

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Doubt

Steve Moore

**Joel Schmidgall:** Well, we had planned to have Dr Foth here today, but unfortunately Ruth, his wife had double knee replacement and so he made a wise decision and he's caring for her and so, we want to bless him, in just a moment we'll pray for them. But fortunately we have one of Dr Foth's good friends here with us, Steve Moore. He worked for 20 years on Capitol Hill, both on the Senate side and the House of Representatives as a staffer also behind the scenes with the National Prayer Breakfast and likewise events around the country and internationally as well. He works in small group ministry, a devotional thought, and just has his hands all over the place. So it's our honor to have him here with us this weekend at all our locations. Can we give a big and a warm welcome as he comes and shares in the word?

**Steve Moore:** Jesus loved questions. Just think about how many questions Jesus asked in our scriptures just that are recorded in our scriptures. How many do you think? Whisper to your neighbor how many questions Jesus asked in the scriptures? Over 100 questions came out of Jesus' mouth. How many questions did people ask Jesus? About the same number. So in our depiction of the life of Jesus in our scripture, he's constantly asking questions or receiving questions. So I think Jesus would be very happy that we're going to spend some time this weekend thinking about doubt, about the questions in our hearts and our minds asking Jesus those questions, letting Jesus ask questions of us.

Now, if you're really disappointed that Dick Foth is not here this weekend imagine how I feel cause I would be sitting down there, right there, drinking in one of my favorite people and I'd be much more comfortable. But let's just take a minute to pray for Dick and for Ruthie. Will you join me? Lord, thank you for Dick Foth and Ruth Foth and so much of what we love about Dick comes from Ruth and so many of the things about Dick that we might not like are not there because Ruthie was there to edit those out of his life. We pray for Ruthie, we pray for her knees that she would continue to make steady progress to complete healing and a complete full activity and watch over them tonight and their whole family there in Colorado. Bless her with a great night's sleep and a great day tomorrow. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

What I'd like to talk about on your subject of doubt, I finally connected with Mark Batterson a little after noon time on Thursday and he said, would you like to come fill in for Dick? And I said, I doubt it. He said, you're hired. So the subject of doubt may seem kind of heavy for a beautiful late spring, early summer weekend. But it's something that's a very big part of all of our lives. So I'm going to talk about bad doubt and good doubt and how Jesus can help us maneuver from our bad doubt to our good doubt. You can see something that's not up on the screen right there, but a quotation from Alfred, Lord Tennyson who said; "There lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds." That there's actually more faith in honest doubt than just saying something from memory, from rote and so we're going to look at some aspects of doubt.

And so let's just dive in to this Mark 9 passage that should be in front of you. You can look it up on your device if you'd like. So this is a passage in Mark 9, and this is what Dick Foth was going to talk from. Let's just kind of look at that together. I'll just read through it but the context is Jesus has just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration and when he gets down at the bottom of the mountain, there's this crowd scene around a boy who is got a demon and the inability of the disciples to do anything about it.

<sup>14</sup> *"When they came down to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd about them and the teachers of the law arguing with them."*

<sup>15</sup> *"As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet them."*

<sup>16</sup> *"What are you arguing with them about?"*

That's one of those Jesus questions. How often would he encounter us where we are and saying, what are you arguing about? We do so much arguing on this planet.

<sup>17</sup> *"A man in the crowd said, 'Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech."*

<sup>18</sup> *"Whenever it seizes him, he throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, he gnashes his teeth, he becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."*

<sup>19</sup> *"Then Jesus replies 'You unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you?' (Another question) 'How long shall I put up with you?' (Another question) Bring the boy to me."*

<sup>20</sup> *"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."*

<sup>21</sup> *"Jesus asked the boy's father, 'How long has he been like this?'"*

Not something that Jesus wouldn't have had the ability to know but Jesus asked the question to engage the father to bring him in, I think.

*"From childhood," he answered. <sup>22</sup> "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."*

<sup>23</sup> *"'If you can'?" Jesus asks. "Everything is possible for one who believes."*

<sup>24</sup> *"Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'"*

That is right exactly where I am in my life. I believe, I believe, but Lord, help me to overcome my unbelief. And isn't that the place where all 7 billion people on the planet are right where this guy talks about, I believe everybody believes in something. But not everybody has all the faith they had for all the situations that come up. So we're all in the situation, I believe. But help me with my unbelief another word for doubt. My shadow, my unbelief is the death of my wife. My

wife died six years ago in a couple of weeks after 37 of the greatest years of marriage that you can imagine. We were sitting there watching television one night and she went ow, ow and she said, where does appendicitis? Is it over here or over here? But it turned out she had a cancer on her ovary and we went through a long, difficult kind of situation and she died about two years after that first hour. So I believe, help me with my unbelief, help me with my doubt. We prayed earnestly that my wife would not suffer and she did. We prayed that my wife would not die, but she did. So my life always before and for the rest of it is consumed with I believe, help me overcome my unbelief.

Let me run you through a quick history of doubt. Okay? Going back to our first parents and the Adam and Eve they're in the garden, they're still in a perfect state of being and yet they doubt. The serpent comes along, did God really say, don't you think God wants you to be like him? And they ate the apple and he gave it to her and he ate. And then what did they do immediately? The first thing they did is they covered up. The second thing they did is they hid in the bushes as if God couldn't find them and they started blaming each other, blaming God, and so that's what all doubters do. They cover up, they hide and they blame.

But then as it plays itself out, so we get to the Noah's situation, he builds up ark, everybody laughs at them and they all drowned. Abraham comes along and God says, you and Sarah are going to have a microphone problem (there were issues with the microphone). And what does Sarah do when she's told that she's going to have a child? Remember what she does? She laughs; with this body I'm going to have a child, with that equipment over there we're going to have a child? Along comes, you know, 3000 years before Viagra, it's a very difficult situation. So we roll forward to get out of trouble quickly. Along comes Moses and Moses has been tending sheep for 40 years and God gives him an out and he comes up with seven reasons why he cannot be the deliverer. And then we roll forward to David. David doesn't think, David doubts that God is looking. So he looks at Bathsheba while she's bathing, brings her into the palace, sleeps with gets her pregnant. And then as the first king of Israel instigates the first cover up to have her husband brought in so they think that's where the pregnancy came from and then sends them off to be killed. Solomon's doubt was he thought it was a good idea to have 600 wives. A whole nation doubts, even though all the prophets told them how they should live and they get conquered by the Assyrians, then the Assyrians get conquered by the Babylonians, the Babylonians get conquered by the Greeks, the Greeks get conquered by the Romans and the Romans are done with it and they destroy the city and its tumbleweeds for almost 2000 years.

And then so when Jesus comes along, John the Baptist Dad doesn't believe and he's struck dumb. Jesus kind of comes along and Herod at least believes the story well enough so that he kills all the kids in town to wipe out a potential successor. And Peter walks on water for awhile, then doubts and starts to sink, Later, Peter denies him three times. Judas betrays him even after the resurrection and they're on the mountain and Jesus is about to ascend. They said they were all there and some doubted even at that.

So doubt is baked into us. It's in us and there's really not much we can do. If anybody tells me, I have no doubts, I say, I doubt it because we all have doubt. Its part Adam and Eve had at each one of those people are in that exact same situation, I believe, help me with my unbelief.

I wish I could gather you all down here for story time, but a wonderful book that I love that I got some slides on is a book by a guy named Jack Kent said, there's no such thing as a dragon. And little Billy Bixby wakes up in the morning and suddenly he's got a dragon on his bed. And he walks down and he said, mom, I've got a dragon. And Mom said, there's no such thing as a dragon. And the dragon sits on the breakfast table and when Mrs. Bixby, makes the flapjacks the dragon eats them all. And Billy says I didn't know that dragons like pancakes. And his mom says, there's no such thing as a dragon and as the dragon continues, and eventually the dragon gets kind of big. And Billy said I didn't know dragons grew so fast. And mom says, there's no such thing as a dragon. The dragon continues to grow till he takes up the whole house and he runs down the street with the house. And Billy says, I wonder where the dragon's going to take our house. And mom says there's no such thing as a dragon. And eventually they get there and she is continuing and eventually Billy says, no, there is such a thing as a dragon. And the dragon shrinks and it shrinks and it shrinks and eventually it's back down to minimal size. And the mom said, I wonder why he grew so big and Billy said, I think he just kind of wanted to be noticed. Whenever we say there is no such thing as a dragon in our life, the dragon gets bigger and bigger and bigger. When we deny the existence of our loneliness or addiction or our sadness and any of these, our shame, it grows in darkness, it grows in isolation. And so the opportunity we have to deal with that is to bring stuff out into the open. Remember Adam and Eve, they cover up, they hide and they blame. And whenever we do that with our doubts, they don't get better, they don't go away they grow and they grow and they grow. And so in each of the buildings in official Washington, there are people saying there's no such thing as a dragon. Various problems and issues that they would rather not think about or deal with they continue to say there's no such thing as a dragon and they grow and they grow and they grow.

Let's look at example of good doubt, which is this next passage out of Matthew, and you might be surprised, but this is an example of that I think of is good doubt. This is the story where they go up to Caesarea Philippi, which is a remote area; this is late in the three years of the ministry. And Jesus is just asking them, who do the people say that I am? And they come up with a variety of different answers. And Jesus says, who do you say that I am? And Peter's response is, you're the Messiah. The first human being to identify Jesus face to face as the Messiah. And then you see what Jesus says to him. Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you the spirit revealed this to you and to you I give you the kingdom on this rock I will build my church. Where Jesus validates the correct statement that Peter makes, which is great so far, and then we'd go to the next slide.

<sup>20</sup> *Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.*

<sup>21</sup> *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."*

Now watch what Peter does

<sup>22</sup> *Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"*

Peter is being protective of the Jesus that he loves, but can you imagine rebuking Jesus? That Peter somehow thought that was an okay thing to do? That in their relationship where Jesus had taught these folks that you should express what you're thinking and that you don't have to be all quiet and polite and silence that Jesus encourages this kind of behavior or Peter wouldn't have been doing it.

<sup>23</sup> *Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."*

Jesus responds very strongly to Peter's kind of situations, but if we fast forward to John chapter 21 at the end where Jesus is saying, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? That this kind of situation where Peter was not fired at this moment, he's still the Peter, he's still the rock, he's still got the keys on this rock I will build my church. Jesus does not say, well, based on what you said on page two I'm taking back what I said on page one. No, the Jesus is relating to a peer who's full of doubt to the point of rebuking Jesus and Jesus said, that's the kind of person I want in my group. Not only I want to be in my group, I'm putting you at the top of my group. Jesus is validating the process of Peter expressing his doubts, his unbelief, and he's not just any run of the mill person, he's the top of the heap. Jesus is validating the idea of us when we have doubts, when we are uncertain, when we have problems in our lives, the worst thing we can do is to say there's no such thing as a dragon. And the best thing we can do is articulate it, to say it, to bring it out of the darkness, both with Jesus and with each other.

Let me tell you a couple of stories about a couple of dear friends of mine who lived out good doubt. In about year 2000, I was in Rwanda for the first Rwandan prayer breakfast seven years after the genocide in which a million people out of a population of 10 million were killed and not with weapons of mass destruction face to face, where the killing squads would give your family the machete and say, kill the families in your area around there and do it by lunch. And if you don't do it we're going to take the machete and give it to them. And the president of the country, Paul Kagame stood up and said, we, the people of Rwanda are the nation of the broken heart. All of us have broken hearts and we can't go to the UN for a new heart, we can't go to the United States for a new heart the only place we could go for a new heart is to Jesus. So at this prayer breakfast today, we're going to Jesus for a new heart. And then I got to meet one of those new hearts. The speaker of the parliament at the time was a woman named Henrietta. And Henrietta was giving me the job in a couple of peoples to drive us across the country of Rwanda to go... she said, we're going to go see the gorillas. So I said the gorillas or the gorillas? And she said, both actually.

And so as we're driving across the country she said, do you like to sing in America when you on a car trip? And I said, yeah, we sing, you know, Bill Grogan's goat and John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt or whatever. And she said, well; in Rwanda we sing Swahili praise songs to Jesus. I said, well, I won't know the songs, but she said you'll pick it right up. So we're going down the road when all the hands were out of the sunroof and out of the side as we're careening down this singing. And by the first stop, the senator I was traveling with said, how's it going in your car? And I said, (whispering) it's going just fine. I had sung myself hoarse before the first rest stop.

So this Henrietta was love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness and self control, pouring out of every pore in her body. She was just exuberantly, wonderfully happy. So she asked me about my family and so I reciprocated, tell me about your family. And she said, well, my husband and I have a wonderful new family. We're getting along so wonderful and we're so happy. And I said, well, why did you use the term a new family? And she said, well, actually it happened right around here. She said, during the dark times by which she was referring to the genocide, we were right and our girls were so little that they really couldn't run. So we found a church that was willing to provide sanctuary for our girls. And she said, I went over that side of the mountain, my husband went over to that side of the mountain, and then we would scavenge what food we could. We'd run down the hill, we'd feed our daughters, and then we'd go back into seclusion. And she said, and then we would always meet at three o'clock in the morning in this clearing and she pointed to the spot and she said, I came to that spot one night and I waited for the appointed time. And I waited for an hour and I waited for an hour and a half and she said, and I knew what that meant. That meant my husband was not coming, and he would never come so she said, I climbed down this mountain. How can I tell my daughters that their father is dead? And she said, she walked into this basement of the church that had provided sanctuary for those kids and she said, and all the babies were dead. The killing squads had found this collection of 300 kids and slaughtered.

And so she said, but after the dark times, I married a man from the tribe that killed my kids and we adopted two orphans from his tribe and two orphans from this tribe. And so as she tells me this story, I said in my mind, I go, wait a minute that's your story just a few years ago, and you're full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, and self control. A story like that is blossoming in your life, because she confronted the evil in her life. She entrusted Jesus and she went to Jesus for a new heart. And that's what Jesus gave her.

When my wife Lori, was in hospice at the end of her life, she was in tremendous pain and heavily sedated to keep her as comfortable as possible. And so she was sort of like a whale that would be underwater for a long period of time and then she'd surface and she'd say a couple of sentences, and then she'd go back unconscious. And so little by little over a period of three or four days, she had a message for me, a message from my daughter, a message from my son, a message for her mom and her brother. And somehow she managed to get to consciousness to say those things. So my son was up in bed with her and she woke up and she said, 'hi, snuggle bunny,' which was her little childhood name. And she said why are you here? And he said, I'm here to say goodbye mom. And she said, I love you. He said, good bye mom. She said, I love you, goodbye mom. And she said, I love you in the tone of I'm correcting you. And he goes, oh, I get it, mom, see you later and she says, alligator. And then she goes out, she's unconscious for a long kind of period. Later on she wakes up and she looks around the room and sees us all. And she says to my daughter, am I dying? And my daughter looks to me to give the answer. And I said, yes, honey, you are. And she said, wow, wow. Incredibly sad, difficult situation, but somehow she had gotten to the place where her death was a wow. It broke all of our hearts but at some point she had faced that. She had realized that she had understood what was actually kind of going on.

Let me give you an illustration, a tool that was given to me by Jack Hayford. Do you know the name Jack Hayford? So, let's see if I can do this one handed this Luke 11 passage where Jesus is talking about your eyes. Are we up there?

<sup>34</sup> *Your eye is the lamp of your body." This is Jesus talking. "When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness.*

<sup>35</sup> *See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness."*

Now, the translators have had a wild time with this word healthy. If you go to BibleGateway.com and you get all the English translations of the thing, there's like seven or eight different choices made. Some people say sound, some people say a generous because this is a bit of a mystery, what this word that Jesus actually spoken in Aramaic and what this word was. But Hayford came up with this wonderful idea that one of the meanings of the word here is the word unfolded. If your eye is unfolded, then your body is full of light. So Hayford says, that's a mystery I have to try to solve. So with a sanctified imagination, he came up with this idea. Imagine that a woman is buying a piece of fabric in a fabric store. In a Middle Eastern market and she walks out and she sees a a piece of fabric there and the merchant is standing behind the counter and he said, oh yeah, this would be ideal for what you want to do. It's just, it's a nice color, it's a very fine piece of fabric. It's in wonderful shape. There's so many things you could do with this fabric. And he shows it to her and kind of brings it all around and then she kind of pays for it haggles for the price and then she gets home and opens it up and finds a hole in it, it's got a problem. And she goes, oh no, this is terrible; I just paid good money for this. So she runs back to the merchants, she said, look, you sold me a defective piece of cloth. And the merchant said, uh, no, no, that piece of fabric was fine when you left here, you must have damaged it yourself. You must have been trying to cheat me out of this. So, no, you don't get your money back.

The Hayford idea is that what Jesus is talking about is that our eye is like that piece of fabric. When I first showed it to you, I folded the fabric so you could not see that tear. And so when she tried to look at it, she could not see the flaw that was there in that fabric. And the idea is that we are the fabric merchants and Jesus is the woman coming to buy. And when Jesus approaches us, we get out our piece of fabric and say, look, it's great, it's beautiful. But the part of us, our shadow part, our shame, our loneliness, our difficulty, our addiction, we show Jesus every part of our life but that part. As if we have hidden it from Jesus and Jesus knows it's there and Jesus knows that if he could get at that part of our life, he could fix it, he could mend it, but not if we have it folded, not if we had tucked away, not if our doubts are something that we keep secretly to our self. And I think Jesus looks at him and said, Oh, if you would only unfold your life to me, if you'd only show me what it is that's bothering you and is difficult for you because I can help you with that. The body of Christ can help you with that. But as long as our, our doubts are secret, as long as we say there's no such thing as a dragon, not only don't they get better, they get worse and they get worse and they get worse.

We all have doubts; it's baked into the human experience. We all believe some things, but we need to have God to help us with our unbelief. Doubt is an unavoidable condition of being a human being. But what is optional is whether or not we express our doubt, the guts it takes Peter

to say, no, no, no, no Lord that will never happen to you. Because Peter was able to say that Jesus was able to address that doubt in his life. The other 11 disciples kept their mouth shut but because Peter expressed it, Jesus could sit, could come into his life. So we all have bad doubt, doubt that undermines us and hurts us. But we can make progress to good doubt, the kind of constructive doubt. And the trick to do that is to unfold, to open up our lives and say, Jesus; this is where I'm torn. This is where I'm broken. This is where I hurt. Could you get your needle and thread onto that spot? And so when our doubts come, Jesus wants us to give them to him. Jesus wants us to give our doubts to each other so that we can find a way to be whole again.

Pray with me. Oh Lord, thank you for your skill at penetrating into the depths of who we are and fixing us at our most vulnerable, broken spots. Forgive me, Lord, when I hide those things from you and only show you the best parts of my fabric, when what you really need to see is the broken parts, the torn parts, the stained parts that you're not embarrassed, you're not surprised by those things. You already know they're there. But Lord, help me to open my life. Help us to open our lives to you so that you can help us turn our bad doubt into good. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.