



Episode 3-9: Helping Those Who Are Doubting

Resources:

Books

[Doubt: Trusting God's Promises - Elyse Fitzpatrick](#)

Lecture:

Helping Those Struggling with Doubt - Brad Bigney (can call Faith Resource Center for more information 765-449-3700)

Websites:

[Vision of Hope](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Well, hello, this is Janet. Welcome back. I'm here with my trusty, co-host Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hi, friends.

Janet: And we are here with a special guest, Brad Bigney. We've asked him to come. He was recently at our church's counseling conference speaking on a subject that was very interesting, I know for both of us.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: So we've asked Brad if he'd be willing to come and share with us that same topic in dealing with doubt. And Brad, I'm just so grateful that you're here because this is a topic that I think most people at one point or another battle with it.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Most of us don't feel like it's okay to talk about.



Jocelyn: Oh, absolutely.

Janet: Yeah.

Brad: Right. There're a handful of things that as I continue to walk with the Lord for myself as well as try to come alongside others, I find are those things that no one is sure it's okay to say. Hey, I struggle with this. And then they assume they're the only one.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: Because it's not being talked about much. And that's, that's horrible. And Satan loves that. If he can isolate you and cause you to think you're the only one. So bringing this out into the light, I think is most helpful. I hope we can talk about a few things that are even more helpful, but the fact that we're even talking about it.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: Should be helpful to some listeners to know this is fairly common.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: Even though our camp is a faith oriented camp, Christianity is all about faith. But you gotta remember, Christianity is all about reaching people who are very frail. Who are very weak, who are very broken. And so part of that means that we, we doubt. We have doubts, we have misgivings. And I think from time to time it's helpful to me to just stop and remember, wait a minute. Cuz I've been a Christian since I was seven and I'm turning 60 this month, so that's a long time. But if you just hit pause and say, the things we traffic in, God loves you. You can know that you're going to heaven. You can have security. You can have a brand new identity that defines you on the basis of Jesus and not on the basis of your personal story or bad decisions. We forget that is mind blowing. That is not easy to grasp. That is not easy to believe. Because you still live with yourself. Your story, you know, some of those bad decisions still haunt you, and we are so more aware of our horizontal relationships, the way we're being treated and perceived by people. Sorry. Even other believers.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: Are sinful, that we assume God is like them. And so that's what causes some of this. Some of the great truths that we get to sing about and proclaim and sit down and have conversations about are actually phenomenal and hard to grasp.

Janet: Yeah.

Brad: You think really, really?



Janet: Well. So that they understand a little bit about who's sharing with us. Can you just tell us a little bit about your own background? Tell us a little bit about your own life in ministry and why should we listen to anything you have to say?

Brad: Oh my , no reason for that , but I'll say, I got saved at seven and I'm very grateful. I truly believe I was born again but my journey involved being in good Bible teaching churches and having a sense there's something missing. There's something missing. And I'm not talking about that experiential, man, I wish I would weep forever or bark like a dog or laugh for 30 days . But it was like, it seems like this great truth is not connecting or available on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday for the stuff that people are actually struggling with.

Janet: Yeah.

Brad: And so biblical counseling was like my second great awakening. When, when I came into a group that they were using the Bible to sit down with real people. So I like to call it helping real people with real problems using your Bible. And I mean, eating disorders and depression and anxiety and bad marriages and on and on. There's really nothing on the list that we'd say, but yeah, not that , not that. And it got me so excited. And so the short story is I am 37 years in now. I'm actually headed into year 38 of being a pastor. But the last oh 30 have involved, don't just preach and teach good sermons, sit one-on-one with people and counsel.

Janet: Love it.

Brad: And that, and I tell you what, that informs my preaching. And that also is why I often choose topics. I have to be honest, I have not personally struggled with doubt. Like I just pitched it a minute ago. Why would I say this is so common? Cuz I've sat with people.

Janet: Yeah.

Brad: For hundreds of hours I've counseled. And that's why I would say, I don't know who your listening audience is. But if you're a women's Bible study teacher, leader, whatever your role is in the church, and if there are men listening and you're a pastor or elder, oh my goodness, please start counseling. A, it's our calling. And I tell you what, it will inform your teaching and your preaching. It will sound different because I mean, we can't just change God's word, but you'll see things you weren't seeing and you'll bring things you weren't bringing. Cuz my goal is to know God's word more and more and more, and more. But to sit with people and listen well enough to know people more and more and more, and then get by God's spirit. I want to bridge those two. I want to bring God's word to where people are. So that's my joy.

Jant: Love it.



Brad: I've been pastoring the same church now for 28 years. I came here in 1995 to do a church plant, and now by God's grace we have three campuses and we have a training counseling center, with about a hundred cases going on at any one time, and about 80 counselors.

Janet: Love it.

Brad: So there's the short story.

Jocelyn: So during the Biblical counseling training conference, you spoke about helping someone who was filled with doubt. What do you mean by doubt? And what are some examples of what you're talking about?

Brad: Yeah. Some of the ones I run into the most is, believe it or not, doubting your salvation.

Janet: Absolutely.

Brad: But you think about it, we are hardwired for works. Effort, merit. Give me a list of boxes to check and I'll do it. You think about it, we forget sometimes cuz the world harps incessantly as if all religions are the same, just choose your flavor. It's all about God and how to get to God. But if you think about it for a minute, you know, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, everybody else pointed the way and said, I'll point the way. Here's the way, here's the way. With Christianity, Jesus said, I am the way.

Janet: Yeah.

Brad: That's so different. And so Christianity is all about not a list, but a person. And you come to Christ in faith and he is for you everything you couldn't be. He does for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. And so that's so fundamentally different that it's hard for the human head to get itself. You know, someone will think they understand it and then something will rattle them. Typically it's that they've done something bad or they've sinned or they feel like they've fallen short of all that God's word calls them to be. And then they start to question their salvation. So salvation's one of 'em, the love of God. Does he really love me unconditionally? That's hard to grasp because you don't get that in this world. Forgiveness Ooh. You mean people love to have Yeah, I understand. I know he could forgive me all that, but this. And so that they're truly forgiven of everything, that God loves them unconditionally and that they are saved and secure in Jesus Christ. That's just a handful of them. I'll tell you some others, you're gonna sit with people who are suffering, whether it's cancer or unemployment or rebellious kids, and so they struggle with the sovereignty of God. Is God really in control? If he was in control, why would he allow this? And sometimes that is compounded with, if he's loving, why would he allow this?

Janet: Right.



Brad: You just think about all this going on in our world and then it shouldn't surprise us that people have doubts, significant doubts in certain areas of what the Bible talks about.

Janet: So then why do you think it's important that people are given permission to express those doubts? Why is that even valuable?

Brad: Yeah. When I was younger and I still had hair on my head. You can't see me. But this is, this is a bald voice right now. I really thought it was all about how fast can I start giving them answers and match a Bible verse to whatever problem I just heard. And I started talking as soon as possible. And I'm telling you what I, listen, listen. I'm Type A. So I even honestly would get frustrated if it took them too long to tell their story cuz I'm thinking I got it already. I got it. You're repeating yourself. You're circling the field. Land the plane. Cause I've got answers. And you know what? I am moving so much more slowly because here's what I realize now, just my listening well to their story is helpful. And so when you say why just you giving them a safe place to express that they have doubts. You know, if you sense that they do and they kind of come at it a roundabout way. And if you literally say, just unpack that some more for me. This is a safe place. There's no judgment here. In my early sessions, I try to do everything I can to help them know I am so much just like you. I'm trying to create a context where they will actually really tell me what they're thinking and believing. I call it lip theology versus life. Most people that come in to meet with me, they're Christians or they've been in the church, they know the right answer. They're gonna give you the party line until they believe you actually are safe, and then they just might dip their toe into, but here's what I really think. I want to get to that point because you cannot take them to a better place until you truly know where they actually are. I call it your red dot reality. Red dot reality. By that, I mean, you're standing at the mall or you're standing in amusement park, you're trying to figure out how to get to a certain ride or store. Well, you can't get anywhere different till you what? Know where you actually are.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: That you are here dot.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: You look for that red dot or that yellow star. In counseling, I find I'm much more concerned now, have I really heard the red dot reality? Because I may go a different direction. I'm certainly gonna move at a different pace. I need to know where you really are. So I work hard. So, sorry, that's more than you probably wanted.

Jocelyn: I think it's such an important question because so many people equate Christianity with faith. Like



Brad: Right.

Jocelyn: Faith means I never doubt anything. I agree with God and I believe it as soon as I hear it. And while faith is an essential part of Christianity, it's not like a one and done deal. It's not like you say, now, I believe, I'm free. Like,

Brad: That's right.

Jocelyn: It's a journey.

Brad: Yeah.

Jocelyn: and it's difficult. like you said, some of the things that we're asked to believe are literally unbelievable, you know?

Brad: Yeah.

Jocelyn: How could someone say, I see the price of my sin and what my sin cost you, and I'm asking you to forgive me and not hold that price against me.

Brad: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And believe that that could happen. That takes a lot of faith.

Brad: That's right.

Jocelyn: I think it's important that people are given the permission to say, there are some things that are really hard for me to understand or to believe.

Janet: Yeah. And the other thing I think is important about that is, we frequently think if I doubt, that is in itself sin and wrong. So what must happen is I say, I shouldn't doubt, I repent, Lord, I believe.

Brad: Right.

Janet: Which right. Maybe not is true.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: That's right.

Janet: So instead of working through it, I just have to go, Nope, that's wrong. Slap on I know this truth, and I move on, and then it builds.

Brad: That's right.



Janet: Just kinda builds.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And it builds.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: Yeah. Because if, to your point, Jocelyn, yes, it is all about faith, but it's an ongoing, I start with faith. But then that's why Romans 10 says, and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. I didn't just need to hear it and get faith, and now it's one and done. I have to keep hearing it, to keep feeding my faith because as I go through different seasons and different pressures and different confusion, we are, we are just frail creatures. We are easily rattled. We are easily confused. And the other thing I make more note of now as I read my Bible every year, there's a reason he calls us sheep. You know, he could have called us a much more flattering animal. There's just nothing flattering about sheep. They're just ridiculously stupid and easily rattled, you know. And so that's us. And so it's okay to know I started following the Shepherd. That's us. But then I started wandering, then someone else did something and I did too, and then I got scared and I ran towards the cliff, or I flipped over backwards and I can't get off my back. I mean, that's what sheep do.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: Literally he has to find them and stand them up on our feet, which is a good reminder. He is not as frustrated or put out with us as we think. And he does not despise our frailness.

Janet: Love it.

Jocelyn: That's a really good reminder.

Brad: He's a shepherd. And shepherds know how needy the sheep are, and so he's a shepherd and we're easily rattled and we're, you know, easily confused and need help.

Jocelyn: So, many of us love someone who struggles with doubt. What should our posture be toward them? How can we be helpful in their time of need?

Brad: Yeah, I think, most people would be surprised. I know as I began to dig into this, when I saw this as a need, Yeah, I thought I'm seeing this a lot. I want to get my head around scripture. What does I have to say? I was surprised. There's actually a verse that now is my go-to when you say, what should my response be to a doubter? It's not maybe what you would think. It's Jude 21 and 22 that literally says, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life and have mercy on those who doubt.



Janet: I don't why I've never noticed that before.

Brad: Yeah. So you know, he's telling you it's something actively that you've got to do to keep yourselves in the love of God. It doesn't mean you have to earn his love, but for you to stay aware of that love, there are certain things you have to do. A, be reading God's word. Be having unhurried time with him. Spend time with others who believe these things, cuz very often we can ride on someone else's faith in the moment. Don't hear me saying someone else can save you. But there's a reason he calls us to community. And there are times that literally my being with someone else that I realized they absolutely still believe this. I have some doubts right now, is a help.

Janet: Yes.

Brad: And as we get around people and you sense, I think they have some doubts right now. It says, have mercy and think, okay, be merciful. That could be me next.

Jocelyn: That's super helpful.

Brad: I remember I used to be so frustrated with worryers and people that were anxious and I was just like, just get a a life. Just get over yourself. Man, I'm telling you what. I mean, you know, if you've never experienced it, you're just like, here's a Bible verse. Here's your verse. Here's your verse. How do I say this? You know, do not be... and then I got stuck in it in a season. And it felt like being a widowed sock in the dryer. You know what I'm saying?

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: Spinning, spinning, spinning, spinning. Lots of heat, lots of action, but not getting anywhere. And I just couldn't get unstuck. And it was a fight. I had to fight with scripture and reach out to others to help me. And so, while I have not personally struggled with this, the fact that he's allowed me to go deep into a ditch I'd never tasted before on other things causes me to say, this could be me. and it's pretty awful.

Janet: Yeah.

Brad: It's pretty miserable when you're there. Be merciful.

Jocelyn: It's so helpful to hear that because that's not my tendency. Like, my inclination towards someone who is struggling with doubt is not to be merciful. It's usually to be kind of annoyed. Especially because when I have worked with a family member who struggled with doubt, it would happen at inopportune times. Like, I can't sleep tonight because I'm worrying about something. And I would be like, seriously, it's the middle of the night, and can't you remember what we talked about this afternoon? So being merciful to a doubter takes a lot of help from Jesus because I don't think it's any of our natural inclination to be patient with each other when



we're just not believing something. You can't see someone's belief. You can see their actions, but you can't see belief. And it just seems a little too ethereal, I think sometimes.

Brad: That's right. And especially for any of us, and I assume you each have a measure of this. I know I do. If you have the gift of teaching. Ooh. There's so many times that we just have to tap the breaks. Just tap, tap, tap.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Yes.

Brad: We're so quick to want to teach in those moments, and I'm not saying there's not a place for it. There really is. But no one wants to hear what you have to say until they're convinced you care.

Janet: Yes.

Brad: About how painful this is. So that's why I think it doesn't start with, and exhort the doubter like, like pummel them with scriptures. The doubters.

Jocelyn: That'll make them believe.

Brad: Beat the doubters with a verse. Shame the doubters. Don't you know, we just memorized... And there's a place for lovingly coming back around to truth. So don't hear what we're not saying. Nobody gets to a better place without truth.

Jocelyn: But no one is, who is already struggling to believe it's gonna be like, oh, I feel shamed enough to believe.

Brad: No.

Janet: Now, I believe.

Jocelyn: The lack of shame was not what I needed.

Brad: Right. So because, because what Janet was touching on, that's just gonna further, I should never reveal this to anyone again.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Yes.

Brad: Just look at how they responded. They just think there's just something awful wrong with me and I've sinned in a horrible way. They were put out with me. So, merciful, patient.



Janet: So then how would you differentiate doubt and unbelief, and why do you think it's important to make that distinction? I know for me, sometimes doubters think maybe I don't believe.

Brad: Yeah. One of my favorite things to keep in mind for myself, and I try to say it as I try to equip others, is don't be a sloppy counselor. And so the longer I counsel, the more I am becoming mindful of, distinctions are important. Distinctions are important. And there's a lot of them. When you're on the front end of this, it's easy to push things that are similar into the same category.

Janet: Yep.

Brad: Similar, does not mean it's the same. And so while these might be in a similar category, I think they're distinct on some important levels. A doubter, think about it. A doubter is struggling because they want to believe but find themselves not consistently enough holding onto it and believing it. Unbelief is a hardened decision that I do not believe it. I'm done.

Jocelyn: You're refusing to believe it.

Brad: Yes.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: Yes. I've already decided. The verdict, it's out. I've already decided. That's unbelief. And that's why when you see in the scripture, there are places where Jesus runs into unbelief. In Mark chapter six, it says, and they were offended at him and he could do no mighty work there, and he marveled because of their unbelief. And so it literally shut down the degree to which Jesus could work. That's not the doubter, that's hardened unbelief. And he saw their heart. Same way in Acts chapter 19, as Christianity was just getting going. It says, but some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the way. A doubter is not hurling hardened insults at God. And saying, you know, he's a child molester. He put his son on the... A doubter is saying, I just can't believe that God actually really liked me. I know there's that verse. I know you just gave me some other verses. That's how a doubter sounds. They would love to believe it, but they're struggling to settle into it consistently with their name on it.

Jocelyn: That's very different. That's a super helpful distinction.

Janet: Yeah. So one of the things I'm hearing is a doubter is miserable.

Brad: Yes.

Janet: Someone who's an unbeliever's happy. They just don't believe. You're an idiot.



Brad: That's right. Your conversations with someone who's guilty of unbelief are probably conversations you started at the gym or in the neighborhood. Right? Where I run into it occasionally just hardened. I'm done. I've already, I, I don't need this conversation. There is no God or there is no good God. How could there be a good God? A doubter has usually sought you out. You're having coffee or they're part of the women's ministry and they just said, Hey, I'd love to get together, but they're just hinting around. And I hope everyone realizes when someone asks to meet with you, they are dipping their toe in the water and just on the front end of conversation are making a decision whether they could really tell you what's going on. But notice they're seeking it out.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Yes.

Brad: They would love to not keep living this way. That's the difference between doubter and unbelief. But, and, the thing that I love about this is that I think you see examples in the gospels of where Jesus moved mightily on behalf of doubters. So I just read you a couple verses that said he could do no great miracle there because of their unbelief. That's not how he talks about doubters. I'll give you two examples. You see Jesus actually helping people who doubted his power. So you might think, well, if you doubt his power, he can't, you know, see there's a name it and claim it, blab it and grab it. Version of Christianity out there, that's like, it's all about your faith. If your faith is sound and robust with not an inkling of doubt, you get what you ask and his power will be manifested. That's not what you see in the scripture. You can bring your little tiny mustard seed faith to the right person and his power can be manifested. So my favorite example is in Mark chapter nine. Where he, they're in the boat and Jesus is asleep and the disciples are with him. And there's a storm that, I mean, even though these are fishermen, they are terrified by this storm and they think they're gonna die. and they, come to him and they say, but if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus said, if you can? All things are possible for one who believes immediately. The fa Oh, I'm sorry. This is the father who brought his demon possessed son. Let me get the right passage. It was in Mark four, where they woke him and said to him, teacher, listen to this. Do you not care? And it's a rhetorical question. They've already decided he doesn't.

Janet: Right.

Brad: I don't think he even cares about us. Why would he be in this storm? That's so much like us. Why would I lose my job? Why would I have prostate cancer? Why would my adult daughter have just walked away from the faith? I don't think he cares, but I'm coming to him. Do you not care that we're perishing? And he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace be still. And the wind ceased. He answered their prayer that was filled with a, I'm not sure you even care, but notice they were going to him.



Janet: Yes.

Brad: They were going. They were not running away from him saying, he doesn't care. Stop believing it's not worth it. They came to him with doubt as to whether he cared, and he answered. That's similar with Mark nine, where the father who had a son who kept throwing himself in the fire, came and said, Lord, If you can do anything, and Jesus said, if you believe, I certainly can. And he said, Lord, I believe. And then I appreciate his honesty. Help me with my unbelief. So he acknowledged there's a mixture. But again, that's not hardened unbelief. That's, I do believe or I wouldn't come to you. But I gotta be honest, there's a little bit of unbelief. I don't know if you can do this. No one else has been able to do this. In fact, your disciples couldn't do it while you're up in the mountain. And he healed the boy.

Jocelyn: I think that's so helpful because there is a kind of a thread in modern Christianity right now, even, in some of the music that's popular, that if you did have enough faith and you spoke in Jesus' name, then your faith could have accomplished, you know, this big thing that you were praying for, and it's, that's such a fallacy.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Because God's action doesn't depend on the amount or the strength of our faith. It depends on the person that we're putting our faith in.

Brad: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And it really leaves the Christian, in a confusing place because it's like, well, if I prayed for my friend to be healed from cancer, and she didn't get healed, it was probably because I had a deficiency in my faith. So her lack of healing is my fault. And it just, it leads to all sorts of terrible false guilt.

Brad: Yes.

Jocelyn: Where my lack of the amount of faith was the problem. Instead of saying like, that was the wrong system for believing anyways. That's not at all what God is talking about.

Janet: And I would say on the other side of that and what happens if you believe that and then they are healed, who gets the credit for that?

Jocelyn: Oh, great point.

Janet: Me.

Brad: Yeah.



Janet: My great faith is what did it. So if you need something, you better ask me. Cause I got it, man.

Brad: Right.

Janet: And it's not making much of Jesus.

Jocelyn: No, not at all.

Brad: Even sometimes I believe a lot of Christians do not understand the phrase in Jesus' name. And they think that's just a tagline you throw on the end. And if I throw that on the end, now it has to happen.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: Because there are those places where Jesus said, and if you'll pray right, ask anything in my name, it'll be, and what you gotta understand is when the Bible talks about the name of God or the name of Jesus, that is encompassing all of his characteristics, who he is and his purposes, and what he's doing. He's always doing more than we can see. I love John Piper's statement. He said, God is always doing 10,000 things in your life and he might allow you to be aware of three of them.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Yes.

Brad: So God's up to something. When you pray in Jesus' name, that is you saying, I'm coming to the right person, bringing whatever measure of faith I have, but I'm praying in Jesus' name that if this is in line with your purposes and your will, and matches your character and what you're doing, there's always more than I can see. Let it be so. Amen. So it's not a throw down this, and now it has to happen. And if it didn't happen, I didn't have enough faith.

Jocelyn: That's so helpful.

Brad: I wanna align myself with him and what he's doing.

Jocelyn: And you know, God just loves to rescue people who need rescued, like he delights in using really fallible people to accomplish his will. So, like you said, Janet, this is about making a lot of God. And when God can use people who have the faith that's the size of a mustard seed, it is making a lot of him. It just shows that he is capable of accomplishing amazing things through really flawed people.

Janet: Yeah.



Brad: Yeah, yeah.

Jocelyn: If we were to unpack doubt, what might be some of the things behind it? What do you think contributes to doubt?

Brad: Yeah, there's probably far more than I took time to jot down on a piece of paper, but as I just brainstormed, as I've tried to unpack it and ask follow up questions to tease out, you know, I always think of every issue, no matter what it is in counseling as this ball of thread, you know, all tangled up. and if I wanna help someone, I find that the more you can tease out individual threads and instead of just trying to address that blob, what is that blob comprised of? They're usually individual pieces and it's so much more helpful. Here's some of the pieces or threads that I've seen. No one person has all of these. But I found at least one of these is often a part of that doubt. What's causing that. The first that comes to my mind is it could just be spiritual immaturity. You know, often there are times where I literally find that I have an occasion to teach someone something they did not know. They're just uninformed. So you're constantly coming across people at different levels of Bible understanding in what they've been taught. And so often it can just be simple spiritual immaturity. That, or they may have come from a different church that taught them that you cannot know that you're saved. You can lose your salvation. So you have an opportunity to go to scripture and teach. So sometimes it's spiritual immaturity. Sometimes I believe it's an attack from the enemy. Because I think, you think about it, Christians sometimes I don't think realize unbelievers who are just hardcore unbelief. He leaves them alone. Let 'em do their thing. When God saves a man or woman, Satan does not give up on us. He knows the impact. even of a flawed man or woman. You get filled with the spirit. You get excited about Jesus. You start ministering and reaching out to others and talking, and he wants to limit that. And if he can keep you so obsessed with yourself, constantly combing over your life that you can't ever get settled in who you are and who you are in light of Jesus, then he can neutralize you. In a sense just paralyze you cuz you're always so still struggling with your own, but I don't even know if he loves me. I don't know if I'm really saved today. I don't even know if I'm really forgiven. Then how can I have an amazing conversation with a friend over coffee saying, oh my goodness. You know, you can know that God can forgive you. So it can be an attack from the enemy, cuz you think about it. Revelation chapter 12 tells us there's two things we know about Satan. Jesus told us in John that he's the father of lies. So he lies all the time. And then Revelation 12 tells us he's the accuser of the brethren. Notice who he's accusing. God's people. And that verse in verse 10, Revelation 12 actually says, and he accuses them day and night. So, see, I find that often it's a totally different subject altogether, but it's worth touching on here. Christians need to make a better distinction between conviction and condemnation, and our enemy loves to condemn us and accuse and say, look at you. You just lost it with your, kids. You got angry. And you call yourself a Christian. You're supposed to be different. You're supposed to have the fruit of the spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts lovingly and appropriately. Our enemy, Satan condemns with an all encompassing blanket, like you should just give up, you should give up



trying. And so often they're guilty of believing the accusations of their enemy. There's no way God could forgive you. Look at that. There's no way God really loves you. Look at that.

Janet: That's really good because, we all get convicted, but when I think about someone who's battling doubt, there's a lot of condemnation.

Brad: Yes.

Janet: And what you don't wanna do is go self-esteem-y. Oh no, you're not that bad.

Brad: Right.

Janet: Think better.

Brad: Right.

Janet: So then we think, I guess condemnation's okay. But no, that's not from the spirit. Condemnation saying, how can you call yourself a Christian? The Holy Spirit would never say that.

Jocelyn: Right.

Brad: No, that's right.

Janet: Because he knows it's only cuz of Jesus anyway. I didn't bring anything to the table. So I think that's helpful for doubters. If I'm condemning myself, I already know that's not from spirit.

Brad: And usually when I ask a clarifying question, you'll hear the difference. When I'll say, so, in what areas do you feel like you're ? Without fail, the answer sounds like this. Everything just everything. Well, news alert. It's true. We could all say, I still am not all I should be with my communication, with my money, with my prayer, with my..., but the Holy Spirit is connected to our father. He's a great father. A good father brings one thing at a time. When it's an all-encompassing everything, that is not the Holy Spirit. But when God begins to put his finger on my life and say, Brad, too much sarcasm. You, shouldn't be saying everything you think. Everything you think is funny is not actually funny. And he really brings it. I'm not making this up. And then I begin to memorize some verses like, set a guard, oh Lord, over my mouth, keep watch over the door of my lips. In a multitude of words transgression is unavoidable. I just need to not say everything that I think is funny, or even just everything that I think I should say. That's Holy Spirit and he grows me. Or man, I need to be gentle. it's a focused area with hope. It's focused and I feel hopeful. I feel hopeful. I'm a little bit like, ugh, I'm a little bit pained that, Ooh, that's still there, but I'm hopeful and it's focused. And I say, here we go Lord. Whereas condemnation is often vague and general, all-encompassing, overwhelming. Why don't you just quit?



Janet: I love that. To think short version. If it's conviction, it leads to hope and holiness. Cuz I grow.

Brad: Yeah.

Janet: And if it's condemnation, it leads to despair, and doubt. So if it's leading me to doubt and despair, I can

Brad: That's right.

Janet: probably guess that's not from the spirit.

Brad: That's right. So very likely an attack of the enemy.

Janet: Yep.

Brad: Another thing that I run into, because it's true of humans, not only are we hardwired for effort, merit, works, boxes that we check is, oh, most human beings-- some more than others, but all of us to some degree-- oh, we're used to living by our feelings.

Janet: Oh yeah.

Brad: And then we had a culture that. A culture that just points us there as you're never more authentic than when you're going with what you feel, what your heart is saying to you. And we know from scripture, Jeremiah 17, the heart can say some terribly deceitful things. So very often I find as I ask questions, I have the opportunity to teach somebody, you literally do not have to believe everything you feel, and they didn't know that. So I'll help them to understand that your thinking feeds your feelings and then your feelings most often lead to your next action. And if you do that long enough, I think the same thing. Feel it, do it. It kind of sets me on a course and it kind of becomes a part of who I am. So teaching people the role of feelings. I'm glad we have feelings. I love having feelings. I wanna feel for great doctrinal truths. I want to feel in worship. I want to feel something for my family. I wanna feel something when I look at creation. But the Bible teaches clearly I don't want to be led or ruled or dominated by my feelings. I can say no to my feelings. And say feelings, I hear you, but here's what God's word says. That's news to some people.

Janet: Yeah.

Brad: You mean I can, and in a sense I say you gotta learn to talk back to your feelings. And I've got some favorite articles by Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones, and some others that I like to use with my counselees, where he talks through most people that are stuck in a funk are guilty of listening to themselves instead of talking to themselves. And you actually see some psalms where the psalmist is doing this. He's choosing to exhort himself.



Janet: Yes.

Brad: Psalm 103 is one of those, bless the Lord, oh my soul and all that is within me. Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord. Oh my. He's actually kind of exhorting himself. Forget not all his benefits. Forget not. Psalm 42 is another one. Why so downcast oh my soul? Why? Put your hope in God for I shall yet trust him. I'll see it again. So he's talking to himself. So there's places where you might help someone learn: don't just listen to your feelings and believe them. There's a place to push back against your feelings. And then, the last one that I jotted down is, you might, believe it or not, you just might be guilty of unconfessed sin.

Janet: Yep.

Brad: Because, oh my goodness, there is no reason for a believer to have this solid, settled, confident assurance and security, while you hold on-- Now I wanna be careful. There's never a day that we're not sinning, we're sinners. What I'm talking about is a glaring area that God has been putting his finger on. Say, you're living with your girlfriend. you're sleeping with your girlfriend, you're embezzling money from your employer. Just something. And you don't wanna deal with it. You're holding onto it.

Janet: So you know it's wrong and you're not confessing.

Brad: That's right.

Jocelyn: Sinning with a high hand. Yeah.

Brad: See, yes. that's good, Jocelyn. Sinning with a high hand. I don't care. I know what God's word says. Well, Yes. Well, you have some doubts. You should. Yeah, you're gonna have some doubts about where you stand with God. And again, the Bible doesn't teach that you can lose your salvation. But it does teach us, just like sometimes when people push back to me, well, I don't have to read my Bible to prove I'm a Christian. No, you don't. But if you'd like to live a full, robust spirit-filled life, cuz that's our food. So if you wanna be spiritually anemic, if you wanna be continually depressed, if you'd like to be continually confused, then don't read your Bible. But I don't have to read my Bible to prove I'm a Christian, but it's my food. So same way with sin. I'm gonna sin. But when you hold onto it and refuse to repent, all kinds of troubling things will come your way, including doubt about where you stand with God. So those are four that I think listening to your feelings, spiritual immaturity, unconfessed sin and what was the first one? And spiritual attacks from our enemy. And think about how common any one of those four would be. In the period of a Christian life that you might run into one of those.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: Well, and even as I'm thinking about people who are doubting to be able to take that apart in their own, whoever's listening and go, oh, I do see myself in that. I do see myself. And the hope that that gives.

Brad: Yeah.

Janet: Oh, I can deal with that.

Jocelyn: Because doubt.

Brad: That's right.

Jocelyn: Doubt is kind of like depression. It just feels so ambivalent. You don't know where it came from or why it's covering you.

Brad: Right.

Jocelyn: But if you were able to kind of break it down like this, it's helpful to see that there are factual reasons that are contributing to your doubt. Not that getting rid of doubt is like your ultimate goal in life, but if you can work through those issues and it results in your faith growing so that you don't doubt in the same way.

Janet: Praise God. Yeah.

Jocelyn: By all means we should do it.

Brad: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Yeah. And, those four categories are very understandable. It's not like some deep theology that we have to go study for a couple of years.

Brad: Yeah. And I think, just like I was saying when I was younger, on the front end of this, I would've been guilty of one of the worst things you can do is say, oh, you shouldn't,

Janet: Yeah.

Brad: you shouldn't doubt there's some great do not doubt verses. Ask questions and I, finally say, well, have you always struggled with doubt? Is there an incident that has triggered this? Is there anything going on in your life? And that's when you'll begin to hear, oh, and you'll begin to hear feelings. Or, oh, you begin to hear condemnation or, oh, if you asked long enough. Well, is there anything God's been talking to you about or anything going on in your life and you can tease out, oh, there's unconfessed sin. One of my favorite questions related to that, and here's a good spot for it, is only maybe five years ago I started doing this is when I'm, especially when I'm not getting traction, you know what I mean? Say you've already poked with accusations of



the enemy and feelings and you're still just like, this seems confusing. Why are they doubting? I like to look at someone and say, now, I'm so happy we're meeting. I'm thrilled that you would open up to me like this, but I want to ask you, what is it that you had already decided you were not going to tell me as we had these conversations? And watch their face. Because very often there's something someone has decided they're gonna keep that off to the side, unspoken. Say for instance, yes, I'm having sex with my boyfriend, or I'm, you know, cuz you'll dive in with colored pencils and circling verbs and better praise music and you ought serve, you know, teach children's class, but you just haven't asked or gotten out into the light. Oh, you're sleeping with your boyfriend. Well, yeah, you're gonna have some doubts about where you stand with the Lord. So I love to ask, so what is it you decided you weren't gonna tell me?

Jocelyn: I should include that in my parenting.

Janet: There was our parenting tip for the week.

Brad: As we've had this lovely conversation. It seems so confusing as we've gone round and round. What am I missing here? Oh, you're missing something.

Janet: So what are some ways that we can be patient with those who doubt? We know we need to be patient. What are some ways we can do that?

Brad: Well, I touched on it initially. Just move slower. And that's true for all counseling. But you know, go slow. And don't think you're wasting time to listen. Listen well and ask clarifying questions. Nothing communicates to someone that you're really listening than when they take a breath, instead of you making a statement, you ask another question that goes for another layer. Well help me understand that even, better, you know? Tell me a little more. So, you know, patience is listening. I think to be patient, put yourself in their seat, and just consider this could be me.

Janet: Yeah.

Brad: You know, I haven't had, praise God, I haven't had to experience everything that people struggle with to be more compassionate, but him allowing me to have that season of anxiety, just even like the season that Vicki and I have experienced of two prodigal kids. I have not experienced divorce. I have not experienced cancer. There's a lot of life-shattering things I've not experienced, but he gave me one that has caused me to be so much more sympathetic and compassionate towards people. And then on that level of being stuck where you just feel like, oh my goodness, I wanna beat my head against the wall. How do I say this to you? Just don't worry and or don't doubt. Well, being stuck in it myself was quite helpful. So almost like if you haven't experienced a life shattering thing, or really being stuck on some level, even while in your head you knew, I knew all the do not worry verses, I knew God is... then maybe stop talking to people



until you have it happen to you. Wait till you're in a better place. But at least just say, okay, wait a minute, but for the grace of God, that could be me. What?

Janet: Right.

Brad: What does it really feel like? And if you would listen well, instead of just talking, you'll feel it more. Wow.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Brad: That is miserable. That is, they are in angst. They are in agony. They don't want to be there. I think you would stop judging them. And so those are the few things that-- well, and the other thing that I might say is, some of this stuff is represented well by the Book of Job. You know, Job is suffering. But the doubter is suffering. The anxious person is suffering.

Janet: Yes.

Brad: The person who, who's smitten with fears is suffering. And it's interesting to me that, sure, there are a couple of pithy little verses, you know, in the Bible about suffering. But when God got ready to give us a book on suffering, it's a 42 chapter long book, and it's messy. and it's wandering. It used to be one of my least favorite books cuz I was just like, oh my goodness, who's talking? Is it right? Is it wrong? Like cut to the chase. It's wandering all around. And now that I'm older, I love it. Because it really captures what real life is like. One day Job's saying something right, and a few days later he's not. . And guess what? At the end, God still says, Job is my man.

Janet: Yes.

Brad: And that puts things into perspective. God isn't expecting us to get it right every day and everything coming outta our mouth has to be just solid. Be patient with the doubter. Don't jump on every single little thing they say and be the word police, I guess is how I would say it. And think to yourself, all right, where should I jump in? Where should I just ask more questions? Where should I let them? Because they might not have really gotten all the way down to the bottom. And if you jump on them too soon, you may not ever get to the real bottom red dot reality.

Jocelyn: I can't.

Brad: Patience.

Jocelyn: So Brad, do you have any resources you can recommend to us on helping someone who is filled with doubt?



Brad: I do hope to have more, but I don't ever wanna recommend a book I haven't read. So I've got some books on my reading list now. But the one that I can recommend, and actually I would recommend the whole series if you're unaware of this, oh, it's such a good series. So there's a series of little books by P and R Publication called 31 Day Devotional. I mean, there's one on fear of man, one on anxiety, one on everything. But there is one by Elise Fitzpatrick called Doubt: trusting God's promises. And I think what I like about this series is it's just short, a page and a half, but there's a little bit of something to think about and some scripture and a heart reflection exercise. And then you just do it again the next day. Do it. which matches how we've been talking. Don't be in a hurry. You're not gonna fix this with two do not doubt verses. This gives the doubters some good things to reflect on as they consider what God's word says to them.

Jocelyn: And we'll also link the session that you taught on this, during the BCTC to our show notes. So if somebody wants to listen to that, they can get a more full experience of your teaching.

Brad: Okay.

Jocelyn: We also know that your wife is a faithful listener to Joyful Journey podcast, and so we just wanna give you a second to give her a shout out. Why don't you just tell us some of the reasons that you love her?

Brad: Oh my goodness. We should have started this sooner. I needed more time on this. Nevermind the doubter. Lemme talk about my wife. Well, first I, my shout out is to silky Shetland pony. So that's, my little pet name for her cuz she's so sweet and so adorable. And beautiful. And I think little Shetland ponies are so pretty. And so I'm not talking about a heavy stocky pony. We're talking about sleek. We're talking about sleek. Lemme make that clear, Baby Love. Sleek. But oh, she is just, she's delightful. I mean, here's the best thing I can say about her. As I go places and I teach, and then it's a number of years sometimes before she can go with me and after people have met her, they'll say, oh, Brad, we thought we loved you, but we love her. We love her. And she just lights up a room. The the other thing about my wife, Vicky, and God just blessed me so much with a wonderful wife, is I have people all over the nation say to me, and it's just true. They'll say, Do you know with your wife? When I walk away from Vicky Bigney, I feel so encouraged. I just feel so encouraged. She just dumps encouragement on everybody, and you walk away thinking, why do I feel so good? But she encourages, she draws people out. It's not about her. And she's just, even after 38 years now of pastor, she's not sitting in the back skulking around cuz she's been hurt. She's just working the crowd, just moving around, being her silky Shetland pony self. Meeting people.

Jocelyn: What a gift she is to you.



Brad: Hugger. She's just hugging left and right. She doesn't care if they're not a hugger. I'm a hugger. She just pulls them in. People are standing there stiff as a door awkwardly, as this little silky shetland pony hugs them. Hey, how do you reject a silky Shetland pony?

Jocelyn: You can't, obviously.

Janet: Well, that's great. So Vicky, there's your shout out.

Brad: Yeah. And I gotta, and to really move your Joyful Journey podcast to another level, I gotta let you know that my silky Shetland pony listens to it while she cleans the toilet.

Jocelyn: Oh, we feel honored.

Brad: It's on bathroom day that she listens to you guys so, there you go.

Jocelyn: Anything to make a yucky job better.

Brad: Yeah, right.

Janet: Well, thank you Brad. This has been great and I really do think any of the people listening who might be battling doubt have just been given some hope, and some encouragement, and some direction. At least that's our prayer. So thanks for joining us this week.

Brad: Good. Keep up the good work. See you guys.

Jocelyn: Thanks.

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