

Text: Luke 24:36-49

Theme: Counteracting Doubt

April 15, 2018

How many of you have ever taken a medication to counteract another medication, to offset the side effects of the primary medication? In the pharmaceutical world, there's a list of counteracting medications as long as the list of actual medications. And, unfortunately, it's not uncommon that those who take medications also need to take counteracting medications as well. In our text, it would be great if all we needed was a counteracting medication. However, as we face doubt, we need more than a medical prescription. We need a prescription for counteracting doubt.

I. Like the disciples, God gives us ample reason to trust. A. But we still doubt. 1. We doubt because things are not logical. Step into the shoes of one of the disciples. Was it logical for Jesus to suddenly appear through locked doors? Wasn't it reasonable for the disciples to be startled and frightened? When events around us don't make sense, we question, we look for answers, and we doubt. Doubt is a logical response to what we cannot explain. We want answers or, better yet, we don't even want situations that create questions. Yet no matter how much we try, those situations occur and, as they do, our natural, impulsive response is doubt.

2. We doubt because our faith is weak. Just hearing that statement makes us uncomfortable, doesn't it? In our minds, weak faith and faith don't go together. To us, weak faith is dangerously close to no faith at all, and we don't like to be in that predicament. But, if there's good news in the midst of our doubts, that good news is that we're not alone. How many times did Jesus say to those He hand-picked, those He chose specifically as His disciples, "O you of little faith?" Although Jesus doesn't speak those words out loud to us in this moment, He could easily do so because we, like the disciples, are often those of little faith.

3. We doubt because we can't keep our minds focused. If the disciples had focused on Jesus and ignored everything else, if they had practiced tunnel vision and refused to allow any other thoughts to enter their minds, would doubt have overtaken them? When life doesn't make sense, when crises occur, when people do and say things that are simply not normal, would we ever doubt the workings of God if our minds never moved off the target, never glanced, even for a moment, away from the promises in His Word? Doubt exists because we can't keep our heart and our mind focused on the God who says, "Trust Me. I've got it all under control."

B. Because doubt clearly exists, how do we counteract doubt? 1. We counteract doubt by fighting against our doubts. If the disciples had put up a fight, doubt would have stayed outside those locked doors. Every morning of every day of every year we wake up to a battle, a battle against doubt. More precisely, our battle is against the creator of doubt, against the one whose only goal is to destroy your faith. When we engage, doubt isn't allowed to play games in our minds. When we take the shield of God's Word in hand and stand our ground, we win because God wins for us. To counteract doubt, we fight and we fight as long and as hard as necessary.

2. We counteract doubt by focusing on the love God has for us. In our Epistle, John writes, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us." Where the love of God prevails, doubt cannot exist. When our minds are buried in God's loving acts, the devil has no chance. As doubts surface, our first response is to focus on God's

love, to say and believe, “Jesus loves me, this I know.” The words may be simple; they may be child’s words, but those words work. As we immerse our hearts and minds in God’s love for us, in the evidence of that love, and we keep on rehearsing those indisputable facts, love will prevail and doubt will run with its tail between its legs.

3. We counteract doubt by taking God at His Word. In verse 44, Jesus says, “These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you.” My words. Can anyone or anything stand against the power of God’s Word? As we take God at His Word, our hearts are filled with promises, with power, with knowledge, with confidence, with the ability to stand our ground and to force doubt to run. When God speaks and faith-filled hearts listen, we have no reason to doubt the power and wisdom of God. Things may not make sense, but, even as that occurs, taking God at His Word protects us, shields us so that doubt cannot step in and wreak havoc in our lives.

4. We counteract doubt by resting in His peace. How would life be different for you if you were at total peace within? As Jesus stepped into the room through those locked doors and said, “Peace be with you,” that was all His disciples needed. God’s peace is powerful. It can turn fear into trust, worry into unstoppable power, uncertainty into empowerment. As we claim His peace and find our refuge in His peace, He empowers us for the work He needs done, creates a calm that can exist in the middle of this chaotic world. It happens when “Peace be with you,” drives out doubt and establishes itself as the one in control of our thoughts and actions.

5. We counteract doubt by trusting implicitly. The disciples were plagued with fickle faith, with weak faith. Likewise, we can sing, “I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus, trusting only Thee,” but that doesn’t make it happen. Trust is learned in the school of experience. Those pillars of the faith that we can name in our minds, they didn’t become pillars overnight. They became pillars by trusting God with the little things, with the mid-range things, and with all the big things. Whatever life dished out, trusting God was their first move. Implicit trust, immovable trust, a trust that engages every time doubt attempts to enter, that’s a trust that counteracts doubt.

6. We counteract doubt by responding, “Thy Will be done.” As we declare, “Not my will, but Your will be done,” we announce to ourselves and to the world around us by our actions that God trumps all, that nothing and no one can trump God. As we encounter the puzzling parts of life, our lengthy list of life’s questions, and all our confusion, doubt has no power, no foothold, no place in our hearts when we say with utmost conviction, “Thy will be done.” When we believe God will do what God wants done in us and through us, when we believe that God has unlimited power, our only response is to say, “It is well with my soul.”

7. Medications will likely require other medications to counteract the side effects until the end of this world. Whether that occurs or not, until the end of this world, or until our departure arrives, whichever comes first, take your prescription; use it to counteract doubt, and then, enjoy, enjoy the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.