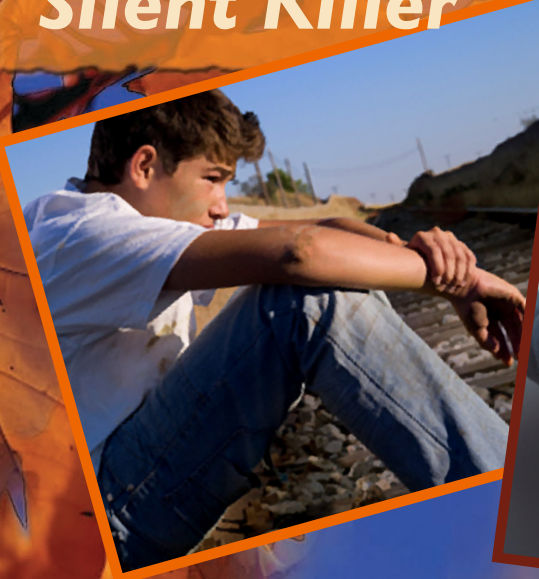


DOUBT: The Silent Killer

Teacher's Guide



FALL BIBLE STUDY SERIES

STRENGTH *for the Inner Man*

Be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man — Ephesians 3:16

As you look into this very important subject with your students, make sure they realize, without question, that doubt is one of the most dangerous spiritual opponents we can face. Why is this? Because it strikes at the very root of what makes a Christian a Christian—faith. Without faith, we have no connection to God or to His Word. The Bible tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God. Your students should see that faith is our lifeline to eternal life. Satan is well aware of the fact that faith is of inestimable value and importance to the Christian, and he purposes to sever that connecting line by any means possible. Your students should be aware that doubts generally start very small. Satan will, at every opportunity, attempt to plant tiny seeds of doubt in the soil of our minds. In dealing with this topic, you will want to be careful that the tone of your presentation is positive rather than negative. In recognizing that doubt is a deadly danger, the focus can be on the positive benefits of possessing a vibrant, living faith.

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OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to identify different characteristics of doubt and will know that, as they focus on a positive faith, they can overcome or avoid doubt in their own lives. They will be able to explain how doubt sabotages trust and faith in God.

1. Discuss with your group the frequent use of Peter as a scapegoat for Christians who doubt. We might think, After all, if Peter, the great Apostle, could doubt Jesus on such a grand scale, why can't we? Remind your students that none of us have walked on water like Peter did. In this account, the close relationship between faith and doubt is clear. One minute Peter walks on water by faith, and the next, because of fear or doubt, he begins to sink. Jesus clarifies what has happened when He says, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt"? Jesus inferred that Peter had a little faith but that doubt had prevailed. James 1:6 also brings out the dangers of wavering in our faith.
2. Your group should conclude that when we trust God, we do so based on His reliability. He has proved Himself unfaithfully trustworthy. He has never broken a promise, and He never will. What He says will come to pass. Ask your class to relate examples of times in their lives when God proved Himself trustworthy. Answers may include God's promise of salvation, which He gives to those who come to Him in repentance. God promised, "I am the Lord that healeth thee," and it is likely that many in your group can tell about instances of healing. Deeper experiences, divine protection, guidance, the supplying of needs, and other promises we find in God's Word could also be mentioned. Answers might include: treating others with respect, making sure we give credit where it is due, trying to view all sides of an issue objectively, considering how our actions or words would appear through the eyes of others, giving others the benefit of the doubt. As a supplementary point of discussion, ask your group to outline Christ's example. Although He was God incarnate, He walked the earth as a humble, compassionate man. Certainly He had every right to claim honor and authority, yet He took a lowly place and did not draw attention to Himself. He has given us a pattern, and we must follow in His steps. See 1 Peter 2:21.
3. Don't ask your students to share their lists, but use this exercise to bring out the dangers of allowing doubt and negative thinking to take over in our minds. If this happens, we may easily feel there is no positive remedy for our situations. This is a typical ploy of the devil, designed to bring more doubting and inevitable discouragement. We must take the offensive! Making a list of this type is a good place to start. As your students document their concerns and identify areas where they might be inclined to doubt, encourage them to note specifically how God could change the situation. Then lead your group to consider the beautiful promise given in Romans 8:28. We cannot be sure that God will work out every situation as we think best, but if our trust is centered in God and we are determined not to doubt Him, we can be sure that God will work things out for our good. As your group discusses this question, they will probably come up with several of the following thoughts: We can ask God to witness to our hearts, revealing where we stand in regard to our spiritual experiences. We might ask someone to pray with us about our concerns. We might look over our lives to see if there really is any sin or if this is just an accusation of the devil. We can resist the devil and go to God's Word for comfort. We can purpose to read our Bibles more (maybe only an additional ten minutes) and pray more. We can recharge our faith in God by rehearsing past victories.

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4. Direct your students' attention to Joshua 6:18 and 19. These verses document what Israel was told not to do. Specifically, they were not to take of the accursed thing but were to bring the silver, gold, and vessels of brass and iron to the treasury of the Lord. Whether Achan doubted that this was important—or simply refused to believe that Joshua had the right to make such a requirement—made little difference, considering the outcome. Achan perished because of his sin. As your group discusses how our doubts affect others, the point should be clear that doubt can bring serious repercussions. It may cause others to doubt. It may bring confusion to those around us. Satan can use the doubts of just one person to take several families away from the Gospel—and he has done it!
5. One way we can learn to recognize doubt is by asking the Holy Spirit to make us sensitive to His counsel. He will let us know whether a suggestion is from the Lord. Firmly fix in your mind that Satan is the author of suggestions that bring distrust or confusion. We can resist his advances by quoting an appropriate Scripture. (In the case cited, 2 Corinthians 9:8 or Philipians 4:13 would be appropriate.) We must give to Christ our temptation to doubt, just as we have learned to hand over other temptations to Him. We must ask God to give us strength to resist temptation.
6. Ask for volunteers to share their statements of faith. Bring out that faith depends upon our willingness to trust in God regardless of the circumstance at the moment. Sometimes the answer is immediate, but there are times we have to wait for the help to come. Depending on the degree of need, waiting is undoubtedly the greatest test of our faith. Doubt would cancel our hopes for tomorrow. Ask your group to pinpoint some ways doubt can enter when we are waiting for an answer from God. They may mention such thoughts as: Did God really hear me? Does He care? Is there something hindering an answer from God?
7. After hearing some responses from your group, bring out that a person does not live a Christian life for long before he realizes that Satan opposes the submission of our will to God. James 4:7 is good instruction: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." In the same vein, Peter says, "... whom resist steadfast in the faith." This leads us to know that we resist Satan by faith, not by doubt. Since faith comes by hearing God's Word, we need all of the Scriptures we can assimilate to have the necessary faith to please God.

NOTES

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Apostolic Faith Church

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Memorize

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”

—Matthew 14:3

Jesus
THE LIGHT of THE WORLD

Challenge Yourself

Key Texts

Genesis 3:1-6; Joshua 6-7;
Matthew 14:25-31; 27:5; Hebrews
11:1,33; Romans 10:17

Other Scriptures Used

Joshua 6:18-19; Romans 8:28; 10:17;
2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:13;
James 1:6; 4:7