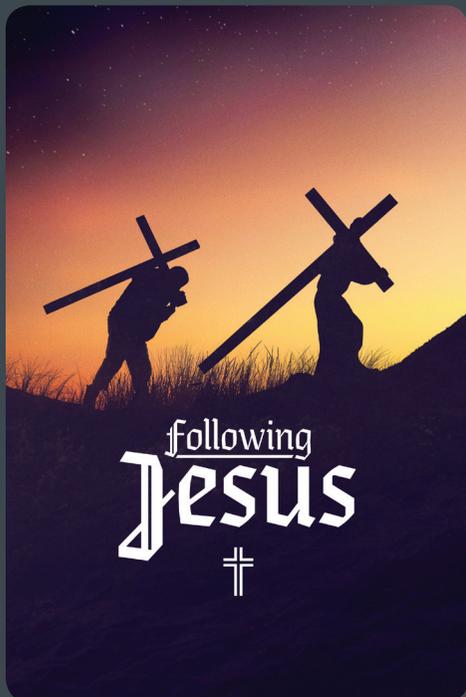
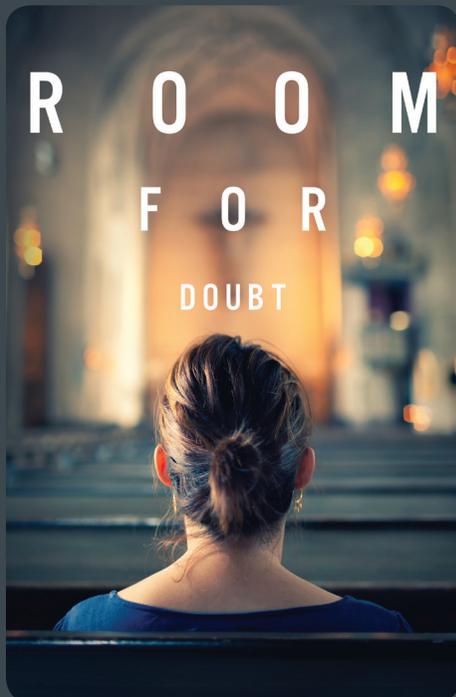


Sermon Journal



February 10–
March 29



March 30–
April 26

Asbury
United Methodist Church

Following Jesus

page 7

Room for Doubt

page 67

Asbury's Vision Statement:

Developing all generations for significant lives in Christ.

This defines our specific and unique calling.

Asbury's Marks:

Worship and obey Christ

Learn and live out Scripture

Influence and invite others to follow Christ

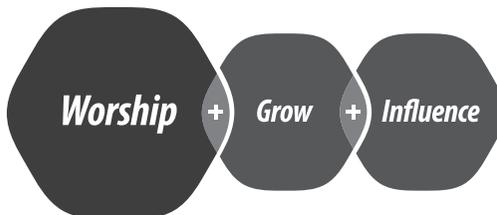
Steward time, skills and resources

United with the Body of Christ

These are outward signs of spiritual growth for a Christ-follower at Asbury.

Asbury's Map

Worship +2. This is what we want people to do to connect at Asbury.



Prayer and Priority List

- Every Sunday, come to worship, grow and influence.
- Every Sunday, communion and prayer available at 9:00 am in the Mason Chapel.
- Every Monday, Celebrate Recovery, Celebration Station and the Landing meet.

February

- Fri, 2.5–6 IF: Gathering, Asbury's Venue, begins at 7:00 pm
 Sun, 2.7 Communion in all services
 Wed, 2.10 Lent begins today. Ash Wednesday service, Sanctuary, 6:00 pm
 Sat, 2.13 2nd Saturday, serving the community, 8:15 am–noonish
 Sat, 2.13-20 Monterrey, Mexico mission team
 Sun, 2.14 "Following Jesus" sermon series begins

March

- Thur, 3.3 Q Commons, Asbury's Venue, 7:00–9:00 pm
 Sun, 3.6 Communion in all services
 Spring Break missions commissioning
 Sun, 3.12 2nd Saturday, serving the community, 8:15 am–noonish
 Sat, 3.12–19 Spring Break missions and on-site prayer watch
 Thur, 3.24 Maundy Thursday service, Mason Chapel, 7:00 pm
 Fri, 3.25 Good Friday service, Sanctuary, 7:00 pm
 Sat, 3.26 Family Easter event, 10:00 am–1:00 pm
 Sun, 3.27 Easter Sunday

April

- Sun, 4.3 "Room for Doubt" sermon series begins
 Communion in all services
 Sat, 4.9 2nd Saturday, serving the community, 8:15 am–noonish
 Sat, 4.16 50+ Marriage banquet
 Sun, 4.17 Marriage recognition
 Sun, 4.24 Confirmation service, Sanctuary, 6:00 pm

How to Use This Journal

Congratulations on your decision to engage the Word of God on a daily basis. You have chosen the best approach to spiritual growth available.

Pastor Tom developed the journal several years ago to offer a structured, daily reading plan because he wants people learning how to feed themselves spiritually. He places tremendous value on personal study and exposure to the whole Bible. There are many reading plans available but he thought it best to provide one connected to the sermon series.

Journaling is typically a personal or “inward” discipline. How you relate to the Lord depends largely on your personality and the nature of your relationship. Some may prefer a more academic approach of word studies and cross-references while others may carry on intimate dialogues with Jesus using the Scripture as a springboard for conversation. However your approach journaling is OK.

While journaling is an inward discipline, the journal itself can be used as a guide for group discussion or family devotionals. Think of it as a tool for spiritual growth. Asbury puts time and effort into creating these journals because it is one of the best ways we can help develop all generations for significant lives in Christ.

To begin, you will need a Bible you can understand; the New International Version is a safe bet and the version our pastors use for preaching. The New Living Translation is a little more “user-friendly” for beginners.

1. Pray first. Ask for wisdom and understanding and for the Lord to speak to you through the text.
2. Read the scripture referenced at the top of the page. If you have trouble locating passages, use your Bible’s table of contents. References are always listed in this order: book, chapter, verse(s).
3. Respond to the scripture by answering these three questions in your own words: What does the passage teach me about God? What does the passage teach me about people? What does this passage teach me about myself? (These guiding questions may be used every day.)
4. The daily reflections offer insight and can be used for personal application. You may use the blank lines to write or “process” your own thoughts and reflections. Discussion questions have also been provided for small group use.
5. Consider everything you write as dialogue with God—a casual, informal prayer conversation that helps you grow into knowing Him (and yourself) better.

Finally, be sure to bring your journal every Sunday to take notes from the sermon.



Following
Jesus
✝

by Stephanie Hurd

Following Jesus

There's an old story about a street evangelist who was asking people if they were willing to follow Jesus. A passerby had this retort: "I don't know. Where's he going?" Honestly, the question and response are both legitimate. Jesus asked people to follow Him. Some dropped everything and followed without hesitation. Others couldn't (or wouldn't).

Luke 9:46–62 shows a whirlwind of activity:

- The disciples argue about who among them is the greatest.
- The disciples try to stop an unknown exorcist driving out demons in Jesus' Name.
- The disciples get pumped about calling fire down from heaven on the Samaritans (permission denied).
- Jesus' invitation to new disciples is rejected because of family matters.

In the middle of this text is a candid assessment of what it means to follow Jesus. The Master Himself said to a guy who pledged to follow Jesus wherever He went: *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

The next chapter (10:1–24) describes the joy that comes from following Jesus. "Prophets and kings" yearned for but never saw what Jesus revealed to His disciples.

Simon Peter wrestled with the street evangelist's question, too: "Are you willing to follow Jesus?" This concludes John's Gospel: *Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"* (John 21:17–19)

We don't know where following Jesus will take us in this life. My pathway is different than yours. Sometimes we get the short end of the materials stick. Even Jesus sacrificed for His purpose. But He also insisted that life is far more than acquiring stuff: *"For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?"* (Matthew 16:26) Who can forget His words in the Sermon on the Mount, *"Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"* (Matthew 6:25) As the Apostle Paul said about following Jesus: *"I've learned to be content whatever the circumstances."* (Philippians 4:11)

"Why should I follow Jesus?" Because He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the True Vine. He is the Good Shepherd. He is the Light of the World. He is the Bread of Life. He is the Resurrection and the Life. As the Beatles sang, "Money can't buy me love." Materialism won't give you abundant or eternal life. Jesus will. Only Jesus can. That's why I follow Him.

Tom

–Dr. Tom Harrison, Senior Pastor

P.S. The new format has been well received so we are continuing with it, and we've added a page of discussion questions each week for small groups.

Following Jesus is both inviting and challenging. We are invited into relationship but challenged in significant ways. These two dynamics working together create an environment for people to grow in their life with God. Following Jesus is an intentional pursuit that takes time, effort and commitment, but it results in the fullest kind of life.

Following

Eternal life in God's kingdom is both present and continuous. Following Jesus is also present and continuous. It is not a one-time decision but a daily sacrifice and on-going commitment that begins with repentance and belief. Then, in the context of this life-giving relationship with Jesus, we are challenged to surrender our lives and follow Him.

Discussion Questions:

John the Baptist and Jesus both preached repentance as the first step to living in God's kingdom. Communal repentance precedes revival, and repentance is the first step in our personal Lenten journeys toward Easter. Why do you think repentance is such an important starting place in our spiritual lives?

Share with the group how you first entered into relationship with Jesus. What does your commitment to following Jesus look like today?

One challenge to following Jesus is not the people or the stuff in our lives, it is our attachment to them. Refer to Paul's words in Philippians 3:7–11. To what in your life are you most devoted? What competes with Jesus for your priorities? What is standing in the way of complete surrender?

Following Jesus is high stakes/high rewards. In what ways do you feel following Jesus is worth the risk?

Now glance at Matthew 7:21–23. What is the danger of deceiving ourselves into thinking we're Christ's disciples when we are not?

The greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. In what ways is this commandment more about "being" than about "doing"?

How will you increase your level of commitment to Jesus this Lenten season?

Learning

The word for “disciple” in Greek is *mathetes* and means “learner.” Followers of Jesus orient their lives around becoming life-long learners of Him. With the help of God’s Spirit, we can learn, over time, to do the things Jesus did while becoming the same type of person He is. Learning from Jesus is not merely academic—it is also practical and pragmatic and creates the strongest foundation for life.

Discussion Questions:

What is your honest opinion of Jesus as a teacher?

With what life issues are you currently trying to learn from Him?

What is one thing you have learned from Jesus that you have recently put into practice?
What was the outcome?

For some of us “learning” is the easy invitation while “doing” is the challenge. For others “doing” is the easy part but taking time to “learn” from Jesus is the challenge. Which best describes you and why?

What are some dangers of “learning” without (or with minimal) “doing” and vice versa?

During this Lenten season, what steps can you take to bring your “learning” and “doing” into balance?

In Scripture, applied learning is compared to “producing fruit” and “yielding a harvest.” Look at Matthew 6:33. How do you think “good fruit” would be a natural by-product of pursuing God?

Practicing

Disciples are learners. Discipleship is the process of learning from Jesus, and then repeatedly putting into practice what we learn. It is only through practice, putting our beliefs into action, that we make progress in our spiritual growth. If we trust Jesus, our Teacher, and truly believe His message—it will show in what we do.

Discussion Questions:

How willing are you to allow Jesus to multiply Himself through you?

What is the difference between trying to do the right thing and trying to be the right kind of person?

As a group, experiment with “practicing” holiness or Christ-likeness this week. Agree to realistic parameters (days, times, length, etc.) and focus on “being holy” or “being Christ-like” during that time. Be prepared to discuss next time you meet.

Since we are being renewed into the image of our Creator, what automatic responses (old habits of thoughts, feelings and actions) might need to be disrupted to make way for new habits, those that fit with living in God’s kingdom?

The Apostle John, near the end of his long life, said *“This is the message we heard from Jesus...”* As a student of Jesus, how would you finish that sentence? Share your answers, then look at 1 John 1:5 to see how someone with firsthand experience of Jesus did. Now, all things considered—would you change your answer? Why or why not?

Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, used to say, “You are going to be what you are now becoming.” Based on your current daily practices, what kind of person are you becoming? What kind of person do you want to be one, three or five years from now?

What specific thing(s) will you do this Lenten season to improve the practice your faith?

Enduring

As followers of Jesus, we must know what threatens our faith and be ready for it. We can expect pressure, but we can also anticipate God's abundant resources. We must be on our guard but not live in fear. Endurance is Jesus' call to stand firm in our life with God, throughout life's challenges. If we don't endure to the end, then the beginning doesn't really matter.

Discussion Questions:

If your group experimented with the practice of "being holy" or "being Christ-like" last week, discuss those experiences first.

In our culture and in our time, "acknowledging" Jesus before others will look different than it did in the days of Roman rule. It might be as exciting as being baptized. As scary as talking to unbelievers about our faith. As disappointing as missing a sports tournament that conflicts with worship. As humiliating as taking an unplanned pregnancy to term. As difficult as staying in a loveless marriage. As risky as calling what's wrong "wrong" in spite of public opinion. As challenging as trusting in Jesus more than in wealth, possessions, jobs or people. It might make us unprofitable in business or unpopular among our peers.

Share a time that you acknowledged Jesus before others either through words or actions. How would you describe the experience?

Share a time that you neglected a clear opportunity to acknowledge Jesus, either in word or deed, before others. How would you describe that experience?

In 2 Timothy 2:3–7, Paul exhorts Timothy to endure hardships like a good soldier who wants to please his commander, a victorious athlete who plays by the rules, and the farmer who works hard to produce a crop. What do these examples illustrate and how do they relate to your current endurance challenge?

How can your suffering help another?

Refer to Romans 5:3–5. How does daily practice of your faith help prepare you to endure?

According to 1 John 5:1–5, who overcomes the world and how?

Sacrificing

Followers of Jesus are called to a higher mission than to find personal comfort and tranquility in this life. An attitude of sacrifice, alongside faithful beliefs and practices, is an essential characteristic of an authentic, vital Christian life.

Discussion Questions:

Alex and Brett Harris challenge young people to “do hard things,” in their book by that title. Their message: *Let’s not be a generation of self-centered materialists; let’s discipline ourselves to follow Jesus and do hard things to His glory.* In the forward of the book, Chuck Norris says, “Today we live in a culture that promotes comfort, not challenges. Everything is about finding ways to escape hardship, avoid pain, and dodge duty.”

In what ways is Norris’ statement true for you?

What “hard things” is Jesus calling you to do? Bear in mind they may be small, repetitive, mostly unnoticed and fairly tedious things like being on time, reading your Bible every day, staying in touch with your family, controlling your temper, avoiding unwholesome media and entertainment, acting with integrity, not complaining, doing a chore thoroughly or without being asked, putting down your phone, being patient, praying before you start your day...

Refer to Galatians 6:7–9. What do you think is the cumulative effect of making daily sacrifices, no matter how small?

The old sacrificial system required the life of an animal to atone for sin. Since Christ became the once-for-all atoning sacrifice, what is the new system of sacrifice required of His followers? You may refer to 1 Samuel 15:22–23; Psalm 40:6–8; Psalm 51:16–19; Proverbs 21:3; Jeremiah 7:21–23; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21–24; Micah 6:6–8; Matthew 9:13.

As a group, discuss this adage: *A sacrifice isn’t a sacrifice unless it’s a sacrifice.*

What daily sacrifices will you commit to practicing for the remainder of this Lenten season?

Empowering

Followers of Jesus are empowered to do just that—follow Him and be His disciples. Jesus, our Teacher, prepares us for life in God’s kingdom and equips us for every good work that He calls us to do. It is only by being disciples that we become capable of making disciples.

Discussion Questions:

Open your Bible to Matthew 7:7–27 (we started our series here). Let’s discover three (not so obvious) sources of power God has given us:

When it comes to following Jesus, the first rule of the kingdom of God is to ask. We should emphatically and repeatedly express our desires to know God better and to grow in Christ-likeness. He hears and responds generously.

Second, we are to put Jesus’ words into practice (which first requires us to learn what they are). We may do so imperfectly at first, but Jesus will meet us in our efforts. He is where His words are.

Third, we decide. We understand it will be costly and challenging and, knowing that, we harness the power of decision. We make an intentional choice to be life-long students of Jesus.

These three working together give us a solid foundation, one built on the rock—so that as we face life’s difficulties our strength and power is “structural,” a part of our being—not a remote storm shelter that we must run to in times of trouble.

What, if any, is your personal experience with the power of prayer?

If you could you receive power from the Holy Spirit to help you do one thing (especially a hard thing) in the daily practice of your faith, what would it be? Have you asked for His help in that matter?

How does decisive and intentional discipleship form a bridge between initial faith and a life of obedience and fulfillment in God’s kingdom?

Transforming

Because of Jesus' resurrection, we have the capacity for true transformation. The entire Christian life is one of transformation! Followers of Jesus change and grow as we progress from one stage of our life in God to the next, until the moment we are gloriously transformed from death to life and made perfect in every way.

Discussion Questions:

One definition of spiritual growth is, "the dynamic process whereby the Word of God is applied by the Spirit of God to the heart and mind of the child of God, so that she or he becomes more like the Son of God."

How is being content with "receiving salvation" while neglecting the work of transformation a cheapening of God's grace?

Do you view your life with God as dynamic? Why or why not?

In what ways are you more like the Son of God today than when you first believed?

Why do you think transformation is an important precursor to us permanently joining in life with God in the world to come?

Why do you think transformation of our hearts and minds is more important than transformation of our outward behaviors?

How does following Jesus, learning from Jesus, practicing what we learn, enduring in our practices, making daily sacrifices and being empowered by Jesus necessarily lead to transformation?

Under what circumstances might transformation fail to happen?

R O O M

F O R

DOUBT

by Rev. Gloria McGee-Denton

Room for Doubt

In an age of CGI (computer-generated imagery) and Photoshop, almost anything can be made to look true or real, so our default response is to question everything. Throw in awareness of a few centuries of political posturing, religious propaganda and unholy wars, and it's not surprising we would doubt that truth or good or God even exist. Skepticism has been conditioned into us, so it's a struggle to wrap our minds around stories like those of people walking through a sea after an unseen force held back the waters, talking animals, or a flood covering Earth for 40 days. They're just fantastic, as are stories of medical miracles, upwards of 5,000 people being fed with only a little bread and fish, prison doors being flung open and a man raising himself from the dead after three days. These things should cause us to raise our eyebrows in question.

"Unfortunately, in many religious circles, there exists an unwritten rule. Pretend. Act like God is in control when you don't believe He is. Give the impression everything is OK in your life when it's not. Pretend you believe when you doubt; hide your imperfections; maintain the image of a perfect marriage with healthy and well-adjusted children when your family is like any other normal dysfunctional family. And whatever you do, don't admit that you sin," observes Mike Yaconelli in *Messy Spirituality*. Phillip Yancey shares, "As a child I attended a church that had little room for inquisitiveness. If you doubted or questioned, you sinned. I learned to conform, as you must in a church like that. The danger of a church like that—and there are many—is that by saying, 'Don't doubt, just believe,' you don't really resolve the doubts."

Doubting Well

Asbury is not a church "like that."

First, as Yancey points out, we would be hard-pressed to find "a single argument against God in the older agnostics (Bertrand Russell, Voltaire, David Hume) or the newer ones (Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris) that is not already included in books like *Psalms*, *Job*, *Habakkuk* and *Lamentations*. I have respect for a God who not only gives us the freedom to reject him, but also includes the arguments we can use in the Bible. God seems rather doubt-tolerant, actually." God encourages questions.

Second, we want to empower you to doubt well. By that we mean that your doubts would serve you, motivate you and lead you toward truth and understanding rather than lead the opposite direction. Doubt isn't a sign of spiritual or mental weakness, it's a sign of spiritual integrity and depth. Worshipping, witnessing or serving in the midst of doubt doesn't make you a hypocrite, it makes you faithful. We don't want you to fear your doubts but to use them. Invest energy in them, being just as eager to prove as to disprove, just as open to mystery as to mastery of the details, just as willing to believe as to not believe.

Third, in order to receive maximum benefit from this series, we must examine our own ways of thinking. Do we focus on thinking or on doing? Form or on function? Do we prefer linear

conclusions based on concrete information or circular, interrelated abstract reasoning? For example, if we were to discuss the famed “burning bush” at which Moses encountered God, would you want to take it to a lab for scientific analysis? Or would you conceive of the bush as a way to get Moses’ attention and point to something beyond the bush? Throughout this series, we will be faced with controversy and mystery. If it were all black and white and certain, there would be no room for faith—and no adventure.

Dear Doubter

“I would say to those who are experiencing doubt, good for you! There is a blessing coming your way. Come join us in a mysterious journey. The key is that we stay engaged and ask questions because if you refuse to address your doubts through prayer, study, worship and fellowship with believers, you’re in danger of remaining married to your doubts,” says Asbury’s Rev. Charlie Ryser.

Doubts are one of the most obvious things that people inside and outside the Church share. We all have questions that haven’t been answered yet, so regardless of where we are in terms of belief or faith, we’re all in this together.

–Rev. Gloria McGee-Denton

“A man may be haunted with doubts, and only grow thereby in faith. Doubts are the messengers of the Living One to the honest. They are the first knock at our door of things that are not yet, but have to be, understood. . . . Doubt must precede every deeper assurance; for uncertainties are what we first see when we look into a region hitherto unknown, unexplored, unannexed.”

–George MacDonald

Doubt and the Bible

Author Philip Yancey says, “I admit that I’m at times a reluctant Christian, plagued by doubts and still recovering from bad church encounters. I’m fully aware of all the reasons not to believe. So then, why do I believe? In my own days of skepticism, I wanted a dramatic interruption from above. I wanted proof of an unseen reality, one that could somehow be verified. However in my days of faith, such supernatural irruptions seem far less important, because I find the materialistic explanations of life inadequate to explain reality.

“I’ve learned to attend to fainter contacts between the seen and unseen worlds. I sense in romantic love something insufficiently explained by mere biochemical attraction. I sense in beauty and in nature marks of a genius creator for which the natural response is worship. I sense in desire, including sexual desire, marks of a holy yearning for connection. I sense in pain and suffering a terrible disruption that omnipotent love surely cannot abide forever. I sense in compassion, generosity, justice, and forgiveness a quality of grace that speaks to me of another world, especially when I visit places, like Russia, marred by their absence. I sense in Jesus a person who lived those qualities so consistently that the world couldn’t tolerate him and had to silence and dispose of him. I could go on and on. In short, I believe not so much because the invisible world impinges on this one but because the visible world hints, in the ways that move me most, at a lack of completion.”

As we wrestle with doubt and the Bible, and the notion that seeing is believing, allow Yancey’s words above to inspire you to use the Bible as a lens through which you can see things in new ways, and consider these along the way:

Observe your use of the four Wesleyan sources of understanding: Scripture, tradition, experience, reason.

How much of what you believe has actually been seen or proven to you?

Are you attracted to the Jesus represented in these readings? Why or why not?

“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Doubt and The Resurrection

The thing the disciples least expected was for Jesus to rise from the dead—they had no context for this in their experience. He appeared to them transformed yet recognizable, almost ordinary but a little extraordinary (a physical body that could be mistaken for a gardener, but one that could appear behind closed doors). An empty tomb and eyewitness accounts confirm it was not a vision or spiritual experience or delusion—it was something new.

Why is it such a big deal? If Jesus was raised from the dead, then He really is who He claims to be and everything He said and taught becomes credible. Then our sins really do matter and we really do have hope of eternal life by believing in Him. Other worldviews will not allow for a resurrected Jesus because it interferes too much with their goals and their preferred ways of living. Denying the resurrection makes easier to indulge the self with a shrug and a “YOLO” (you only live once) because *“If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’”* (1 Corinthians 15:32)

As you study this week, ask yourself these questions:

Do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus? How about the future resurrection of believers?

What evidence carries weight for you?

If asked, how would you explain your position to someone who disagreed with you?

In what ways is it unfashionable to believe in right, wrong and resurrection in your sphere of influence?

Consider these thoughts by Yancey: “The great divide separating belief and unbelief reduces down to one simple question: Is the visible world around us all there is? Those unsure of the answer to that question live in the borderlands. They wonder whether faith in an unseen world is wishful thinking. Does faith delude us into seeing a world that doesn’t exist, or does it reveal the existence of a world we can’t see without it?”

“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Doubt and God's Goodness

"I hear from many suffering people who ask me how God must feel about what they are enduring. I point them to Jesus. We know exactly how God feels because God gave us a face, and we can see Jesus comforting a widow who lost her only son, healing even the servant of a Roman occupying soldier, restoring health to the blind, the crippled, those with leprosy. At the same time, we get a graphic image—like an ideograph—of what kind of life we should live, a life like Jesus." Philip Yancey goes on: "If the church does its job, people don't torment themselves wondering where God is. They know the answer. God becomes visible through people who live out the mission that Paul expressed so well: 'Praise be to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.'"

"C. S. Lewis referred to the 'megaphone of pain.' By its nature, physical pain interrupts our daily routine and forces us to pay attention to an urgent demand of the body. If I have something in my eye, I simply must take care of it. Perhaps suffering does the same thing in a broader context. Take the September 11 tragedy in the United States. That event had profound effects in our nation. People flocked to church because they needed comfort, and answers. We gained a new kind of hero: firefighters and policemen who gave their lives on behalf of others. We became aware of our interdependency on the rest of the world, and were ministered to by the leaders of so many countries who offered support. That same pattern can happen in families, in groups, in churches, when suffering strikes. Like a megaphone, suffering interrupts life and turns our attention to ultimate things. Some people ignore the megaphone, and some pay attention," offers Yancey.

As you consider the relationship between doubt, suffering and God's goodness this week, remember that God can handle your questions, your sadness, your anger. They're appropriate and healthy responses to brokenness. Pay close attention to your attitudes and emotions. Follow your thoughts to see where they go and observe what unhealthy patterns might be perpetuating your doubt of God's goodness.

"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Doubt and Imperfect People

As we address our doubts in regard to religion and the Church, Christians and hypocrites, it's helpful to avoid hyperbole and sweeping generalizations and instead talk about these things at their most basic level. That means we reduce the conversation to doubt and imperfect people. Romans 3:10 points out the shared state of those who believe and those who don't, "*There is no one righteous, not even one.*" Bring many imperfect people together and the flaws are multiplied and magnified, tempting us to focus on those flaws and to pretend we don't have them ourselves. Unfortunately, imperfect people have inflicted so many wounds that the Church itself has become a stumbling block in our path to knowing God.

For example, the morally upright citizens of the day felt threatened by Jesus whereas the moral losers and social rejects were attracted to him. The Church today has exactly reversed that pattern. This bothers us on a very deep level. But—we can't have it both ways. The only way the Church is going to look clean and shiny is if those inside the church get their act together, keep their act together and keep all the not-yet-perfect people out—and many churches are still trying this. On the other hand, if the Church engages the people Jesus did, the Church becomes a bunch of moral failures and difficult people, but then continues to receive pressure to get their act together so they look like *real* or *transformed* or *mature* followers who represent Jesus well.

As you study this week, we invite you to again monitor your emotions, memories and thought patterns to see what they tell you about yourself.

"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Look for Asbury's app
at Apple's App Store and Google Play!

To download a PDF of this sermon journal,
visit **asburytulsa.org/journal**

Did you know Asbury offers weekday preschool, along with many opportunities for children and students (ages 6 weeks through 12th grade) to learn and grow on Sunday mornings and throughout the week? Go to **asburytulsa.org** to discover how we can partner with you in creating a foundation of faith in your family.



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