“Help! My Doubts Scare Me!”

Dear Sue Bohlin,

Hello. My name is _____. I e-mailed Ray earlier too. Anyways, I was reading an e-mail discussion you had with somebody, who didn’t believe in God. You said something in it about how it’s not an intellect issue, but a heart issue. This is hard for me to accept. I’m ashamed admitting this, but oh gosh its hard for me to admit. Maybe I won’t. I could say that I don’t believe in God, but that just sounds way too harsh. Have you heard of anybody who was a Christian, but then they began to have doubts and became agnostic? That’s how I feel. I asked Jesus into my heart when I was younger (I’m 18 now), but for a long time I’ve just been so skeptical. I guess I’m not a Christian, because a Christian knows that he or she is one, and I don’t. I don’t know how to express what I’ve been going through lately. Everyday I think about my doubt and it depresses me. I’m not sure if I’ll ever get rid of it and that scares me. I desire to believe in God so much, but it’s hard. I have so many questions. I wonder why God doesn’t show himself to me so I know for sure that He is there. I don’t know. Maybe He has but it’s just not enough. Maybe I don’t have enough faith.

Another thing that really doesn’t help me is some of the stuff that I have read on the internet. Different books that I’ve read about have caused me to have even more doubt. Have you heard of *The Bible Unearthed…*, or *The Jesus Puzzle…*? I haven’t read any of them, but read reviews. Anyways, the second one I think denies that Jesus was a historical person. That really bothers me. Earlier today I was reading something on the web where this person was being critical of Lee Strobel (who wrote *The Case for Christ*). I really like that book (not done with it yet), but after what I read on the internet about it, I wonder if it really shows that Jesus was a historical person. I don’t know. Maybe I just let other people’s conflicting

views on Christianity get to me too much, but after reading these things, I start to wonder if maybe they are correct on what they are arguing.

Anyways, to me, my problem doesn't seem to be a heart issue because I really would like to believe in God. I desire to believe in Him and live for Him, but it's hard. Is there something that I lack? Do I just not have enough faith? I don't know, maybe I don't. Well I think I've made this long enough. If there's any advice you could give me I would appreciate it. Maybe you could pray for me. Thanks a lot.

I know you don't know me, but I REALLY wish I could reach through this computer screen and put my arms around you and give you a big hug and tell you IT'S GOING TO BE OK!!!!! It is *so OK* to have doubts, to wonder about where you stand spiritually, because, at 18, you are at the point you need to be—deciding for yourself what you should keep and what you should jettison of what you have been taught. You are an adult now but you probably don't feel that you have enough information to make an informed, committed adult choice about something as important as eternal destiny and one's relationship with God!

Good news—lots of other people are also in your shoes. But they don't ask for help, and bless you, you did, and there IS help for you!! There are good answers, and you'll be stronger and more confident for having voiced your doubts and questions, once you're on the other side of this spiritual crisis. It's OK, _____. . . .God is walking through it with you.

> *I guess I'm not a Christian, because a Christian knows that he or she is one, and I don't.*

Well, no, actually that's not true. Many Christians have assurance that we are Christians, and many Christians fervently *hope* they are but they're not sure. That's an

important issue all by itself: can we *know* we're saved and going to heaven? Can we lose our salvation? Our founder and first president, Jimmy Williams, addressed this issue in one of his e-mails.

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I wish you could see God's heart as He watches you wrestle with your doubts and fears. He loves you so much (man, I feel like Monica on *Touched by an Angel* here!) and is very tender toward you as you experience these strong and scary emotions. I understand your fear that you'll never get rid of the doubt. But doubt is like darkness—you don't overcome it by pushing it away, you make it go away by bringing in light. As you seek light and truth and to know what is really true and real, God will show you the light. I am so grateful that you came to us at Probe instead of some New Age "all religions are the same" website!

> *I desire to believe in God so much, but it's hard. I have so many questions. I wonder why God doesn't show himself to me so I know for sure that He is there. I don't know. Maybe He has but it's just not enough. Maybe I don't have enough faith.*

What's important isn't the amount or strength of our faith, but the *object* of our faith. God is strong enough to handle your doubts and to show you, in ways so intimate you will know it's HIM, that He is real and He loves you very much.

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> *person. That really bothers me.*

With good reason. Some of the best Christian apologetics books started out with the author's intention to disprove Christianity, and the facts overwhelmed the skeptics into belief. The entire world was affected by the life of Jesus Christ, in one way or another, but He didn't exist? Now THAT takes a lot of faith!

> *Earlier today I was reading something on the web where this person was being critical of Lee Strobel (who wrote* The Case for Christ*). I really like that book (not done with it yet), but after what I read on the internet about it, I wonder if it really shows that Jesus was a historical person.*

Did you know Lee Strobel started out as an atheist? I'm glad you're reading it; it was a wise choice. So is his second book, *The Case for Faith*. I found this statement from him in an interview online: "I have found that the testimony of history points compellingly toward Jesus Christ having returned from the dead in the ultimate authentication of His claim to be God. To me faith in Jesus is not blind or irrational. I have so much independent evidence that the New Testament writings are reliable that I would be swimming upstream against the evidence if I were to follow the teachings of the Koran or the Book of Mormon. The more I subject the New Testament to analysis, the more I pepper it with questions, the more I walk away utterly convinced of its trustworthiness."

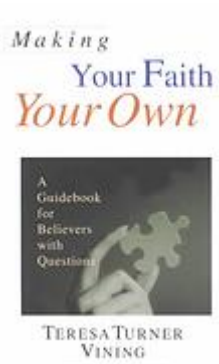
> *I don't know. Maybe I just let other people's conflicting views on Christianity get to me too much, but after reading these things, I start to wonder if maybe they are correct on what they are arguing.*

Just about every truth, especially those of eternal importance, will be countered with something counterfeit, because we're in a very real battle for our minds and souls.

It's unfortunate that the counter-arguments can *appear* so compelling, but the issue is ultimate truth. Right now, you're on the right track in seeking truth and desiring to sort through the clamoring voices that attack it.

> *Anyways, to me, my problem doesn't seem to be a heart issue because I really would like to believe in God. I desire to believe in Him and live for Him, but its hard. Is there something that I lack? Do I just not have enough faith? I don't know, maybe I don't.*

It's been said that the Christian life isn't hard, it's IMPOSSIBLE. You can't live for God in your own strength—not for any length of time, anyway, without burning out and getting majorly discouraged. The secret is to allow Jesus to live His life through you by yielding to Him. That, by the way, is one of the things that sets Christianity apart from every other religion: God inside us, offering to live His life through us, without any loss of our own individuality. But right now, the big issue is what to do with your head/heart conflict. Fortunately, there is a PERFECT book that I believe will make all the difference in the world to you.



It's called *Making Your Faith Your Own: A Guidebook for Believers With Questions* by Teresa Vining. I was privileged to read Teresa's manuscript and LOVED her book. One of its strengths is that she was in the exact place you are now, and she takes you through the questions AND the answers, and suggests you keep a journal as you work through the book so you can decide what you believe and commit to, and what you're not willing to. It is a terrific book on apologetics, and she is very respectful of the person with questions and doubts. I think you will love this book too.

> *Well I think I've made this long enough. If there's any advice you could give me I would appreciate it. Maybe you*

could pray for me.

I'd like to pray for you right now!

Father, I lift up _____ to You and I thank You for her intellect and her honesty in facing her doubts and questions. Thank You that You are not in the least bit troubled by them because You know You are real and true and able to take her through this time to a point where she will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that YOU ARE. I ask You to send her little intimate glimpses of You and open her eyes so she'll know it's You saying "Hi." I ask that You give her a peace when she's pursuing truth and give her an uncomfortable restlessness when she's moving toward the darkness and deception that would seek to draw her away from You. Lord, I thank You for Your hand on _____'s life and on her heart and on her mind, and by faith I thank You for taking her to the place where she will joyfully serve You with all three. Lord, make her feel loved and protected and cherished by You.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Hope this helps, dear one!

Sue