

# Why I stay: My experiences with questions, doubts, and a significant faith crisis

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Is it okay to ask questions and to have doubt?

Dear Harvest Ridge Activity Day leaders,

In my other ward we did this thing called Camp Jeremiah Johnson. What you do there is you go and you do lots of activities outside and have a lot of fun for one day and then you go back home. I want to do this in our ward because it would be fun for the girls to go outside and do some activities in the woods just like the boy scouts do. My brother says that girls only stay inside and do activities all the time and boys get to learn how to save people and things. And so I said to him, well girls want to learn how to save people too and boys want to do activities inside too!!!!!! I think boys and girls should be able to do both things. And if we don't have enough money to do it maybe we could have an activity where we do a bake sale or do something to earn money to go there. And if not, maybe we could just go out in the woods with just our group and do activities out there for a day.

Just think about it for a little while.

Love from your friend,

Hannah Coyne

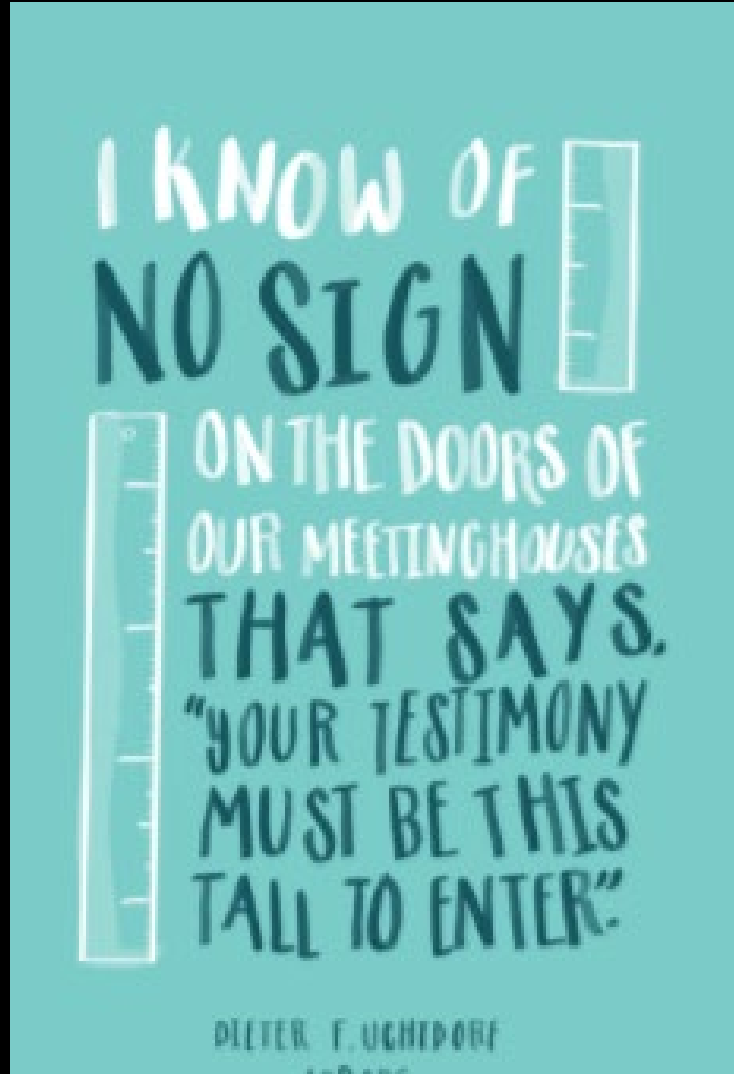


P.S. I think it would be really fun to go do something like that!

P.P.S. Thanks for all you do. I really love activity days

# Is it okay to doubt?

- *“I know I am grateful for a propensity to doubt, because it gives me the capacity to freely believe. I hope you can find your way to feel the same....There must be grounds for doubt as well as belief, in order to render the choice more truly a choice, and therefore the more deliberate, and laden with personal vulnerability and investment. An overwhelming preponderance of evidence on either side would make our choice as meaningless as would a loaded gun pointed at our heads. The option to believe must appear on one’s personal horizon like the fruit of paradise, perched precariously between sets of demands held in dynamic tension. - Terryl L. Givens, Letter to a Doubter, Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture 4 (2013): 131-146.*



# Doubts and questions are okay...

- *Once you were a child. Once you knew what inquiry was for. There was a time when you asked questions because you wanted answers, and were glad when you had found them. Become that child again: even now (C.S. Lewis)*
- Questions are not just good, **they are vital**, because the ensuing spiritual wrestle leads to answers, to knowledge, and to revelation. And it also leads to greater faith. (Sheri L. Dew)
- *When someone comes to you with a question or a concern, please do not brush the question off—do not tell him or her to not worry about the question. Please do not doubt the person's dedication to the Lord or His work. Instead, help the person find the answers to their questions. (M. Russell Ballard)*
- And above all, expect to wrestle yourself. There is deep magic in the spiritual struggles demanded here [at BYU]. – (Spencer Fluhman, BYU Devotional, 2019)

# ...but the pain is real

- When questions and doubts arise, it is easy to feel vulnerable. We may feel like our whole world is crashing down. Finding that our understanding of one issue is in error can lead us to doubt everything else we thought we knew. **With wounded hearts, some people come to the conclusion that they have been purposefully deceived—that they have been lied to. For some, such feelings of betrayal are harder to deal with than the historical or doctrinal issue that began the crisis.** My heart hurts for those who feel this way. The feeling is real, even if the purposeful deception is not. (Michael Goodman, BYU Devotional, 2016)

# Where does doubt fit in?

- Disbelief.....doubt.....hope.....belief
- Doubt is never a final destination
- *Doubt, therefore, can be and should be only a temporary condition. . . .In other words, doubt . . . must never itself be an end. Doubt as an objective of life is an intellectual and a spiritual offense. . . Doubt, unless transmuted into inquiry, has no value or worth in the world. Of itself it has never lifted a brick, driven a nail, or turned a furrow (John A. Widtsoe)*



“To those who have separated themselves from the Church, I say, my dear friends, **there is yet a place for you here.** Come and add your talents, gifts, and energies to ours. We will all become better as a result. Some might ask, “But what about my doubts?” It’s natural to have questions—the acorn of honest inquiry has often sprouted and matured into a great oak of understanding. There are few members of the Church who, at one time or another, have not wrestled with serious or sensitive questions. One of the purposes of the Church is to nurture and cultivate the seed of faith—even in the sometimes sandy soil of doubt and uncertainty. Faith is to hope for things which are not seen but which are true. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters—my dear friends—please, **first doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.** We must never allow doubt to hold us prisoner and keep us from the divine love, peace, and gifts that come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

– President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “**There Is Room for You**”

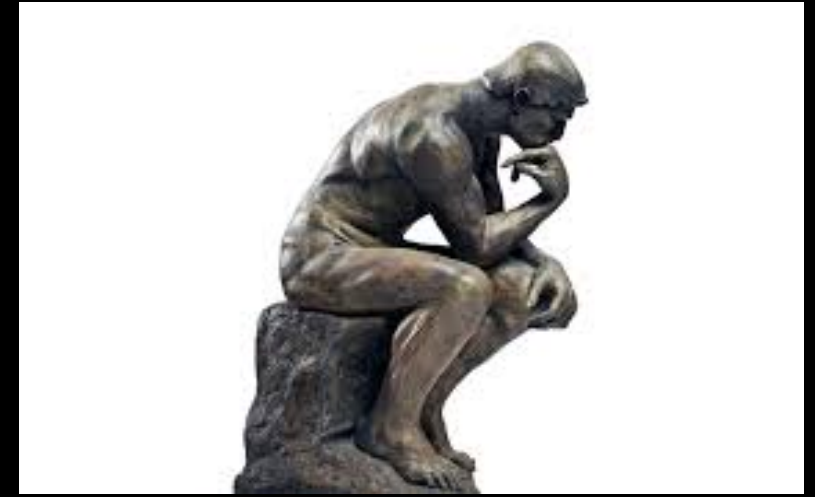


# Are you willing to engage in the wrestle?

- Spiritual wrestling leverages the strength of true doctrine to overpower our weaknesses, our wavering faith, and our lack of knowledge. Spiritual wrestlers are seekers. They are men and women of faith who want to understand more than they presently do and who are serious about increasing the light and knowledge in their lives. (Sheri L. Dew)



# Be seekers of truth



Please understand that this is not a process of once and done.

It is not a process of minutes or hours. It may not be a process of months or even years.

It is the process of a lifetime.

**We are seekers, you and I.**

**We are light gatherers.**

We are on this lifelong mission—to gather light and bear it to the world—that will lead us through the joys and trials of life.

So don't ever stop seeking. Jesus promised that if we seek, we shall find. If we knock, it will be opened. If we listen, we will hear. For the scripture says, "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Hold on to that promise. Even if it takes your entire lives to find the precious light and truth you seek, it will be well worth the effort. – Dieter F. Uchtdorf, 2019

# My own “crucible of doubt”

- My “wrestle” with God
- Do what works

# Do what works:

## “The gospel is still true in the foyer”



- In the foyer, we are joined by various people coming late to the meeting, chasing small children in and out of the chapel, or just enjoying the softer seating options. I have felt a sense of community in the foyer—a kinship with these others who, like us, find their situation not quite measuring up to the chapel ideal. I have also felt the Spirit in the foyer as I have walked figure eights with my daughter, and I have been impressed with this simple thought: *The gospel is still true in the foyer.*
- We *all* spend time in the foyer, figuratively speaking. We *each* face circumstances that make us feel on the margins of the congregation, looking into the chapel from the foyer. And that is okay, because the gospel is still true in the foyer. (Jeffery McClellan, BYU devotional, 2018)

# My own “crucible of doubt”

- My “wrestle” with God
- Do what works
- Find your “people” and ignore the haters
- Teaching SFL200
- Temple experiences

# Complexity and Simplicity

- I offer a concluding perspective now from Oliver Wendell Holmes, who described our three level process this way: “I would not give a fig for the simplicity [on] this side of complexity. But I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.” The simplicity on this side of complexity is level one. Complexity is level two. And on the other side of complexity is the hard-earned, new simplicity of level three. (Hafen)





# PLANTED

Belief and Belonging  
in an Age of Doubt

Patrick Q. Mason

## What if someone you know is having a crisis of faith?

- Don't judge
- Don't take evasive action
- Be present and listen
- Love them unconditionally



# Come to Know Christ

- “When Jesus took upon Himself the heavy, atoning yoke in order to redeem all mankind by paying the agonizing price for our sins... Jesus also volunteered to take upon Himself additional agony in order that He might experience and thus know certain things ‘according to the flesh,’ namely human sicknesses and infirmities and human griefs, including those not associated with sin. Therefore, as a result of His great Atonement, Jesus was filled with unique empathy and with perfect mercy.”

- Neal A. Maxwell, “Becoming a Disciple,” Ensign (June 1996), p. 12.

# Things I've learned as a scholar of faith

- Faith is developmental
- My life is better with Christ in it
- Find your people (your tether)
- Distinguish between doctrine, principles, and practices
- Reality of a Heavenly Mother – worth as a woman
- Beauty and pain in the wrestle
- Some things aren't going to have answers.