

**DOUBT**  
John 14:2-6  
By Raymond White

**John 20:27** *Be not faithless but believing*, said Jesus to Thomas. Good advice, and a reasonable commandment.

But faith is a gift, isn't it? (**1 Corinthians 12:8** *For to one is given... :9 ...faith...*). So, what if you don't have as much of it as you'd like? If doubts and questions haunt you, does that mean that you are less of a Christian? Maybe you should not ask so many questions but just follow blindly. Some say that. But that can't be right, can it? The purpose of a question is not to get *an* answer but to get the *right* answer. That's where doubt comes in. If it were only about believing, we could just as well worship a rock. There are people who worship rocks. Why don't we worship rocks? Because of doubt, and that's a good thing.

Yes, doubt can keep you from the truth, but it can also keep you from error. There is much to be said for honest doubt. There is one thing worse than unanswered questions, and that is unquestioned answers. When Jesus said, *be believing*, he didn't mean believe any old nonsense that comes along, he meant, "Thomas, believe *this*: that I have risen from the dead." He spoke directly to Thomas because Thomas was having doubts.

How did Jesus deal with doubters? It's important to notice that there were two kinds of doubters: cynical doubters and seeking doubters. Cynical doubters he rejected, **Matthew 12:39** *...an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign...* They weren't looking for the truth, they were looking for reasons to confirm their rejection.

But that's not all doubters. There are doubters who are truly seeking the truth, seeking doubters, and Jesus did not deal with them nearly so harshly. For instance, **Mark 9:24** *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief*. This father of a demon possessed child had a mixture of belief and doubt. Jesus did not penalize him for his doubt, did not say, "Sorry, you're doubting so I can't help you," what Jesus did was he cast out the demon.

The quintessential doubter was Thomas. **John 20:25** *Except I shall see...I will not believe*. This was not an altogether unreasonable thing for him to say; after all, everyone else *had* seen. And if you think he should be chided for being short on faith, at least acknowledge that he was long on love, **John 11:16** *...Let us also go, that we may die with him*.

How did Jesus respond to Thomas's doubt? Jesus didn't say, "Thomas, get your attitude right and believe." No, not at all. He said, **John 20:27** *...Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing*.

The idea that Jesus recoiled from doubt is simply not true. He responds to honest doubt and he answers honest questions.

It is a true saying that "Stupid questions are better than stupid mistakes." Do you recall when you were a kid in grammar school, and the teacher said something that no one understood? And you weren't brave enough to ask for an explanation and neither was anyone else? Until, that is, one brave kid raised his hand and said, "Teacher, I don't understand. Will you please explain that again?" Everyone snickered. But the teacher elaborated and everyone learned and everyone was grateful to the brave kid who raised his hand (and later graduated valedictorian).

That kid was Thomas, doubting Thomas, who questioned everything, and got answers. At the Last Supper, Jesus announced that he was leaving.

**John 14:2** *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. :4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

He explained that he was going to die, but that was okay because he was going to God and would prepare a place there for them. And don't worry, he added, you'll know how to get there. Then Thomas raised his hand and asked a question.

**John 14:5** *Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?*

"No, Jesus," he questions, "we *don't* know the way. What are you talking about?" His question, instead of drawing a rebuke from Jesus, drew an answer, a very important answer.

**John 14:6** *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

It's impossible to overstate the majesty and power of these few words. If they had been omitted from the New Testament, we would have lost a lot. "Thomas, you *do* know the way. You know me and *I* am the way. You don't need a map or a compass or a GPS to get you there, you have me, your personal guide. Trust me. I'll get you there. And not only am I the way, I am the truth that you need to know, and I am the life that you need to have."

Wow! Thank you Thomas for asking the question. Now we all know the answer.

*There lies more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds.*

— Alfred Tennyson