

# 5 Things To Do When You're Struggling With Faith Doubts



I recently received an email from a blog reader who said she is struggling with so many doubts, she doesn't think her faith will survive. She asked for advice on what to do because, while she would still "love to believe," she feels she can't anymore.

I've received similar emails periodically since starting my blog and I always feel a sense of dread in responding. Though I have a strong faith now, it was hard fought. It's never been easy for me to "just" believe. I know first-hand how difficult times of doubt are and how complex the questions can be. So, when I receive these emails, I usually stare blankly at my screen wondering where to even begin with a response.

While every person's faith crisis is unique, over time I've realized that I regularly come back to the following pieces of advice. I wanted to share them with you today. Here are 5 things to do if you're struggling with doubts about Christianity.

## **1. Search your doubt to find its root.**

If you're where I was for a long time, doubt has become a large ball of tangled spiritual yarn in your mind; you don't even know how to begin unraveling it to a place of spiritual comfort. Feeling like there is no resolution can leave you depressed and even angry.

Here's some hope. In my experience, and the experience of others I've talked to, there is usually something that is at the core of your doubt, and most other doubts stem from it. If you can identify that core problem, it will help narrow your spiritual searching.

For example, many people have a long list of "why would God..." questions (fill in the blank: allow evil, command genocide, not permit homosexual behavior, remain so hidden, etc.). Collectively, those questions may seem too weighty to

resolve. But at the root of them all is often a nagging feeling that God must not really exist if He is so hard to understand.

In this case, I would suggest studying the evidence for God's existence rather than diving into answers for every individual question in the ball of yarn. **Once you are fully convicted of His existence, you can come back to your questions with a fresh look that is focused on gaining understanding rather than on proving to yourself that God makes sense.** That can make all the difference in the world.

## **2. Explicitly identify your alternative to Christianity.**

It's pretty easy to sit back and name your doubts about Christianity. Faith is often tough, and even the strongest Christians have unresolved questions about their beliefs. But most people struggling with Christianity never take the next mental step to ask, "If I decide Christianity is NOT true, what will I *then* believe?"

For some, it's Christianity or atheism. If you don't believe in Jesus, you're not going to believe there's a God at all. If that's you, explicitly consider what you would have to believe as an atheist: the universe has always existed (or created itself), life arose from unconscious matter by chance, there's no basis for calling anything good or evil and there's no objective purpose for your existence. (William Lane Craig's article [The Absurdity of Life Without God](#) is a **must read** on this.)

For others, it's Christianity or some form of personalized spirituality where you pick and choose the beliefs that make sense to you. If that's you, explicitly consider what *that* alternative means: you will effectively be deciding that you are the ultimate arbiter of truth, standing above all world religions with your personal selection of beliefs. You may feel comfortable with that, but it should raise some red flags if you're honest with yourself about those implications.

If you've never considered what *exactly* you would believe if you reject Christianity, take the time to think it through. You'll see that there will be discomforts with and questions about your new beliefs too.

## **3. Evaluate your unmet expectations.**

Radio host and author Dennis Prager once pointed out that unmet expectations are the source of all unhappiness. This powerful insight has stuck with me ever since. Our expectations can be a serious problem when it comes to faith. Ask yourself these questions:

**What unmet expectations do I have about Christianity?** For example, do you expect that if you're a good person, bad things won't happen to you? Do you expect that you'll see answered prayers more often? Do you expect Christians around you to be better people?

**What does the Bible say about that expectation?** Don't rely on what you *think* you know the Bible says about it – it's possible you have a misunderstanding that is the source of the problem. Sit down and really study what the Bible says about it.

**How does my expectation compare to what the Bible says I *should* expect?** It's this gap between your answers to questions 1 and 2 that can give you insight into your faith challenges. Often what we find is that we have expectations that don't line up with the reality of what the Bible says. We may not *like* the way God does things, but that doesn't make Christianity untrue.

#### **4. Be honest with yourself about the nature of truth.**

Truth doesn't depend on what you like or on what makes most sense to you personally. Truth is something you have to commit to seeking outside of yourself. The wonderful thing about Christianity is that its truth hinges on a single event: Jesus' resurrection. Any Christian who is struggling should read [The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus](#) and/or [Cold Case Christianity](#) to get grounded in the historical evidence for the truth of Christianity.

#### **5. Pray.**

When you're struggling to believe, prayer feels almost impossible – it's the last thing you want to do because you're doubting God is even there. But it's more important than ever to ask God to illuminate His truth for you when you're at that point – especially through reading the Bible. Push through the doubt and pray that He will guide you to the understanding you need.

June 16, 2014 By [Natasha Crain](#)