

## The Valley of the Shadow of Doubt!

Scripture used: John 20:24-29 (NIV)

### OVERVIEW

#### Big Idea:

Pastor Tilden took us into Part 2 of the “Finding God in Silicon Valley” series. Silicon Valley thrives on a culture of skepticism. We can often feel like the environment is hostile to faith, and the culture can sometimes accentuate our deepest personal doubts. Nevertheless, our doubts are not bad; often they are a sign that our faith is being stretched and God is helping us grow. God’s promise to us is that He meets us right at the point of our doubts, and He will help us work through our doubts if we will engage with Him. Our Scripture today tells the story of “Doubting Thomas,” and we learn how to grapple with our doubts as Thomas did right after Jesus’ crucifixion.

### KEY POINTS

- 1) **Point #1 Thomas is experiencing doubt on many levels.** He’s not sure whether Jesus is dead or alive. He is afraid of the cost of continuing to commit to Jesus. He has shame and guilt from his behavior during Jesus’ ordeal, likely wondering whether Jesus will want to even see him. Yet doubt stretches us and, in that way, is a precursor to faith. It is not shameful, but an invitation to engage into deeper intimacy and obedience.
- 2) **Point #2 Thomas showed us a process for strengthening our faith through doubt.** There were 4 steps that Thomas went through to restore his faith in Jesus as Lord.
  - a. **State our doubts.** Thomas did not pretend that he was doubting the other disciples. Instead he very clearly stated that he wouldn’t believe unless he actually put his hands on the resurrected Jesus. He knew he couldn’t truly believe until that happened.
  - b. **Seek the answers.** After stating his doubts, Thomas didn’t leave. Instead he stayed with the other disciples at the last place that Jesus appeared. He prioritized this over all the other things he could have been doing at the same time.
  - c. **See Jesus.** Jesus appeared to Thomas, and this wasn’t an accident. Jesus was seeking Thomas, just like He is seeking each of us. And Jesus already knew the doubts that Thomas had. No one had to explain anything to Him. He was ready to meet him at the point of his doubt.
  - d. **Surrender.** Believing in Jesus and following Him is not about words. Of course that’s a part of it, but ultimately we need to follow up words with actions. Thomas spread the gospel across thousands of miles, ultimately ending up in India. Even today, there are huge numbers of Christians in India who can trace their faith directly back to Thomas!
- 3) **Point #3 God is seeking us, even in our doubt.** Jesus knew what Thomas was thinking and met him at the exact point of his doubt. He put His holy hands on Thomas. God knows where we struggle and wants to reveal Himself fully. We have many stories of how God met us in our lives; pursued us; and redeemed lonely, broken, and sinful human beings. God breaks into our lives in unexpected and providential ways, with encouragement and not judgment, and often via images, symbols, signs, and unique insights.
- 4) **Point #4 Freedom from sin is freedom to be oneself.** We must surrender our doubts by surrendering to God, responding to God’s call with our whole lives. Each season of life brings new doubts, a new search for answers, and a next step of surrender. That’s how our faith grows!

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Many people in Silicon Valley will admit to admiring Jesus as a historical figure, but there is no true category for Jesus just being a likeable person. He was either crazy or our risen Lord. Do you ever catch yourself falling into this trap?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - The Bible is full of examples of people who pour out their hearts to God. Do you really believe that you can take your doubts, fears, and anger directly to God? Why or why not? Have you had a time when God has shown Himself to you and “put His hands in your life”?
- 3) **DO** - God is trying to use each of us in our own special way, but our doubts often get in the way. Pray each morning this week by telling God “I surrender” and asking Him to direct your path.