

Believing in the Face of Uncertainty

Written by Bill Perkins

I've never liked uncertainty. When there's relational instability, I'll do almost anything to resolve it. When I'm confused about my future, I'll obsess until I've clarified it. When there's a project due or a test approaching, I'll over-prepare to ensure success. Above nearly all else, I value stability and consistency, predictability and certainty. Which is why, for a long time, I struggled with my faith in God.

In an increasingly complex world, more people have answers.

In today's world, everyone wants to believe they have all the answers. Everyone wants to appear as though they've got everything figured out. No one wants to come across as confused or uncertain, as if they don't have it all together. Everyone can explain everything. Not only does this attitude infect our views on sports and music, but also politics, world affairs, and even religion. In fact, it especially applies to religion. After all, isn't that the purpose of religion? To provide a framework for viewing God and answering life's biggest questions?

Religion purports to explain what cannot be explained.

That was certainly my experience growing up. Through years of attending church and studying apologetics, I learned to answer the most common objections to Christianity. Where doubt existed, I sought to quince it. Where confusion appeared, I tried to clarify it. Where uncertainty lingered, I aimed to destroy it. The problem is, I still struggled with uncertainty. I couldn't answer every question. I couldn't resolve every doubt. And to me, that seemed like a problem. The Bible explained *everything*, so there wasn't room for uncertainty or doubt or even mystery. But here's what I've come to learn and accept. The Bible doesn't purport to answer every question. And the God of the universe cannot be explained in purely human terms.

We're not called to resolve every uncertainty, but to believe.

Time and again, the Bible stresses the importance of *faith*. It's "confidence in what we *hope for* and assurance about what we *do not see*." Hebrews 11:1 (emphasis mine). It's heading off somewhere without knowing how to get there or where you're supposed to end up. Hebrews 11:8. Jesus even instructs his followers to trust him like children—if there ever was a picture of faith, that's it. Kids don't know much. But they certainly don't lack trust. And in the most visible instruction on faith, Jesus lets Thomas place his fingers in his open, gaping wounds. Yet afterwards, Jesus praises those who believe without seeing (or touching)—despite their uncertainties and questions.

Faith is believing in the face of uncertainty.

Faith doesn't require absolute confidence or perfect clarity. Instead, it exists side by side with uncertainty. It recognizes some questions can't be answered. It accepts mystery where there isn't clarity. It acknowledges God is bigger than our capacity to understand. Yet despite all of this, faith chooses to believe. For someone like me, that can be unnerving. Yet it's also freeing, because I'm no longer burdened with answering every question to rest secure in my faith. Of course, that's the very definition of faith—believing the world's greatest hope even in the face of uncertainty.

Thomas Wells writes about living intentionally.