



Bible Verses: Psalm 23, Jer. 29:13, Matt. 26:36-56

Website: www.str.org

Podcast: Unbelievable? with Justin Brierley

Resources:

Reason To Believe (Author-Timothy Keller)

Finding God (Author-Larry Crabb)

Podcast 11: Faith & Doubt-Jesse DeYoung

Have you ever found yourself seeking God only to find Him absent and silent? The truth is, we all experience this at times. The problem is we tend to hide our doubt in fear—fear that it will cause others to look down on us. Let's try something different. Let's try to own our doubt.

Go ahead, look at doubt for what it is and be honest about the fact that sometimes God seems distant and totally uninterested in the details of our lives... Now we can move forward. None of us want to stay in a place of doubt and lack of faith. We all want to have assurance that God cares about us and is with us in everything. After all, He has promised to be with us always even in the "*valley of the shadow of death*" (Psalm 23). But we can never reach this place of unwavering faith that God is who He says He is and will do everything He has promised to do—unless we first accept the fact that sometimes it's hard to believe.

Consider Jesus for a moment in Matthew 26:36-56. The night before Jesus was murdered he was in a garden with his disciples. He knew what was about to happen to him so he was in a state of total despair. He says, "*My soul is sorrowful, even to death*". Jesus was in a state of such inner turmoil that he was sweating drops of blood! But Jesus brings his trouble before God in prayer saying, "*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.*" And what is God's response? Silence. Total silence. We can refer to God's absence as "The Suck Zone". So what does Jesus do? He embraces this "zone" and says, "*...nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.*" When the work was complete God exalted Jesus and made his name the name that is above every other name.

Jesse DeYoung found himself in The Suck Zone of four years. He (similarly) embraced it and God honored it. When we choose to embrace The Suck Zone (when God seems totally absent) it builds character. We can know that even in God's silence He may be working on our character. We need only to own our doubt before God and embrace the suck until He shows Himself present and active in our lives. The truth is, God is always with us—completing the work He started in us even when it feels like He has turned His back on us.

—Luke Burgett

Talk about it:

- What about Jesse DeYoung's story did you relate to the most?
- What are your thoughts on Jesse (a church pastor) struggling with belief in God?

Make it personal:

- Where have you experienced your greatest period of doubt in God...His goodness...or His existence?
- Are you in the middle of some deep doubt now? If so, what are you doing to work through it?

Accept the Challenge:

- Jesse said that—even during his deepest, darkest stage of doubt—he continued to do the hard work (i.e., read the Bible, pray, etc.) which helped him weather the storm. Dedicate yourself to the hard work; spend 5-15 min. reading the Bible and praying. Matthew 5-7 is a great starting point!

