“How Do I Deal With Emotional Doubt?”

Hello Mr. Gleghorn,

I was reading your web page about doubt and agree with all of it. However, I noticed you didn’t cover the topic of emotional doubt.

I have been a believer since 1994. If I examine any argument against God, I know the truth, yet I still get this nagging feeling that says, “Are you sure there is a God?” “What if all this is fairy tale?”… So I go to all the arguments and prove to myself the Bible is true and am comforted, but it doesn’t last.. the same feelings come again and again… and I know they are just emotion and I can answer them with facts and yet the doubt feeling continues. . .

I just want that confidence I used to have. . . I am not living in sin (not that I know of) and I want to serve the Lord with all my heart. What do I do to stop this incessant doubt feeling???

Since you found my article, you are probably already familiar with the work of Dr. Gary Habermas. If not, he’s probably the first person that I would direct you to for dealing with emotional doubt. Here’s the link to his website: www.garyhabermas.com

And here’s a link to resources that came up from his website when I entered in the topic “emotional doubt” here.

Finally, I also typed the topic into Google and some other resources featuring Habermas came up here.

Now concerning your question, it may be the case that these “feelings” will plague you for years. Of course, the Lord

might suddenly deliver you from this, but it may also be part of His plan for you to struggle with these feelings for some time. If so, then it seems to me that some of the most important things that you can do (and you're already doing many of them) are the following:

1. Spend time with the Lord in His word and prayer, listening to music, praising and worshipping Him—or, if you're the more contemplative type, meditating on His attributes (particularly, His goodness and love).

2. Spend time with God's people. Be involved in a good, Bible-believing local church and get involved in at least one small group as well (maybe a men's group). You've already learned that God's people aren't perfect, so you won't have unrealistic expectations. Nevertheless, the people of God can be a great help to one another in mutual encouragement and support (which we all need) as we walk through the Christian life day by day. Ask these people to join you in praying about your doubts and discouragement.

3. Recognize that these feelings may, at least in part, be "spiritual warfare"—and be prepared to fight against them. In particular, "take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16). Indeed, it might be good to memorize Ephesians 6:10-18. And remember, just because you raise the shield of faith one day, and block many of the evil one's flaming arrows, he may very well return the next day, and the next. So stay ready and be prepared for battle every single day regarding this issue.

4. Finally, you may also find it profitable to read biographies of some of the great men and women of God from church history. This will encourage you that God's saints have often faced great difficulties, challenges, and obstacles in their lives. Read John Bunyan's, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, or a biography on Martin Luther, for example. There are many good Christian biographies out there and these

stories will greatly strengthen and encourage you, I think.

One final thought, if you're not familiar with the apologetic work of William Lane Craig, you might also enjoy that. Here's a link to his site: www.reasonablefaith.org

I hope these thoughts are helpful, _____ as you continue to wrestle with these doubts. Since you may struggle with these doubts for years, I would encourage you to hunker down for the long haul. If God delivers you sooner, praise be to His mighty name. But if not, at least you're prepared for what could be a long, hard fight. And remember to seek God's help against the powers of darkness. We're sometimes tempted to discount spiritual warfare (and sometimes, of course, we maybe should). But if we always discount it, then something is wrong. For Paul tells us that we will experience such warfare as Christians. So at least some of the time, what we're experiencing does have a source in the evil one. And right now you may be a victim of his fiery darts. So put on the armor of God and recognize that you have a terrible enemy who wants to see you fail—and don't give him the pleasure!

May the Lord greatly help and encourage you in your struggles _____!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

_____,

Michael's answer to your email was forwarded to me as the Probe webmistress because it's so good, and I keep thinking about your question.

You raise the point that biblical Christianity is supposed to

be a relationship with God, and it absolutely is. I think many people experience the same thing you do because instead of a real relationship, our Christianity is more like a cognitive acknowledgement of things that are true—and that tends to be one-way. And sterile.

What's missing is the love part, the foundation of what God wants in a relationship with Him (you know—Love God, love people? First and second commandments?) We love Him because He first loved us. . . but in our from-the-neck-up current experience of Christianity, we're missing the love part.

I want to suggest something to you that has really rocked my spiritual life. Dr. Baxter Kruger (who lives in Jackson, MS) is a Trinitarian theologian with all the intellectual chops to be deeply satisfying to my mind, but he is especially gifted at helping us see how very loved we are by the Father, Son and Spirit. He has a 5-part audio series called "You Are The Child Your Father Always Wanted" that I've listened to more times than I can count. I've never listened to ANYBODY'S messages multiple times like I do Baxter's. It's available free on iTunes here: itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/perichoresis.org-podcast/id367278246

Everyone that I've shared these messages with has been so thankful—and they, too, find themselves listening multiple times because he's offering such a major paradigm shift.

I have discovered over 40 years of walking with Jesus that the more I receive the many ways He loves me, the more I pay attention His "hugs and kisses," His ways of showing affection and care for me, the strength of my relationship with the Lord has a way of dissembling my emotional doubts. I pray the eyes of your heart will be open to see how you are immersed in a never-ending stream of divine love and honest affection for you, _____.

I truly hope this helps, as well as what Michael said.

Warmly,
Sue Bohlin

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