



# Connect with Your Faith

## Leader's Guide

### Week 1

Focus for this class: This 6-week class focuses on elements of our Faith including dealing with doubt, healing, how to study the bible, the sacraments, why we need the church and why you are crucial to the life of the church. This is the first week of class, and your mission is to help everyone feel comfortable, get to know them, and help them get to know each other. Begin with each class member providing a brief introduction of themselves (if they have not already) and tell the class what they hope to get out of the Connect to Your Faith course. You could also use the icebreaker games suggested on the previous prework page.

#### *Topic Week 1: How to Deal with Doubt*

**Prework Summary:** Study these teaching points covered in the teaching video. Notice the time for both the teaching video and testimony video and plan the use of your time accordingly to allow good discussion.

**Speaker: Pastor Mark Danzey**

**\*\*\*Script**

#### **Assurance**

When we confess in our hearts and minds as well as publicly that Jesus is God's son, sent to die so that we may be reunited with God and have a relationship with Him now and for eternity, we become a Christian, and we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. For some, this confession is a vivid memory and they know the date this occurred. For others, it was a journey of investigation that gradually led to a belief. Some made this decision as young children and don't remember a time when they weren't a child of God. For others this happens at different points in life.

The assurance of our salvation and our relationship with God is bound up in the Trinity: the three persons of God. These are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's promises in Scripture, the sacrifice Jesus made on the Cross, and the witness of the Holy Spirit confirm our salvation.

#### *The Word of God – the promises God gives us in Scripture*

In John 10:28, Jesus assures us that once we belong to God, He will never let us go:

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand."

He reinforces this promise of never leaving us several times in scripture, including Matthew 28:20 “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

#### *The Work of Jesus – the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross*

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me,” Jesus tells us in Revelation 3:20.

He is knocking and calling us because He loves us and has made a way for us. He is God’s only Son sent to die for us. By believing, we have eternal life. John 3:16 summarizes Christianity and presents the Gospel in its simplest form. It is simple yet profound. God’s unfathomable love for us and Jesus’ unthinkable sacrifice for us means we are welcome to approach both Father and Son now and for eternity.

#### *The witness of the Holy Spirit – the assurance of the Holy Spirit in our hearts (Galatians 5:16-26)*

After our salvation, the Holy Spirit enters our hearts and minds, and begins to transform us into the image of Christ. Philippians 1:6 says, “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” While some changes may be immediate, the work of sanctification is gradual. Over time we, and those around us, begin to see the fruits of the spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – in our life. These changes assure us God is at work in us and we belong to Him.

#### **Circumstantial Doubt**

During difficult times, we may begin to doubt the goodness of God, that we belong to Him, that He means what He says when He promises He will work all things together for good.

Doubt is one of the chief weapons in the enemy’s arsenal. Doubts enter our minds for all sorts of reasons, but ultimately, doubt is fueled by the weakness of our flesh. We cannot see what God sees, we cannot know His plans or motives and we are no longer convinced He has our best in mind. When experiencing doubt, do not become fixated on your circumstances or trust your ever-changing feelings. Focus on the promises of God and what you know to be true.

Reminding yourself of times in your past when God has delivered you is the best offensive weapon we have against doubt. Throughout the Old Testament, God instructs the Israelites to remember all that He has done for them. He designs festivals and ceremonies to remind them

of all He's delivered them from and how far they've come. Psalms 145:4 tells us, "One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts." Not only are we to remind ourselves of all God's done in our lives, we are to tell the next generation, to fortify them against doubts when they arise.

### **Intellectual Doubt**

Christians believe Jesus is God's son, became a man, died, and was raised from the dead, but may struggle with believing everything in the Bible. Even Billy Graham wrestled with believing all of scripture to be true. In his biography, he says, "The particular intellectual problem I was wrestling with, for the first time since my conversion as a teenager, was the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. Seeming contradictions and problems with interpretation defied intellectual solutions, or so I thought. Could the Bible be trusted completely?" In the face of his doubts about the Bible, Billy Graham read the Bible. "I read every verse of Scripture I could think of that had to do with "thus saith the Lord." I recalled hearing someone say that the prophets had used the phrase "the Word of the Lord said" (or similar wording) more than two thousand times. I had no doubts concerning the deity of Jesus Christ or the validity of the Gospel, but was the Bible completely true? If I was not exactly doubtful, I was certainly disturbed. I pondered the attitude of Christ toward the Scriptures. He loved those sacred writings and quoted from them constantly. Never once did He intimate that they could be wrong. In fact, He verified some of the stories in the Old Testament that were the hardest to believe, such as those concerning Noah and Jonah."

Billy Graham also notes that his conviction of the infallibility of scripture depended on his regular reading and meditating on God's word. As the twentieth century's greatest preacher discovered, believing God's Word is an act of faith, just as salvation is an act of faith (Ephesians 2:8).

Psalm 119:99 tells us, I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes." "I gain understanding from your precepts;" Verse 130 says, "The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."

**\*\*\*End Script**

### **Tough questions prep:**

Doubting parts of the Bible may lead into a discussion of apologetics, science, etc. Please think about your responses and encourage them to take the Connect to the Bible class in the Connect Series.

It is always appropriate to say that you do not know on tough questions that you are asked.

**Scriptures to review prior:**

Revelation 3:20

Matthew 28:20

John 10:28

John 10:10

John 10:28

John 3:16

Isaiah 59: 1-2

Romans 8:1

Galatians 5: 22-23

Romans 8: 15-16

Philippians 1:6

Psalm 145:4

## *Class Timeline:*

	Estimated time
1. Introductions	15 min
2. Teaching Video	Pastor Mark Danzey, 8:37 min
3. Discussion Questions	15 min
4. Testimonial Video	Gus Walls, 5:37 min
5. Takeaways	1 min
6. Prayer	1 min
7. Invitation for next week	1 min

**1. Introduce the content and video for this class (in your own words):**

Most Christians find themselves doubting some facet of Christianity at some point in their lives. An important distinction to make is that doubt is not the opposite of faith and therefore not the same as unbelief. God is gracious to those who doubt and has given us many promises in his Word to overcome whatever doubts we are experiencing.

**2. Play the teaching video. (8:36 minutes, Mark Danzey)**

### **3. Discussion questions (pages 3 & 4):**

1. Which type of doubt are you most likely to struggle with – assurance of salvation, intellectual doubt, or circumstantial doubt?
2. Do you tend to rely on your feelings and begin to doubt God's presence when you don't feel him? How can you move from feelings of doubt to confidence?
3. How is unbelief different from doubt? If doubt is not the opposite of faith, what is?
4. Is it comforting to hear that Billy Graham struggled with believing the Bible? Is it surprising to learn that he resolved his doubts by studying the Bible?

### **4. Play the short personal testimony video. (5:37 minutes, Gus Walls)**

#### **5. Takeaways (page 4) / Key Themes**

**(Say in your own words)** God is patient and gracious with us when we doubt. Doubt a facet of everyone's faith at some point in the Christian journey. Be prepared and be encouraged by others who've overcome a season of doubt in their lives.

#### **Key themes to understand as they prepare to leave:**

1. Assurance (I don't feel saved or forgiven)
2. Circumstantial doubt (I can't feel God's presence, and he's not answering my prayers)
3. Intellectual doubt (what if I don't believe all the Bible stories?)
4. Doubt is normal. It should be viewed as an invitation to explore, research and find the answers you need.

### **6. Close in prayer Use the PRAY model as we teach them to pray:**

P = praise – praise God for who He is and what he has done. Use attributes to describe Him.

R = Repent – helps us confess any sins and change the way we think or feel

A = Ask – petition your request for this group to our Father in Heaven including any doubt they may have

Y = Yield – Submit to God's will and let go of our will.

<b>PRAISE</b>	Matthew 6:9	"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"
<b>REPENT</b>	Matthew 6:12	"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."
<b>ASK</b>	Matthew 6:11&13	"Give us this day our daily bread."  "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]"
<b>YIELD</b>	Matthew 6:10	"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

**7. Invite them back next week to learn about . . . . .**

Week 2 of Connect to Your Faith we will discuss "Does God Heal Today?" Join us next week!