



# I HAVE MY DOUBTS

*How God Can Use Your Uncertainty  
to Reawaken Your Faith*

PHILIP RYKEN

"As Christians, we talk a lot about faith but perhaps too little about doubt. This book reminds us that the Bible talks about both. With the warmth and honesty of a pastor and the wisdom and depth of a theologian, Ryken leads the reader to a renewed and refreshed hope in the truths of God without minimizing the dark challenges of our world. Read it and be encouraged. And then give it to a friend."

**Michael J. Kruger**, President and Professor of New Testament,  
Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte

"Doubt, a common Christian experience, is sometimes stigmatized in the church. As a result, many believers feel ashamed of their doubts and struggle with them in secret. In this wise and pastoral book, Philip Ryken reminds us how many biblical heroes struggled with doubts. He gives helpful counsel for how we can work through our doubts to arrive at a more rugged and enduring faith. For anyone who struggles with doubt, this book will serve as not only a light to their path but a comfort and balm to their soul."

**Gavin Ortlund**, President, Truth Unites; author, *Why God Makes Sense in a World That Doesn't*

"One of the great victories of faith in the life of a believer is coming to an understanding that honest doubt represents opportunity, not defeat. Doubt can cause us to seek answers from God and his word that will ultimately strengthen our faith. In this compelling book, Philip Ryken encourages the reader not to run from doubt but instead to grow through it, just as the biblical characters he describes did."

**Ed Stetzer**, Dean, Talbot School of Theology

"Do you experience suffering, intellectual doubt, moral confusion, or times when it seems God is not there or doesn't care? Philip Ryken writes to believers who have doubts and even consider giving up on faith. As a pastoral scholar and spiritual mentor, Ryken is wise and honest, realistic and encouraging. Above all, he is powerfully biblical as he examines and learns from those in Scripture who faced the same doubts we do and came through them reaffirmed in and reawakened to God's loving presence."

**Rick Richardson**, Professor and Luis Palau Endowed Chair of  
Evangelism, Wheaton College; author, *You Found Me*

“Every person will eventually face the abyss of doubt—about God’s fairness, about miracles, about God’s plans. Philip Ryken’s *I Have My Doubts* is the flaming light we need in those dark, lonely times. It’s biblical. It’s insightful. And it will feed, nourish, and warm your soul.”

**Sam Chan**, head trainer and mentor, EvQ School of Evangelism, City Bible Forum; author, *How to Talk about Jesus (without Being That Guy)*

“Because we Christians don’t think we’re allowed to have doubts, the moment they arise, we panic. In *I Have My Doubts*, Philip Ryken shares ten stories of biblical characters whose doubts led to flourishing faith. He pastorally reminds us that we are not alone in our doubts, that our doubts do not diminish God, and that all we need to endure is enough faith to take the very next step in following Jesus. We can both believe and find help in our unbelief!”

**Juan R. Sanchez**, Senior Pastor, High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin, Texas; author, *Seven Dangers Facing Your Church*

“Doubt is everywhere—in politics, media, science, and, of course, the Christian faith. In these ten biblical vignettes about doubt, Ryken provides readers with a path to Christian confidence that refuses to minimize the reality of today’s spiritual uncertainties. Ryken does this, ultimately, by reminding us of the one who holds on to us even when we feel unable to hold on to him.”

**John Dickson**, Jean Kvamme Distinguished Professor of Biblical Studies and Public Christianity, Wheaton College; Host, *Undeceptions* podcast

“In *I Have My Doubts*, Philip Ryken thoughtfully reminds us that uncertainty is not antithetical to faith and, moreover, can be fruitfully constitutive of a faithful life. Drawing from a variety of biblical narratives, he reflects on uncertainties that have accompanied Christian pilgrimage throughout the ages. Encouraging readers to ‘doubt their doubts,’ this book is a refreshing reminder that the flourishing life of a Christ follower materializes not by eschewing all skepticism but by focusing on Christ in the midst of our doubt.”

**Kevin Brown**, President, Asbury University

*I Have My Doubts*

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to Reawaken Your Faith*

Philip Ryken

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*To Anna June Ryken,  
with the prayer that growing faith  
will triumph over troubling doubts  
in your walk with Jesus*





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## Preface

IF WE WERE SITTING TOGETHER RIGHT NOW—just the two of us, you and I—I would lean forward and say: “Can I tell you something? I need to confide in someone.”

You might lean forward a little, too, and say: “Sure. Tell me anything.”

Then I would share my secret, speaking barely above a whisper: “Sometimes I have my doubts.”

There, I said it. And if you raised your eyebrow in the shape of a question mark, I would say it again, only this time I would be more explicit: “What I mean to tell you is that sometimes I have my spiritual doubts.”

What would you do next? And what would you say? Maybe you would slump back in your chair and say, “Yeah, me too; I have some doubts of my own.”

As a lifelong follower of Jesus Christ, I have many days when my mind and heart are filled with faith. Of course I do! I know that God is there—my Creator. I experience the loving presence of his Holy Spirit. I am convinced that the Bible is the living word of God. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose again.

I have full confidence that I am forgiven. My heart's desire is to give God the glory he deserves. I know that the one true and living God is fair and just. His promises are certain and secure. He has a good plan for my life. He will keep me safe. He loves me! One day very soon, God will heal my heartbreak, and I will live forever in his beautiful house. This is what I believe, and I hope you believe it too.

But this does not mean that I never have my doubts—we all do. Sometimes I wonder if God is there; I scarcely feel his presence. I wonder whether certain parts of the Bible are true. I am not completely convinced that someone like me can ever be forgiven. Nor am I totally sure that I can trust God to do what he says. Is he good? *Does* he love me? Will he heal me and protect me? Is there really a heaven after all?

Sometimes the questions come faster than the answers. And then I wonder how to live with my doubts. Can a believer who is sometimes skeptical still walk with God? Is there a God-honoring way to follow the advice that famed journalist Eric Severeid gave in his memorable final *CBS Evening News* commentary in 1977 and “retain the courage of one’s doubts as well as one’s convictions”?<sup>1</sup>

To help answer these questions, this short book tells ten stories about doubt that also prove to be stories of credible faith. The men and women who carried these normal, everyday doubts never gave up on God, and he never gave up on them either. Listening to, learning from, and then living out the lessons of their stories can strengthen our faith. Their experiences can serve as a guide to help us work through the wide range of doubts that most of

1 “Severeid Gives His Valedictory,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1977, <https://www.nytimes.com/>.

## PREFACE

us experience at some point in our earthly pilgrimage—doubts about God that lead to discouragement and hinder our spiritual progress. The experiences of these biblical doubter-believers can also help us care well for the souls of other skeptics by putting Jude verse 22 into practice: “Have mercy on those who doubt.” When we show one another this mercy—and learn to hold our beliefs humbly as well as courageously—our faith rises and joy comes again.

My own faith has been strengthened by writing this book. It was a joy to collaborate during the editorial process with Thomas Boehm, David Downing, Jared Falkanger, Becki Henderson, and Jonathan Rockey, who shared wise insights and made careful corrections. Many partners at Crossway also helped to make this book possible. But I owe the greatest debt to Lisa Maxwell Ryken for her faithful support and to the students of Wheaton College, who remain a constant encouragement as they inspire me to do the very best thinking, writing, and preaching that I can.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other  
beast of the field that the LORD God had made.  
He said to the woman, "Did God actually say,  
'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"*

GENESIS 3:1

# Doubting God's Trustworthy Word

*Eve in the Garden of Eden*

IS THE BIBLE REALLY TRUE? Is God trustworthy enough for us to take him at his word? Sometimes we have our doubts.

In his novel entitled *In the Beauty of the Lilies*, John Updike describes a Presbyterian minister who falls under the influence of critical, skeptical scholarship and abandons his commitment to Christ. Little by little, the Reverend Clarence Arthur Wilmot questioned the central doctrines of the Christian faith. One day, as he sat “in the rectory of the Fourth Presbyterian Church at the corner of Straight Street and Broadway,” Wilmot

felt the last particles of his faith leave him. The sensation was distinct—a visceral surrender, a set of dark sparkling bubbles escaping upward. . . . His thoughts had slipped



with quicksilver momentum into the recognition, which he had long withstood, that . . . there is no . . . God, nor should there be.

Clarence's mind was like a many-legged, wingless insect that had long and tediously been struggling to climb up the walls of a slick-walled porcelain basin; and now a sudden impatient wash of water swept it down into the drain. *There is no God.*<sup>1</sup>

Wilmot's spiritual struggle and ultimate surrender resulted directly from his doubts about the word of God. Maybe this is true of all our doubts: if we trace them back far enough, we discover that in one way or another they all begin with our skepticism about the Scriptures.

If the Bible is trustworthy, then we have a solid place to stand. We know who made us: the God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, and first breathed life into Adam and Eve. We know that despite the evil we bring into the world, God is working all things for good. We know that through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ there is forgiveness for our sin and shame. We know that we have a purpose: to glorify God and proclaim his gospel to the world. We know that God will guide us and protect us as he leads us to glory. We know all this for the simple reason that the Bible tells us so.

Without the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, we would only be hoping and guessing. In a book called *The Certainty of Faith*, Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck wrote:

<sup>1</sup> John Updike, *In the Beauty of the Lilies* (New York: Knopf, 1996), 5–6, emphasis original.

In essence, all truths of the Christian faith come to man from the outside. They are known to him only through revelation, and they become his possession only when he accepts them like a child in faith. . . . Not a knowledge gained through personal investigation, argument and proof, through observation and experiment. But a knowledge gained from a reliable witness.<sup>2</sup>

But what if the Bible is *unreliable*? What if it is a *false* witness? What if Jesus never said some or all of the things attributed to him in Scripture? Where would we stand?

### Did God Really Say . . . ?

Essentially, this is the same doubt that Satan sowed in the heart and mind of Eve when he spied her alone in the garden of Eden. With malicious intent, the crafty devil said to the woman, “Did God *actually* say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1).

What Satan said to Eve demands careful scrutiny. Although there is such a thing as an honest doubt, notice that the first theological question anyone asked was a deliberate deception. God did *not* say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden.” As the devil knew full well, what God said was this: “You *may* surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16–17). Satan cleverly turned what was primarily a permission into exclusively a prohibition.

2 Herman Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith* (St. Catharines, ON: Paideia, 1980), 71.

When we have questions about something in the Bible, it is vitally important for us to make sure that we are reading it carefully and know what it really says!

The first part of Eve's reply shows that she had been listening carefully to her Creator. "We *may* eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden," she said (Gen. 3:2). Yet the rest of her answer went beyond the plain word of God. According to Eve, God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden"—so far, so good—"neither shall you touch it, lest you die" (Gen. 3:3). Here Eve went too far. God had only forbidden our first parents from *eating* this particular fruit, not from *touching* it. By saying more than God said, Eve put herself in spiritual danger. If we want to stay safe from theological error, we should be careful neither to add to nor subtract from the word of God, but to hold to the line of Scripture.

When his first attack failed, Satan decided to attempt a less subtle stratagem. This time, instead of a deliberate distortion, he uttered an outright contradiction. "You will not surely die," he said. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4–5). With these unholy words, the liar called God a liar and made him out to be a miser. By forbidding this fruit, God was not protecting Eve from death, Satan alleged, but preventing her from knowing something she had a right to know.

This accusation assumes there is some place where Eve can stand outside of God's moral authority—a neutral vantage point from which she can critique his character and evaluate his instructions. But if God is God, there is no higher standard. When we claim the right to assess the Almighty on our own terms, we are not

simply on shaky ground; we are standing nowhere, in a place that simply does not exist.

Sadly, Eve believed the devil's lie. Doubting the truth of God's trustworthy word and believing instead "that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate" (Gen. 3:6). Eve regretted this moment for the rest of her life. We all do, living as we do in a fallen world. Unfortunately, we see the same story of undue skepticism repeated far too often. People who know what God says start raising some questions—"honest questions," they may call them. But before long they are in open denial, especially about biblical ethics. Thus, a discussion that starts with "Did God actually say?" and "Do I really have to?" ends with "No, he didn't" and "No, I don't!"

We see a decline of biblical confidence happening today in the United States. According to *The State of Theology* survey published in 2022, growing numbers of Americans in general (from 41 percent to 53 percent) and of evangelicals in particular (from 17 percent to 26 percent) believe that "the Bible, like all sacred writing, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true."<sup>3</sup> Given these beliefs, it is hardly surprising that immorality of all kinds also seems to be on the rise. *The State of Theology* documents this as well. For example, when asked whether "the Bible's condemnation of homosexual behavior" still applies today, fewer Americans and fewer evangelicals say yes. According to the prevailing cultural logic, if we do not believe that what God says is true, then we do not have to do what he says.

3 "The State of Theology," Ligonier Ministries, *thestateoftheology.com*, accessed October 17, 2022.

We have so much to learn by looking carefully at the dialogue in Genesis 3. From the story of naive Eve and the sly serpent, we learn that when doubts arise, the person who is most desperate for us to disbelieve the truth of God's word—including, perhaps, the truth of his own existence—is the devil. We learn that when doubts are dishonest—when, for example, we are not genuinely open to changing our minds about God—they usually have disobedience somewhere on their agenda. We also learn that when doubt expresses itself as disobedience—as it sometimes (but not always) does—we are headed for destruction. Eating the forbidden fruit did indeed lead to death, just as God said.

### **When We Have Doubts of Our Own**

If we are honest, we have to admit that what happened to Eve is a temptation for us as well. Sometimes we have our doubts about the stories we read in the word of God, about its moral convictions and the promises it makes.

We know how truly human the Bible is, and we wonder if it is also fully divine. We question whether Adam and Eve were the parents of the entire human race. Can we square biblical teaching with scientific evidence? Our culture struggles with the Bible's sexual ethics, and maybe we do as well: two sexes, two genders, and one definition of marriage, in which a man and a woman are united in a lifelong covenant. Is the Bible right about the sanctity of life inside and outside the womb? Is it for or against women? Does it have a righteous view of justice, including racial justice? Does it give us a true perspective on the fundamental unity and the eternal diversity of humanity? Is it really true that our bodies will rise again and that we will all stand before God's throne for judgment?

In the face of such questions and objections, many skeptics believe (!) that the Bible is “scientifically impossible, historically unreliable, and culturally regressive.”<sup>4</sup> Most of us can relate. If we read the Bible carefully, eventually we encounter something we find hard to accept, and maybe difficult to believe at all. The question is this: What should we do when this happens?

By way of answer, here are several practical steps we can take to give us growing confidence in the word of God.

First, we can *confess that we are not neutral observers* but are predisposed *not* to believe what God says. This is one of the sad results of humanity’s first, morally fatal transgression. As soon as Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they hid from God—a clear sign that they were no longer aligned with his divine holiness. God called to Adam and said, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9). This showed that the first man had ended up far from God. Adam’s sin has *noetic* effects on all of us; in other words, it distorts our spiritual ability to reason. Spiritual doubt comes more naturally to the fallen human heart than genuine faith does. Missiologist Lesslie Newbigin reminds us: “We are not honest inquirers seeking the truth. We are alienated from truth and are enemies of it.”<sup>5</sup> If this is true, then we need to doubt our doubts and stay skeptical about our skepticism.

Second, we can *keep studying the Scriptures*. When we do, we will find out how reliable they are. The Bible is easily the best-attested text from the ancient world. We have—by far—more

4 Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2008), 99–100.

5 Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 69.

well-preserved manuscripts of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments than we do of any other history book or sacred text from antiquity. We know what the Bible says.

Furthermore, the general trajectory of biblical scholarship is to confirm rather than to deny biblical history. To cite one notable example, some scholars used to cast doubt on the historicity of David, despite all the biblical evidence to the contrary. Those aspersions were set aside for good when archaeologists discovered a stone artifact at Tel Dan in 1993 and saw “the house of David” among its inscriptions. This proved that David’s reign was engraved in stone as well as written in Scripture. Or consider Luke’s assertion that Jesus was born “when Quirinius was governor of Syria” (Luke 2:2). Certain scholars used to claim that Luke’s timetable was inaccurate. But as more information became available, it turned out that Doctor Luke knew more than these scholars did about the governorship of Quirinius and his census-taking in the Roman world.<sup>6</sup>

When we have our doubts, we need to study the Bible more, not less. We need to open it up, not set it aside. The overall direction of biblical interpretation encourages us to keep searching for the answers, so that in time we too may come to a better understanding of the truth. If we are wise, we will accept the mysteries, wrestle with the difficulties, live with the questions, and wait for the answers while we keep studying the word of God.

6 For more on Quirinius, see Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 82–83, and Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951), 100.

Third, we can *recognize that the Bible contains the faithful ring of truth*. When we have our doubts, it is easy to focus so much on what we think are problems that we miss the unmistakable signs of authenticity.

There are many things we would never expect to see in the Bible unless they were true. For example, we would not expect so many heroes of the faith—nearly all of them, in fact—to expose so many of their failings in its pages. It is really difficult to imagine an important leader like Peter coming off so badly in the church's sacred texts unless he himself had insisted on its accurate record of his ignorance, cowardice, and betrayal.<sup>7</sup> The best explanation for this unrivalled candor is that the authors of Scripture were telling the truth about themselves because they wanted us to know the truth about the mercy and grace that God showed them.

We could say something similar about Jesus of Nazareth—not about his sins, of course, because he committed no sin, but about some of the troubling facts in his biography. Why would the Bible ever speak of his spiritual struggle in the garden of Gethsemane, or proclaim that he was crucified as a common criminal, or record his words of dereliction from the cross unless these things actually happened? Even if we still have our doubts about certain parts of Scripture, we should recognize that its primary historical claims are true beyond any reasonable objection.

C. S. Lewis found a realism and attention to detail in the Bible that was unlike anything else in the literature of the ancient world, and this convinced him that its writers were telling the truth. Lewis wrote:

7 Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 170–78, cited in Keller, *The Reason for God*, 105.



I have been reading poems, romances, vision literature, legends, and myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know none of them are like this. Of this text there are only two possible views. Either this is reportage . . . or else, some unknown writer . . . without known predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern novelistic, realistic narrative.<sup>8</sup>

Fourth, we can *do what the Bible says*, which of course is a lifelong challenge for us all. Some doubters and skeptics want to determine whether the Bible is true first, and *then* perhaps they will start to obey its teachings. But the first thing Jesus said to Andrew, Peter, and the other disciples was “Follow me!” (Matt. 4:19). Then he sat down to teach them what they needed to know (see Matt. 5:2ff.). Doing and believing go together. Indeed, we do not truly believe in Jesus unless and until we begin to follow him. The longer I live, the truer the Bible gets, not only because I get answers to all my questions but also because I have tested its truth through a lifetime of faith. We learn the hope and beauty of the Bible by living into its teachings.

Fifth, we can *pray for the help of the Holy Spirit*. We need God's help to believe God's word. One of the most important claims the Bible makes about itself is that it was “breathed out” by God the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; cf. 2 Pet. 1:21). The Spirit of God is not a subjective feeling but a living, supernatural person—someone who has the divine power to confirm our minds and hearts in the truth of Scripture. John Calvin wrote beautifully about the Spirit's work in his famous *Institutes*:

8 C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 155.

The testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in man's heart before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded.<sup>9</sup>

Sixth, if we are having our doubts about the Bible, we can *refuse to give up too soon*. I say this partly because our eternal destiny depends on it. Only the Scriptures are able to make us “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). But I say it even more because I know that God wants to bless us with growing faith that leads to full assurance. He wants to answer for us the same prayer that the apostle Paul offered on behalf of the Colossians, that our “hearts may be encouraged . . . to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ” (Col. 2:2).

When by the grace of God we experience full confidence in the word of God, we are able to testify to its complete reliability and eternally saving power. “The Bible can be trusted,” writes Timothy George, “to be totally reliable on its own terms: its history is historical and its miracles are miraculous, and its theology is God's own truth.”<sup>10</sup>

9 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.7.4.

10 Timothy George, “What We Mean When We Say It's True,” *Christianity Today*, October 23, 1995, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/>.

## A Step of Faith

Notice that I have not offered any kind of proof. According to Lesslie Newbigin, “There can be no indubitable proofs”; the only two “possible responses to the claims that the Bible makes are belief or unbelief.”<sup>11</sup> That is mainly because of the kind of book the Bible is. Although it makes many truth claims, it is not a compendium of logical propositions. Instead, it is the true story of a relationship that God invites us to make our own. Because our story is still being written, we must trust the faithful Author to make it come out right in the end. Our only certainty, then, is “the certainty of *faith*.”<sup>12</sup>

The kind of knowledge we should expect from the Bible is the same kind of knowing we experience in our relationships. “In this kind of knowing,” Newbigin writes, “we are not in full control. We may ask questions, but we must also answer the questions put by the other.”<sup>13</sup> There is give and take. There is also room to grow. We can ask God all the questions we like, but we cannot hold him at arm’s length, as if he were simply the object of our scrutiny. We have questions for him, but he also has questions for us—questions such as “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (Job 38:4) or “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15) or “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isa. 6:8).

A sculpture on the campus of Wheaton College makes a dramatic statement about our dynamic relationship with Scripture.

<sup>11</sup> Newbigin, *Proper Confidence*, 55.

<sup>12</sup> Keith Johnson, “Doubt,” in *Life Questions Every Student Asks: Faithful Responses to Common Issues*, ed. Gary M. Burge and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 135, emphasis original.

<sup>13</sup> Newbigin, *Proper Confidence*, 10.

The sculpture is a large bronze book—about three feet high—with layers upon layers of open pages. The artist, Liviu Mocan, gave his work the provocative title *The Book That Reads You*. The sculptor’s point is that while we are reading the Bible, it is also reading us, discerning our desires and our commitments. How will we respond? This is a much more important question than any of the questions we have about the Bible. We are inside the story, not outside of it, and sooner or later we all have to make a choice: Will I trust the God of the Bible or not?

Billy Graham made his decision at Forest Home—a Christian retreat center in California. At the time, the young preacher was questioning his calling as an evangelist and wrestling with the hard questions people asked him about the truth of Scripture. Seeking definitive answers, he went out into the woods alone, set his Bible on a stump, and started to pray:

O God! There are many things in this book I do not understand.  
There are many problems with it for which I have no solution.  
There are many seeming contradictions. There are some areas  
in it that do not seem to correlate with modern science. I can’t  
answer some of the philosophical and psychological questions  
[people] are raising.

Then the brilliant evangelist fell to his knees and declared, “Father, I am going to accept this as Thy Word—by faith! I’m going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and doubts, and I will believe this to be Your inspired Word.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Will Graham, “The Tree Stump Prayer: When Billy Graham Overcame Doubt,” Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, July 9, 2014, <https://billygraham.org/>.

Graham preached at the campground that night with fresh authority; more than four hundred people gave their lives to Jesus Christ. Just a few weeks later he began his Los Angeles Crusade, which touched the nation. Many years later he testified:

I've discovered something in my ministry: When I take the Bible literally, when I proclaim it as the word of God, my preaching has power. When I stand on the platform and say, "God says," or "The Bible says," the Holy Spirit uses me. There are results. Wiser men than you or I have been arguing questions like this for centuries. I don't have the time or the intellect to examine all sides of the theological dispute, so I've decided once for all to stop questioning and accept the Bible as God's word.<sup>15</sup>

Sadly, Billy Graham knew a fellow evangelist who made exactly the opposite decision. The man's name was Charles Templeton. The two preachers toured Europe together in 1946, proclaiming the gospel. But Templeton started to have his doubts, and by 1957 he had publicly de-converted from Christianity. "Billy," he said, "it's simply not possible any longer to believe." Templeton first became an agnostic and then later a well-known apologist for atheism. When he was interviewed about his religious views near the end of his life, he said wistfully, "Everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus." Templeton wept openly after he said this, but then dismissed any further conversation about spiritual matters with the words "Enough of that!"<sup>16</sup>

15 Billy Graham, quoted in Justin Taylor, "Charles Templeton: Missing Jesus," TGC, May 9, 2013, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>.

16 Templeton's tragic spiritual journey is outlined in Taylor, "Charles Templeton."

## Our Mother in the Faith

Everyone has to make choices and then live with the consequences, whether tragic or triumphant. Our mother Eve made her choice in the difficult years that followed the loss of paradise. While I regret her transgression as much as anything, I also admire her subsequent life of faith as “the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20).

Eve stood by Adam’s side as the two of them heard the first promise of the gospel: a son that would crush the serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15). Eve believed it because God said it. She also received the first sign of salvation: the animal skins that covered her shame (Gen. 3:21). Evidently, she believed the good news as much as she could, because when her first son was born, Eve declared, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD” (Gen. 4:1). Martin Luther preferred an alternative translation: “I have brought forth the God-man.”<sup>17</sup> As it turned out, that child was not the Son of God incarnate—only another sinner. But Eve was believing into the promise of God that a Savior would come, as eventually he did. We should not think of our first mother merely as a sinner and a doubter. Remember instead that she was the first believer!

We imitate Eve’s life of faith when we take God at his word and trust his promise for our own salvation in Jesus Christ by his sin-defeating death and life-giving resurrection. If anyone tries to tempt us with a question that begins with the words “Did God *actually* say . . . ,” we will interrupt as politely as we can, point to something specific in the Bible, and say, “Yes, as a matter of fact, he did!”

<sup>17</sup> See Jonathan Black, “Eve Was a Christian,” *Apostolic Theology*, July 22, 2014, <https://www.apostolictheology.org/>.

*The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh  
and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that  
I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD?”*

GENESIS 18:13–14