

# Rescuing Ambition

## A Summary of Chapter 5 (Ambition's Confidence) with Discussion Questions

Main Idea: Drawing near to God by faith is the only focus worthy of true ambition.

People need to be rescued from shortsightedness and develop God-sightedness. To rescue us from shortsightedness and help us develop God-sightings, the Lord positions us to extend our hand of faith to lay hold of what we prize. Faith, fully displayed, will lead to a life fully lived.

- What does it mean to have shortsightedness vs God-sightedness?
- Using the examples of losing a job, house or family member, how would we be shortsighted? How would we be God-sighted?
- Read Hebrews 10:38; 11:6; 12:1

Having faith is a popular theme in today's culture. Faith is not some mysterious, detached, force-like power. The focus of true faith is God who is made known in the person of Jesus Christ.

- What's the difference between popular faith and biblical faith?
- What's the difference between mere religiosity (going to church and obeying commandments) and biblical faith?

Faith starts with God and fixes on God. Biblical faith confidently—even ambitiously—asks God to act according to his promises. Our faith stands on the unchanging character of God.

- Give a difficult or challenging situation in your life (either now or immediate future). Ask the class how you should ask God to act according to his promises.

Drawing near to God is a life of intimate fellowship with a Person.

- How do we fellowship with a close friend?
- Which of these answers help us understand how to fellowship with God?

True faith is drawing near to God with a confidence that He will work out His purposes perfectly for His children. When we draw near to God in true faith, we can deal with the complexities and curveballs of life.

- How? In what ways?

# Doubt

- ⇒ Definitions of Doubt: to waver (in two minds), hesitate, be uncertain, distrust. "Doubt is a state of mind in suspension between faith and unbelief." --Os Guinness (p. 26)
- ⇒ Doubt is not unbelief, but it is on the pathway towards unbelief.
- ⇒ Doubt can be beneficial in seeking answers to questions and reinforcing faith if an individual continues to seek God, pursue Scriptural truth, and stay connected to the local church.
- ⇒ If one turns from the Lord, rejects Scriptural truth, and neglects the local church, doubt can lead down a dangerous pathway towards unbelief.
- ⇒ Scripture does not give a 10-step strategy to overcoming doubt. It simply says, "Do not doubt."
- ⇒ Doubt is a complex struggle that requires wisdom and patient love and mercy. While doubt may be difficult to overcome, there is substantial healing in Jesus Christ.

*"To believe is to be 'in one mind' about trusting someone or something as true; to disbelieve is to be 'in one mind' about rejecting them. To doubt is to waver between the two, to believe and disbelieve at once and so to be 'in two minds.' This two-ness or double-ness is the heart of doubt and the deepest dilemma it represents. The heart of doubt is a divided heart."* --Os Guinness (p. 23)

## Examples of Doubt

The Fall (Gen 3), Abraham & Sarah (Gen 18), Moses (Ex 3-4), Elijah (1 Kings 19), Peter (Matt 14:22-33), Thomas (John 20:24-29), Disciples (Matt 28:17), M. Luther, C. S. Lewis, F. Schaeffer.

## Doubt as a Curse for Disobedience

"But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you . . . Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life." Deut 28:15,66

## Praying in Faith and Not Doubting

*And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. 22 And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."* Matt 21:21-22

*And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."* Mark 11:22-24

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.* James 1:5-8

## Showing Patient Love and Mercy to Doubters

*But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.* Jude 1:20-23

# Seven Families of Doubt

Guinness, Os. *God in the Dark: The Assurance of Faith Beyond a Shadow of Doubt* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1996), 39-161.

1. Doubt from Ingratitude (Forgetting to Remember)
2. Doubt from a Faulty View of God (Faith out of Focus)
3. Doubt from Weak Foundations (No Reason Why Not)
4. Doubt from Lack of Commitment (An Unsigned Contract)
5. Doubt from Lack of Growth (No Sign of Life)
6. Doubt from Unruly Emotions (Coup d'Etat from Within)
7. Doubt from Hidden Conflicts (Fear of Pain/Old Wound)

# Faith and Doubt

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- a. The functional certainty of receptive faith is founded upon belief in God, and therefore not functional when there is unbelief and rejection of God.
- b. The functional certainty of receptive faith is not functional if we consider it impossible, unlikely or doubtful that God will function faithfully and sufficiently in accord with who He is.
  - (1) The divided mind or double-mindedness of doubt affirms belief in God (a), but questions God's character or ability (b).
  - (2) Most of the New Testament references pertain to such double-mindedness.
- c. The functional certainty of receptive faith allows for mental and emotional questioning, reservations and uncertainty.
  - (1) When we are living by faith that is receptive and available to God's function in our lives:
    - We don't know where God is taking us into the unknown and uncharted territory.
    - We don't know where this adventure will end.
    - We don't know what God will do next.
    - We don't know how God is going to work this out.
    - We don't know when this situation will be settled.
    - We don't know why God is allowing this circumstance or why God is acting as He does.
  - (2) The situation where we find ourselves is indeterminate and problematic. We are questioning, uncertain and perplexed. We are forced to recognize our inadequacy, inability and our own lack of faith as we remain receptive to God's activity.
    - Mk. 9:24 - "I believe; help my unbelief."
    - Jude 1:22 - "have mercy on some who are doubting"
  - (3) God is big enough and understanding enough to accept our doubts, to convince us and assure us of His character and sufficiency, and to bring us along to increased faith.

## Rescuing Ambition

### Conclusion of Chapter 5 (Ambition's Confidence) with Discussion Questions

Ambition battles unbelief with faith. First thing in the morning, before I'm even caffeinated, I have a choice: faith or unbelief. Unbelief starts in the little things. Unchecked, it becomes a habit, a condition, that chokes out godly ambition. The only antidote is faith that focuses on God.

- Give an example of a little thing in your life last week for which you didn't trust God.
- If your unbelief in this area is left unchecked, what might it look like in your life?

Unbelief is a decided distrust in the promises and character of God.

- Share something that worries you right now, something that causes you concern. What promises and/or character traits of God are you failing to completely trust?
- Do you fight any doubts about God, your future, or the Lord's ability to provide for your needs? What promises and/or character traits of God are you failing to completely trust?

It is so important to see faith as a gift from God (Eph 2:8-9). If faith were from us, when it's vanquished by unbelief, we would have lost it forever. But because faith is a gift coming to us as a benefit of the cross, we can access it by turning to Christ. God gives us faith as a gift, arranges our circumstances to call it forth, gives us grace to act boldly in faith—then rewards us for it!

- Give a brief testimony of how you personally first came to faith in Christ.
- How has God in recent days given you grace to act boldly in faith?

God-centered faith:

1. Doesn't compromise values.
  2. Doesn't accuse God.
  3. Seeks wise counsel.
  4. Refuses to see me as a victim of circumstances.
  5. Asks others for reminders of the truth of Scripture.
  6. Confesses the sin of unbelief.
- For whom can you be the body of Christ in these areas this week?
  - To whom in the body of Christ will you go if you need help this week?

Conclusion: Godly ambition finds its focus through faith. It battles unbelief with faith. It leans on faith when circumstances scream otherwise. And ambition is confident in the ultimate reward.