

LESSON



DEALING WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOUBT

“DOUBTS ARE LIKE GRAPES—THEY COME IN DIFFERENT VARIETIES AND ARE NOT EQUALLY SOUR. SOME ARE TRUTH-SEEKING AND STRENGTHEN FAITH; SOME OTHERS DON’T HAVE TRUTH AS THE GOAL.”

DR. ZACH BREITENBACH

**DR. RICHARD KNOPP &
DR. ZACH BREITENBACH**

ROOM FOR DOUBT

Room For Doubt

Room For Doubt encourages questions, addresses doubts, and strengthens faith. It offers a variety of resources, including a great website and a cool mobile app, video and animation productions, live presentations, and a growing number of curriculum options. It is a grant-funded project at Lincoln Christian University.

The program is led by **Dr. Richard Knopp** and **Dr. Zach Breitenbach**. **Rich** is the Program Director of Room For Doubt, Professor of Philosophy and Christian Apologetics at Lincoln Christian University, and Program Director of WorldView Eyes (www.worldvieweyes.org), a grant-funded project to help high school youth understand and embrace a Christian worldview. He has degrees from St. Louis Christian College (BA), Lincoln Christian Seminary (M.Div.), Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (M.A.), and the University of Illinois (PhD in philosophy).

Zach did his academic work at North Carolina State University (BS, MBA), Lincoln Christian Seminary (MA in Apologetics), and Liberty University (PhD in Theology and Apologetics). Prior to his work with Room For Doubt, Zach worked with American Airlines and taught at a large Christian high school in Florida. He now serves as the Associate Director of Room For Doubt and is an adjunct professor at Lincoln Christian University.

How To Use This Resource

This lesson plan includes detailed outlines with fill-in blanks, “hidden text” notes with explanations and answers for blanks, recommended online videos and other resources, suggested activities, and questions for group discussion or personal reflection. It can be used in **two different ways**:

(1) Teachers can use it to present a lesson to others (e.g. face-to-face or online). It offers a complete preparation and presentation manual. If you are using this material *as a teacher*, you can print the lesson *without the hidden text* and use it as a student handout.

(2) Students can use it for self-instruction. Just go through the lesson yourself (or maybe with a few friends or family), learn what you can, watch the recommended videos, jot down responses to questions, try some of the learning activities, and choose some of the items to answer in the Discussion & Reflection Guide.

“**Hidden text**” is a feature of Microsoft Word. Hidden text is given in a shaded background to provide explanations of the lesson content along with links to suggested videos and other resources. Hidden text is also given with **yellow shading to display answers** for the fill-in blanks. If you want to see (or print) the *hidden text*, you can specify this in Word’s Preferences. (For convenience, PDF files with, and without, this hidden text are also available.)

Please encourage everyone to install and frequently use the **Room For Doubt app** (for iOS or Android). It offers great searchable resources that you can easily share with others. It also allows you to submit questions. See <https://www.roomfordoubt.com/app/> or use the QR code.



Dealing with Different Types of Doubt

Room For Doubt: “Strengthen Your Faith” Curriculum¹

www.roomfordoubt.com

Lesson Objectives: “This lesson helps students...”

1. Discover different sources of doubt.
2. Consider how different sources of doubt call for different types of responses.
3. Understand different “targets” of doubt—that doubts about some things are much more significant than doubts about other things.
4. Distinguish between doubts that are essential to Christianity and those that are not.

- Optional video resources are sprinkled throughout this lesson. For the full list of resources, see the “Relevant Resources” section at the end of the lesson. Two free books by Gary Habermas are especially recommended.

Introduction

- A. What kinds of things have you read about or heard about that you doubted were really true? What examples can you think of? (Think of claims made by friends or family, something you accessed online, etc.)
- B. Have you ever doubted that you were able to do a particular task or accomplish some goal? What examples can you think of?
- C. In this lesson, we will see that doubts are not all the same. Doubts come from different *sources* and they also differ in their *significance*. This is important to understand, because different kinds of doubts require different kinds of responses.

I. Different Sources of Doubt

- Doubts arise from different sources. As we’ll see, some doubts come from our emotions; some from our intellect; and some from our will. Some doubts come from what we think about ourselves or what we feel about our relationship to God.
- One of the first steps in dealing with our doubts is to identify the primary source of the doubts. Then, we’ll be in a much better position to respond to our doubts in the most effective way.

A. *Psychological* doubts.

1. These come from _____ **OURSELVES** _____ and are about ourselves.
2. Examples?

¹ Room For Doubt (R4D) seeks to encourage questions, address doubts, and strengthen faith. It offers a variety of resources, including a great website and mobile app, video and animation productions, live presentations, and different curriculum options for churches, small groups, college ministries, high school camps, and high school youth groups. Be sure to install and use the Room For Doubt mobile app (for iOS or Android)! R4D is a grant-funded project at Lincoln Christian University.

- Sometimes, our doubts come *from ourselves* and have to do with *ourselves*.
- Examples: “I’m not very confident at anything.” “I don’t have much to offer.” “I feel insecure.” “I don’t feel comfortable around other people.” “I don’t really know who I am.”

3. **Strategies for response.** (How can we respond to psychological doubts?)

- God intended for people to be different. Remember what Paul says about the body (1 Cor. 12:14-16). Every different part of the body is equally important.
- There are many different personality types (cf. Enneagram or personality tests). There is no “right” one or “best” one. That’s part of what makes us special and unique.
- If we want to be different than we are, it will take time and effort to develop. But don’t get discouraged. God can use you *as you are* but His grace can also help you have greater confidence in yourself.

B. **Intellectual** doubts.

1. Come from our **MINDS** and pertain to the *truth* of Christianity.

- Intellectual doubts are created *by our minds* and pertain to whether Christianity is *true*.
- Intellectual doubts have to do with *what we think about* (not what we feel about) the truth of Christianity.
- Intellectual doubts question the evidence, raise objections, or question the rationality of Christian belief.

Christian Smith, in his book *Soul Searching*, reports that students often leave faith behind due to intellectual doubt and skepticism (page 89). “Why did they fall away from the faith in which they were raised?” Students were asked this open-ended question (there were no multiple-choice answers). The results: 32% said they left faith behind because of intellectual skepticism or doubt. (That is, 32% said things like: “It didn’t make any sense anymore.” “Some stuff is too far-fetched for me to believe.” “I think scientifically, and there is no real proof.” “There are too many questions that can’t be answered.”)

- Optional video: David Kinnaman talks about how young adults today are different from young adults of past generations. He talks about how a big part of the problem is that *young people don’t feel like they can ask their most pressing questions in church*. They need “real dialogue” and “real answers” about the big questions in life if they are going to be committed Christians. Otherwise the church will lose them. Intellectual doubts must be addressed. Watch here (3 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jitHsBPGtUY>
- Optional video: In this one-minute apologist video, J. Warner Wallace talks about the key factors that lead so many young adults who were raised in a Christian home to walk away from the church in college. He emphasizes the importance of preparing young people to know what they believe and why they believe it is true before they go off to face the intellectual and moral challenges of college. Watch here (3 min): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xPHVW_Z4w

2. **Question:** What do you think are the most common *intellectual* doubts that people have about Christianity?

- Here are some common ones: Does God really exist—especially with all the evil and suffering in the world? Is God really “good”? Is Jesus who Christians claim he is? How do we know He rose from the dead? Is the Bible really reliable and true? Doesn’t science conflict with faith? How can nice people really be spiritually “lost”? The idea of hell seems so intolerant. It doesn’t seem fair.

3. Strategies for response. (How can we respond to intellectual doubts?)

- Be willing to invest the time to examine the wide array of evidence for Christianity. There are many great resources available. Room For Doubt keeps an updated list of recommended resources at <https://www.roomfordoubt.com/recommended-resources/>.
- Be as intellectually skeptical of non-Christian perspectives as you might be of Christianity. It's not just a matter of doubting Christian claims; we should ask tough questions of non-Christian views as well. How do they compare?

B. Emotional doubts.

1. Come from how we **FEEL** about something.

- Emotional doubts arise *from how one feels* (rather than what one thinks) about the person or thing in question. The bothersome issue is not the real problem; rather, it is the way the person “downloads” the issue and responds to it. It is about the things that one tells oneself in response to the issue. This sort of doubt often (but not always) arises when one is having unsettled psychological states (e.g., anxiety, depression).
- This doubt is highly *subjective* because it depends on the doubter's moods and passions, yet it often is mistaken for intellectual doubt. In many cases, one experiences some genuine intellectual doubt in combination with emotional doubt.
- Emotional doubt is the most painful doubt. Emotional pain, in general, is often quite painful.
- Emotional doubt is also the most common type of religious doubt.

2. Two key signs that one is experiencing emotional doubt.

- (1) One is feeling a good deal of pain along with the doubt.
- (2) One asks “**what if**” questions. The doubter may admit there is good evidence for Christianity, BUT she's still haunted by this sort of thought: “But what if Christianity just isn't true? What if, in the end, believers are simply mistaken?” The concern is not with the evidence but with how one feels about the evidence or about unlikely possibilities relating to the evidence. It may seem like factual doubt, but when you press this person you find out that the anxieties are present even when they admit you've provided good evidence.

3. Typical emotional (and spiritual) worries for believers. (What are some worries and emotional doubts that Christian believers face?)

- There is often an inescapable worry about our relationship to God or about what God specifically wants of us.
 - Even though one has accepted Christ, one asks: “**What if I'm not really saved?**”
 - Even though one admits having good evidence for Christianity, one may wonder: “**What if God doesn't exist or Christianity isn't true?**”
 - Even though one is assured that one hasn't blasphemed or rejected the Holy Spirit, one may think, “**What if I committed the unpardonable sin?**”
- We may feel that we have overlooked something important or failed to do what God requires or approves. Despite good reasons to have confidence, there is lingering fear. E.g. “I just don't feel sure that I'm pursuing what God wants.” “How can God really accept me?”

- Emotional doubt often comes in cycles where one will feel better for a while and then just one event or troubling thought can trigger the fall into emotional doubt again. Even when given plenty of evidence, the doubter continually falls back into saying, “Yes, but what if...?”
- Optional video: The Christian apologist Gary Habermas talks about emotional doubt (watch from 4:45-7:05; the rest of the video is useful too if you have time to show it): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3q0JHiLTck>
- Here is an example of a question sent into Room For Doubt by an emotional doubter: <https://www.roomfordoubt.com/post/wondering-about-gods-existence-prompts-panic-attacks/>.
- Two great free online resources for learning more about emotional doubt (the focus is on emotional doubt but the other types of doubt are discussed as well) include: Gary Habermas’s Dealing with Doubt at http://www.garyhabermas.com/books/dealing_with_doubt/dealing_with_doubt.htm and The Thomas Factor at http://www.garyhabermas.com/books/thomas_factor/thomas_factor.htm.

4. **Strategies for response.** (How can we respond to emotional doubts?)

- **Emotional doubts cannot be successfully addressed by emotional responses.** That just puts us in an ongoing up-and-down cycle that’s controlled by changing feelings. The key to addressing emotional doubt is to identify and change false thinking that leads you toward the painful emotional doubt and replace these false thoughts with true ones.
- Emotional doubts can be reduced by **focusing on what is *objectively true***. E.g. When we were very young, we may have had emotional fear about a ghost in the closet. But when we discover that this is not true, it can take care of our deep inner anxiety.
- **Our salvation is not based on how we feel or what we think about ourselves.** Our relationship with God is based on *objective* truths about who God is and what God has done. It’s based on what God has *promised*. It’s based on what God has done *for us* through Christ. The righteousness of Christ is given to us *based on our faith in what Jesus has done*. (See Romans 3:21-24; Philippians 3:8-10)
- NOTE: There are effective biblical strategies for treating emotional doubt, and we devote an entire lesson to this important topic. See “Dealing with Emotional Doubt.”

C. **Volitional** doubts.

- Volitional doubt has to do with one’s will; it is an unwillingness to believe, grow in faith, give up sin, or live the Christian life. It involves a lack of passion or commitment to God. It often involves unwillingness to take steps to escape one’s doubt or grow in faith.
- The attitude here is: “I don’t want to believe. I don’t *want* to do it.”
- This sort of doubt is often present along with other doubts. For example, one may have genuine intellectual doubts, yet one may also have volitional doubt along with those intellectual doubts (i.e., one does not really want to address those intellectual doubts or find answers). So volitional doubt can be part of the problem even if the major problem is intellectual or emotional doubt.
- Volitional doubt is the most serious form of doubt because one does not care and is not willing to deal with it.
- It is also the least painful kind of doubt since one doesn’t care. This is the opposite of emotional doubt (which is much more painful but less dangerous).

- Sometimes unresolved intellectual doubt becomes emotionally painful and then becomes volitional when the person goes numb to it and checks out from caring about Christianity anymore.

1. **Volitional** doubts originate in our **WILL** or from what we truly want.

Thomas Nagel (atheist philosopher): “It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! *I don’t want there* to be a God; *I don’t want* the universe to be like that.” (*The Last Word*, 130; emphasis added)

- Notice in the quote how the atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel is very honest about much of his doubt being volitional. He admits that he does not want to believe in God.

2. **Strategies for response.** (How can we respond to volitional doubts?)

- Volitional doubts are probably the most difficult kind of doubt to resolve, because those with volitional doubts don’t want to believe; they don’t want to hear. They’re already against believing.
- Perhaps the best way for YOU to deal with volitional doubts is to do everything you can to **prevent volitional doubts in the first place**. For instance, (a) if you allow intellectual doubts to grow without addressing them, it can eventually prompt you not to want to believe. After all, why would you want to believe what you think is not true? (b) If you are constantly fighting emotional doubts without addressing them, you may just give up on God and decide that you don’t want God or anything He represents. The point is: it’s very important to address other kinds of doubts as they arise to help prevent yourself from falling into volitional doubts.
- **How can you help OTHERS** who have volitional doubts about God and Christianity?

- We can try to point out how **the Christian God can meet their deepest human needs better than anything else**. The aim here is to show others that they should want Christianity to be true because Christianity would be deeply satisfying to them if it is true. This may prompt them to have renewed interest in considering whether Christianity is true. (See the lesson on Deep Human Needs.)
- We can learn and **pose tough questions that force them to evaluate their own belief system**. If they begin to see weaknesses or major problems with their own view, perhaps they will be more open to another alternative.
- We can try to **expose some of their inconsistencies**. For instance, if they say they don’t want God’s moral values, do they consistently apply the moral values of their atheism? Atheism implies (or requires) the view that there are no moral values that apply to everyone. But do they really live this way? They may say that there are no universal moral principles, but do they apply this consistently if people cheat on them, or lie to them, or hurt them badly? The point is: **If they can see their inconsistencies, perhaps they will acknowledge a problem that requires a different and better solution**.
- If you can help someone with volitional doubt understand that they do not have sufficient grounds to reject Christianity for intellectual or emotional reasons, and that they are rejecting God and Christianity simply because they don’t want it, then you have probably done everything possible from a human point of view. You have left them “without excuse” (see Romans 1:20).
- Remember that God has given everyone the freedom to reject Him. Even God does not force us to believe.

- Answers we are looking for here include things like: the death, deity, and resurrection of Jesus; the existence of the Christian God (the Trinity); etc. To give just one biblical example, the Bible itself says that the resurrection of Jesus is essential to the truth of Christianity. In 1 Corinthians 15:17, Paul says that the Christian faith is worthless if Christ has not been raised.

3. Be really concerned only about what is NECESSARY for Christianity.

- If you are struggling with a doubt, ask yourself: Is it really at the **core of Christianity**. If it is at the core, then the doubt you have is especially significant; nevertheless, you should not be afraid to express it and seek feedback from Christian leaders. If it is not at the core, then you should not worry that Christianity is false just because you are not sure about that issue.
- We need to **keep our doubts in perspective**. That does not mean that your doubts that are not at the core of Christianity are unimportant or should not be addressed. It strengthens your faith when you study up on any of your doubts. Sometimes you can resolve them entirely. But always keep the significance of the doubt in mind.

III. Reflections

Note: Before giving or looking up the “answers,” just share or reflect on some big things you’ve learned from this lesson.

A. There are different KINDS of doubts.

- Doubt is multi-faceted. This lesson looked at doubts that are psychological, intellectual, emotional, and volitional. And doubts can be about core Christian beliefs or something less important.
- We can have different kinds of doubt at the same time. For example, one may have an intellectual doubt that a perfectly good and powerful God would allow so much suffering and evil in this world and also have emotional doubt by feeling that God, if He exists, does not love you.
- Optional video: The Christian apologist Sean McDowell discusses the importance of expressing your doubts and seeking answers to them. Do not hide from your doubts and do not discourage others from honestly expressing their doubts. Watch here (3 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQdlRbsyzAU>

C. Doubts are not always about EVIDENCE.

- We have seen that doubt may have to do with evidence (or the possible lack of it), but it may have to do with how you *feel* about God or yourself (emotional doubt; psychological doubt). It may also have to do with your *will*—not wanting God or not wanting to have faith (volitional doubt).
- Because there are psychological, emotional, and volitional aspects to doubt, doubt is not always addressed simply by studying the evidence and answering questions about the truth of Christianity.
- If anyone has *volitional* doubt about Christianity—if they don’t *want* it to be true or don’t *want* to consider it—they will use their worldview assumptions to *ignore* evidence or just *interpret the evidence differently*. In this case, we should try to expose the problems with their basic assumptions.

B. Christians can have a **SPIRITUAL** assurance that *goes beyond* the intellect and evidence (Romans 8:16-17; Heb. 11:1).

- *Intellectually speaking*, no one can prove anything with absolute certainty. (Remember the Matrix!) All humans—whether they be atheist, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or whatever—hold beliefs that go *beyond* what they can absolutely prove, so it's *possible* to have some doubts about these beliefs.
- However, even though **Christians** cannot be *absolutely certain* in terms of what we *intellectually* know and what we can absolutely prove about our faith, **we can have complete assurance and full conviction** when it comes to truths about God and the gospel.
- This assurance and conviction are based on **very good evidence** (which other lessons in the “Strengthen Your Faith” series present).
- But the assurance and conviction of Christians *goes beyond mere evidence and rational arguments*, as important as they are.
- Christians uniquely have the gift of **the Holy Spirit** who testifies to our hearts that we are children of God (Rom 8:16-17). The Holy Spirit provides an *inner witness*—a kind of direct knowledge that *goes beyond* the intellect alone.
- So the Christian’s faith is **not a blind faith**; it is a faith that has assurance and conviction! **Hebrews** says, “Faith is the *assurance* of things hoped for, the *conviction* of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).
- **Paul** longed for believers to be “encouraged” and “to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:2-3).

Relevant Resources

- Room For Doubt keeps an updated list of recommended resources for addressing questions and doubts at <https://www.roomfordoubt.com/recommended-resources/>.
- Room For Doubt has a variety of articles in its web and mobile app that discuss doubt: <https://app.roomfordoubt.com/category/34/Doubt>.
- Here is an example of a question submitted to Room For Doubt that seems to involve emotional doubt: <https://www.roomfordoubt.com/post/wondering-about-gods-existence-prompts-panic-attacks/>.
- Two free online resources for learning more about the types of doubt are: Gary Habermas’s *Dealing with Doubt* (http://www.garyhabermas.com/books/dealing_with_doubt/dealing_with_doubt.htm) and *The Thomas Factor* (http://www.garyhabermas.com/books/thomas_factor/thomas_factor.htm). In these, Habermas discusses types of doubt (with a special focus on emotional doubt, which is the most common). He also discusses how to deal with the various types of doubt.
- The Christian apologist Gary Habermas talks about emotional doubt (watch from 4:45-7:05; the rest of the video is useful too if you have time to show it): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3q0JHiLTck>. In this one-minute apologist video, J. Warner Wallace talks about the key factors that lead so many young adults who were raised in a Christian home to walk away from the church in college. He emphasizes the importance of preparing young people to know what they believe and why they believe it is true before they go off to face the intellectual and moral challenges of college. Watch here (3 min): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xPHVW_Z4w.

- The Christian apologist Sean McDowell discusses the importance of expressing your doubts and seeking answers to them. Do not hide from your doubts and do not discourage others from honestly expressing their doubts. Watch here (3 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQdLRbsyzAU>.
- Richard Knopp, "[Where Will We Go Without God?](#)" *Christian Standard* 149 (June 2014): 38-40. <https://christianstandard.com/2014/06/where-will-we-go-without-god/>.
- David Kinnaman talks about how young adults today are different from young adults of past generations. He talks about how a big part of the problem is that young people don't feel like they can ask their most pressing questions in church. They need "real dialogue" and "real answers" about the big questions in life if they are going to be committed Christians. Otherwise the church will lose them. Intellectual doubts must be addressed. Watch here (3 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jitHsBPGtUY>.

Discussion & Reflection Guide: Dealing with Different Types of Doubt

A Resource Provided by Room For Doubt

www.roomfordoubt.com

1. What are *intellectual* doubts about Christianity? What are some intellectual doubts that you would like to have answered?

- Intellectual doubt has to do with the truth of Christianity (evidence, objections, whether it is rational). Intellectual doubt specifically has to do with what we *think about the truth of Christianity* (not what we feel about it).
- If any intellectual doubts are raised that cannot be answered within the group discussion, encourage students to submit their questions to Room For Doubt.

2. What are *emotional* doubts? What are some common characteristics of emotional doubt? Have you struggled with any emotional doubts concerning God, the Christian faith, or your salvation?

- Emotional doubts arise from how one *feels* (rather than what one thinks) about the person or thing in question. The struggle is with the way the person “downloads” the issue and responds to it. It is about the things that one tells oneself in response to the issue.
- Emotional doubt is the most painful doubt. It is also the most common.
- **Two key signs** that one is experiencing emotional doubt: (1) One is feeling a good deal of **pain** along with the doubt. (2) One asks “**what if**” questions. An emotional doubter may admit there is good evidence for Christianity BUT still be haunted by this sort of thought: “But what if Christianity just isn’t true? What if, in the end, believers are simply mistaken?” The concern is not with the evidence but with *how one feels* about the evidence or about *unlikely possibilities* relating to the evidence. It may seem like factual doubt, but it’s more likely *emotional* doubt: the anxieties are present even when good evidence has been acknowledged.
- Typical emotional worries for believers include: What if I’m not really saved (even though one knows one has accepted Christ)? What if God doesn’t exist or Christianity isn’t true (even though one admits having good evidence for these things)? What if I committed the unpardonable sin (even though one is assured that one hasn’t blasphemed/rejected the Holy Spirit)?
- There is often a worry that one has overlooked something important or failed to do what God requires. Despite good reason to have confidence, there is a fear that some minimally possible worry may be true.
- Emotional doubt often comes in cycles where one will feel better for a while and then just one misguided thought can trigger the person to fall into emotional doubt again. Even when given plenty of evidence, the doubter continually falls back into saying, “Yes, but what if...?”

3. What is *volitional* doubt? Do you think this is the most serious kind of doubt? Why or why not? How might you help someone overcome volitional doubt?

- *What it is...* Volitional doubt has to do with one’s will; it is an unwillingness to believe, grow in faith, give up sin, or live the Christian life. It involves a lack of passion or

commitment to God. It often involves unwillingness to take steps to escape one's doubt or grow in faith.

- The attitude here is: "I don't want to believe. I don't want to do it."
- This sort of doubt is often present along with other doubts. For example, one may have genuine intellectual doubts, yet one may also have volitional doubt along with those intellectual doubts (i.e., one does not really want to address those intellectual doubts or find answers). So volitional doubt can be part of the problem even if the major problem is intellectual or emotional doubt.
- *Why it is serious...* Volitional doubt is the most serious form of doubt because one does not care and is not willing to deal with it. It is also the least painful kind of doubt since one doesn't care. Sometimes unresolved intellectual doubt becomes emotionally painful and then becomes volitional when the person goes numb to it and checks out from caring about Christianity anymore (so be aware if one seems to be sliding in this direction).
- *Helping a volitional doubter...* In some way, the person needs to see that she should care about God and coming to faith in Christ. She needs to get "fired up" and motivated to pursue spiritual and eternal things. It is important for the person to reflect upon how the Christian God meets her deepest needs.

4. Why is it important to consider whether a doubt that you are having has to do with something that is essential to Christianity or something that is non-essential? What sort of beliefs do you think are essential to Christianity?

- Doubts that are about non-essential matters may have some importance, but Christianity does not stand or fall based on these issues. So if you are struggling with a doubt, ask yourself if it is really at the core of Christianity. If it is at the core, then the doubt you have is especially significant; nevertheless, you should not be afraid to express it and seek feedback from Christian leaders. If it is not at the core, then you should not worry that Christianity is false just because you are not sure about that issue. We need to keep our doubts in perspective. That does not mean your doubt is unimportant or should not be addressed. It strengthens your faith when you study up on your doubts. Sometimes you can resolve them entirely. But always keep the significance of the doubt in mind.
- Examples of some essential Christian beliefs that must be true in order for Christianity to be true include things like: the death, deity, and resurrection of Jesus; the existence of the Christian God (the Trinity); etc. To give just one biblical example, the Bible itself says that the resurrection of Jesus is essential to the truth of Christianity. In 1 Corinthians 15:17, Paul says that the Christian faith is worthless if Christ has not been raised.

5. The lesson covered four sources of doubt: psychological, intellectual, emotional, and volitional. Which one do you believe is experienced the most by your peers? Can you share some examples of doubts that you know others (or you) have had or are having? As you think about or discuss these examples, try to classify them: are they primarily psychological, intellectual, emotional, or volitional?

6. What did you learn in this lesson that you didn't know before, and how is it helpful to you?