A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

When Faith Has Questions

Starting Out with Christ · Book 3



Honest doubt and the God who answers

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Introduction

Some people think a real Christian never has doubts. That is not what the Bible shows. Its pages are full of people who asked God hard questions, some of them angry, some of them afraid. God did not throw them away. He met them.

My family attended the Catholic church when I was young. I always believed in God, but faith became personal later, when a neighbor, Pastor Jimmy Carter, took me to his church and showed me from the Bible what it means to trust Christ. Even after that, I had seasons when I drifted. I wrote this book because honest questions do not disqualify you from following Jesus.

If you are struggling to believe, or you believed once and now you are not sure, this book is for you. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. It is often the place where faith learns to stand on its own feet.

1 Help my unbelief

A father brought his son to Jesus. The boy had suffered since childhood, and the disciples had not been able to help. Jesus told the father, "all things are possible to the one believing" (Mark 9:23, SLB).

> *I believe, Lord; help my unbelief.*
> **Mark 9:24 (SLB)**

That is one of the most honest prayers in the Bible. The father had some faith and a lot of doubt, and he told Jesus both. Jesus did not tell him to come back when he was sure. He healed the boy.

You can pray that prayer too. God already knows what is in your heart. Telling Him the truth about your doubts is not a lack of faith. It is talking to Him, and that is where faith starts.

When I finally faced my drinking on May 29, 2020, I knew I could not fix myself. My wife waited in the truck while I went into my first 12-step meeting. I was drunk, and I sat there weeping as I listened to everyone, full of shame and brokenness. I believed God could save me, even though my faith felt shaky. I prayed like the father in Mark 9:24: help my unbelief. Jesus does not wait until our faith is strong before He helps us.

2 Doubters in the Bible

David wrote, "How long, LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?" (Psalm 13:1, SLB). Asaph admitted his feet had almost turned aside when he saw the wicked doing well (Psalm 73:2-3, SLB). He said, "it was trouble in my eyes, until I went into the sanctuaries of God" (Psalm 73:16-17, SLB).

John the Baptist, who had pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God, sat in prison and sent a message asking, "Are You the One who is coming, or are we to look for another?" (Matthew 11:3, SLB). Jesus did not scold him. He sent back the evidence: "the blind receive sight, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:5, SLB).

Jude told the church, "on some have mercy, making a distinction" (Jude 1:22, SLB). The Greek word behind "making a distinction" can also mean wavering or doubting, and many read Jude as speaking of mercy for those who doubt. If the Bible tells us to show mercy to people who are struggling, God is merciful to them too.

3 Thomas and the scars

Thomas was not in the room the first time the risen Jesus appeared. When the others told him, he said he would not believe unless he saw the nail marks for himself. A week later Jesus came back, and He went straight to Thomas.

> *Bring your finger here, and see My hands; and bring your hand, and put **it** into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.*
>
> **John 20:27 (SLB)**

Jesus did not wait for Thomas to fix his doubt on his own. He came to him and gave him what he needed. Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28, SLB). The man known for doubting made one of the clearest statements of faith in the Gospels.

Then Jesus said something for us: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29, SLB). We do not get to touch the scars. We do have the testimony of the people who did, written down so that we may believe.

When I translated the Steadfast Literal Bible, I noticed how patiently Jesus dealt with Thomas. He

did not scold him for wanting proof. He invited him to look at His hands and side (John 20:27). God is not threatened by someone who sincerely wants to know what is true.

4 When people tell you it did not happen

Some doubts come from inside. Others come from people who sound very sure of themselves. John Shelby Spong, an Episcopal bishop who died in 2021, wrote a book titled Resurrection: Myth or Reality? (1994). He argued that Easter's power does not depend on a body walking out of a tomb, and that modern people should let go of the literal story.

Tom Bethell answered him in print. He pointed out that the first disciples, including Peter and the women who visited the tomb, were skeptical too. They did not expect a resurrection. He also pointed to Paul, who put it bluntly.

> *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith **is** futile; you are still in your sins.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 15:17 (SLB)**

Paul did not think the resurrection was a nice idea. He thought it was the whole thing. Then he gave the good news: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:20, SLB).

5 What to do with your doubts

Bring them to God. James wrote, "if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from God, who gives to all

generously and does not reproach" (James 1:5, SLB). "Does not reproach" means He will not make you feel stupid for asking.

Bring them to the Word. Read the Gospels. Many doubts shrink when you see what He actually said and did.

Bring them to people. Find a mature believer you trust and be honest.

Keep doing what you know is right while you wait for answers. When the psalmist was in despair, he talked to his own soul: "Wait for God, for I will yet give thanks to Him" (Psalm 42:5, SLB).

6 What your salvation depends on

Here is something that may take a weight off your shoulders. Your salvation does not depend on how strong your faith feels today. It depends on how strong the One you trust is.

> *And this is the testimony, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life, and so that you may believe in the name of the Son of God.*
>
> **1 John 5:11-13 (SLB)**

Weak faith in a strong Savior saves. Strong faith in the wrong thing does not. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and "He has been raised

on the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, SLB), and He holds on to His people. "He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6, SLB).

If you have never trusted Him, start with a prayer like the father's: I want to believe. Help my unbelief. Then tell Him you know you have sinned and ask Jesus to save you. He will not turn you away. Jesus said, "the one coming to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37, SLB).

For a long time I measured how I was doing with God by how well I performed. When my bad choices caught up with me, I saw that if salvation depended on my record, I had no hope. Our security rests on what Jesus finished (Ephesians 2:8-9). Knowing salvation depends on Christ alone is what brings real peace.

When Faith Has Questions

✦ ✦ ✦

Doubt is not the end of faith. This book looks at the honest doubters in the Bible, how Jesus met Thomas, what to do when people tell you the resurrection did not happen, and why your salvation depends on a strong Savior, not strong feelings.

I believe, Lord; help my unbelief.

Mark 9:24 (SLB)

Book 3 of 11 in the collection Starting Out with Christ

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