confirmation biased. It is a condition everybody suffers from. So G.K Chesteshn says this,

When men choose not to believe in God,

And let me suggest Christians can very often compartmentalize God, is not that they don't believe in anything, you take God out of it you believe in anything. It is not that you believe in nothing, you believe in anything, anything you want to believe you want God to be a golden calf, he is a golden calf to you. That is what the text is trying and that's why Jesus doesn't want to show miracles to them. So what you see is what you choose to believe. So what confirms your faith. This is your doubt but what you see is a choice. So call this confirmation bias. Here is a simple example.

Two people were crucified next to Jesus, both of them had access to the same information. They didn't go through Bible college, they didn't have anything but two men criminals hung next to Jesus. One saw Jesus and said, we are hung here because of our sins, Jesus when you are in paradise remember me. The other man spat at Jesus. Two people, same access to information, one chose not to believe, another chose to believe. You see where we are going with this and you have to ask yourself, where do you struggle. If you say, you don't struggle with this, you are lying to yourself. You can be an elder or a pastor, all of us struggle with this. it is your pride that prevents you from seeing this.

So here is a key thing, how do we get blessed assurance. Focus on the big things in faith, not the disputable issues. If you and I are going to argue about what you don't believe in, there is a long list you know, why is there so much struggling in the world. That is the number one on most people's list. If God is really God, why is there so much pain and suffering, that is number one. Number two, if God is so

good why does he allow hell. Is hell literal? Why are Christians so divided, you know. The list goes on, but you have the one, two, three which is often on everybody's list. So what am I trying to suggest. I am suggesting that Christians divide themselves over everything. There are 45,000 denominations. Everybody has confirmation bias. They believe what they want to believe, it is crazy. Billions of Christians around the world they are so divided. The catholic think they are right, the orthodox thinks they are right. The reformed evangelicals think they are smarter than everyone else and everybody else doesn't have the Bible, but how do you know what you believe today is from the Bible and not because like Arnold Lim and Peter Ng very cleverly tell you. Let me challenge you that. How do you your entire doctrine on justification of faith is coming from people who have the gift of the gap like me and Peter and all other speakers, how do you know is not from us but from the bible.

Let me tell you, you can't. Unless, two things, the Holy Spirit tells you too and number two, you are a Bible scholar. So let me suggest, Jesus says, I came for one thing, to preach. You ask what did he preach. He preached rocks, these things non-negotiable.

Paul tells us,

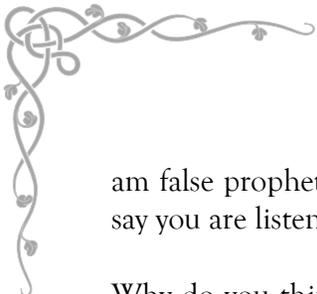
For what I received I pass onto you as of first importance. This is not speaking in tongues, this isn't baptism, this isn't the eucharist, **that Christ died for our sins. He was buried and raised on the third day.**

That is the priority. Steven Covey says this in the seven habits, you fix the big things, the small things will fix itself, but Christians like to argue over stupid things, but this is that, of this you prioritize.

Now there are a lot of things that I struggle with the Bible. One thing I am convicted of is that all man are sinful and Jesus came and died for my sins and he calls me to be savior and to be Lord. Everything else, let me tell you, hold your breath, I doubt. I can change my mind. We keep on reforming but the gospel is ever lasting. So let me do

Practice listening to God, not those who people think they are closer to God. why? Because Jesus rebukes his disciples because they were going in their own strength, they did not pray, they did not fast but those disciples were presenting themselves as people close to God.

Now I am going to say certain really sensitive things this morning and you may not like it. In the movie PK, the jab was at gurus you know. The Hindu faith has a lot of gurus and this guru say they represent God and people follow them. They say they are following God, actually they are following gurus. So evangelicals think they are very smart. They say, you know we don't do that, we are Bible believing Christians. This is Jon MacArthur telling his congregation from the Bible that you have to meet on Sunday even though every doctor tells you, you will spread the things because that is the word of God. And even though after the court told him, you can't do it, he still it. Here is the thing that really bothered me. On Sunday morning, the church met inside, unmasked, without adhering to any social distancing, McArthur noticed the church defiance on the service and saying the good news is you are here, you are not distancing, you are not wearing masks and these are things that bothers me the most, the congregation cheered in response. So don't tell you are listening to the bible, you are listening to Arnold Lim. May be I



am false prophet, may be Peter is a false prophet, may be Yee Dian is a false prophet, my question is you say you are listening to scripture, I challenge you the evangelical church is listening to their gurus.

Why do you think that Ravi Zacharias scandal stumbled so many people, because the evangelical church has raised up preachers to superstars status. This is a toxic culture which you should avoid. Instead spend time in prayer.

Be part of a community that has mercy on those who doubt and Jude 22 says that. Now this is a heavy topic and after the first service some people were telling me, about, how my children doubt what I do and I will tell you this. we are on the verge of becoming the next Europe. The question we ask is do we provide our children the platform to ask questions. The second is you and me, may be you have been in a church for a long time and may be you came to FBC for many reason, but you know what you don't quite believe and I challenge you, I want to say that it is okay to say I don't believe.