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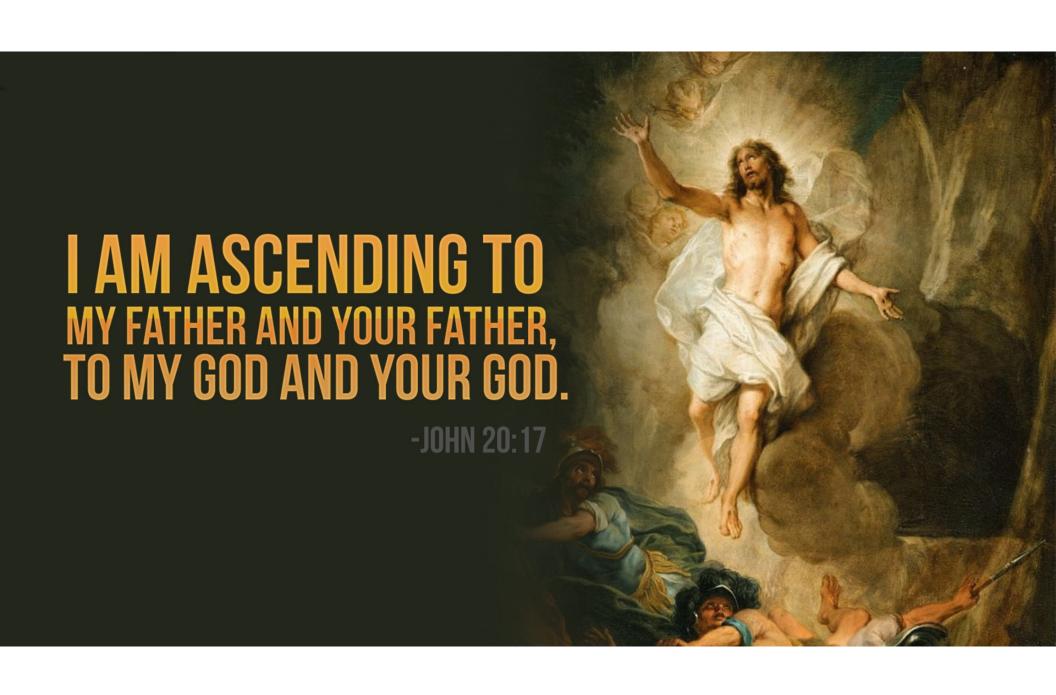
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DOUBT

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- ¹⁴ Mary turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. ¹⁵"Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."
 - "Mary!" Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").
- "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (NLT)



¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went, telling the news to the disciples: "I saw the Master!" And she told them everything he said to her. ¹⁹⁻²⁰ Later on that day, the disciples had gathered together, but, fearful of the Jews, had locked all the doors in the house. Jesus entered, stood among them, and said, "Peace to you."

Then he showed them his hands and side.

20-21 The disciples, seeing the Master with their own eyes, were exuberant. Jesus repeated his greeting: "Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you." (MSG)

22-23 Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. "Receive the Holy Spirit," he said. "If you forgive someone's sins, they're gone for good. If you don't forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?" (MSG)

- ²² Having said this he ¹breathed an effusion of spirit upon them and said, "Take Holy Spirit as your companion."
- ²³ "If you forgive someone's sins, they are gone and forgotten. If you don't let go, then you are stuck with them."

[renephusesen - It was a symbolic act with the same word used in the Septuagint when God breathed the breath of life upon Adam - Gen 2:7.]

(MIRROR Bible)

- ²⁴⁻²⁵ But Thomas, sometimes called the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, "We saw the Master." But he said, "Unless I see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger in the nail holes, and stick my hand in his side, I won't believe it."
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 - ²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were again in the room. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus came through the locked doors, stood among them, and said, "Peace to you."
- ²⁷ Then he focused his attention on Thomas. "Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side. Don't be unbelieving. Believe."
 - ²⁸ Thomas said, "My Master! My God!" (MSG)



²⁹ Jesus said, "So, you believe because you've seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing."

Jesus provided far more Godrevealing signs than are written down in this book. These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it. (MSG)

Jesus clearly told his disciples that he would rise from the dead; what do you make of both Mary and Thomas' initial reactions?

DOUBT

With whom do you identify most with in this story and why?

What allowed them to journey though doubt to more authentic faith?

What doubts do you struggle with and why?

"They worshiped him; but some doubted." --Matthew 28:17

What might help you work though your doubts to nurture a more authentic faith?

Doubt: A Necessary Tool for Growth (from Richard Rohr's CAC devotional - Feb. 1st 2021)

One of our core teachings is "the path of descent," the idea that the spiritual life will eventually require us to descend into a dark tunnel, to descend into unknowing and doubt, to descend into a

loss of certainty, to descend through a process that feels like dying. This deep anguish characterizes what Brian McLaren describes in his book "Faith After Doubt" Stage Three: Perplexity.

[do a quick review of McLaren's Stages or Seasons of Faith]

Lord, help my unbelief

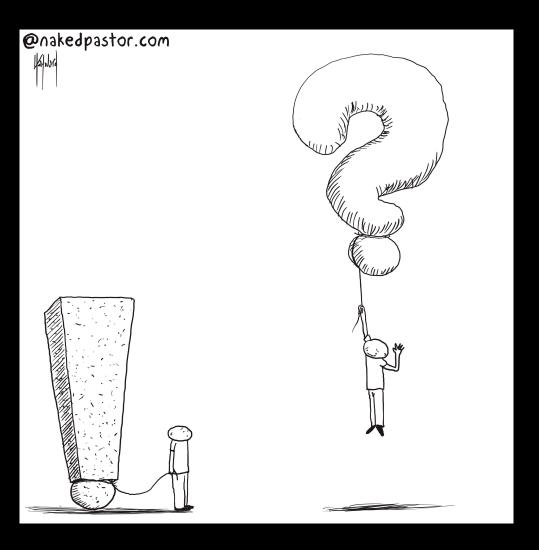


"I believe we can help people change their very understanding of what faith, spirituality, and theology are about. Rather than getting people to a destination of right beliefs handed down by authority figures, we can help people understand faith as a process of human growth and development that helps us survive and thrive, re-examining our beliefs when reality requires so that we can remain faithful to truth. Over the years, I've been studying a number of theorists of human development, both religious and secular, and I've found this simple four-stage synthesis to be helpful."

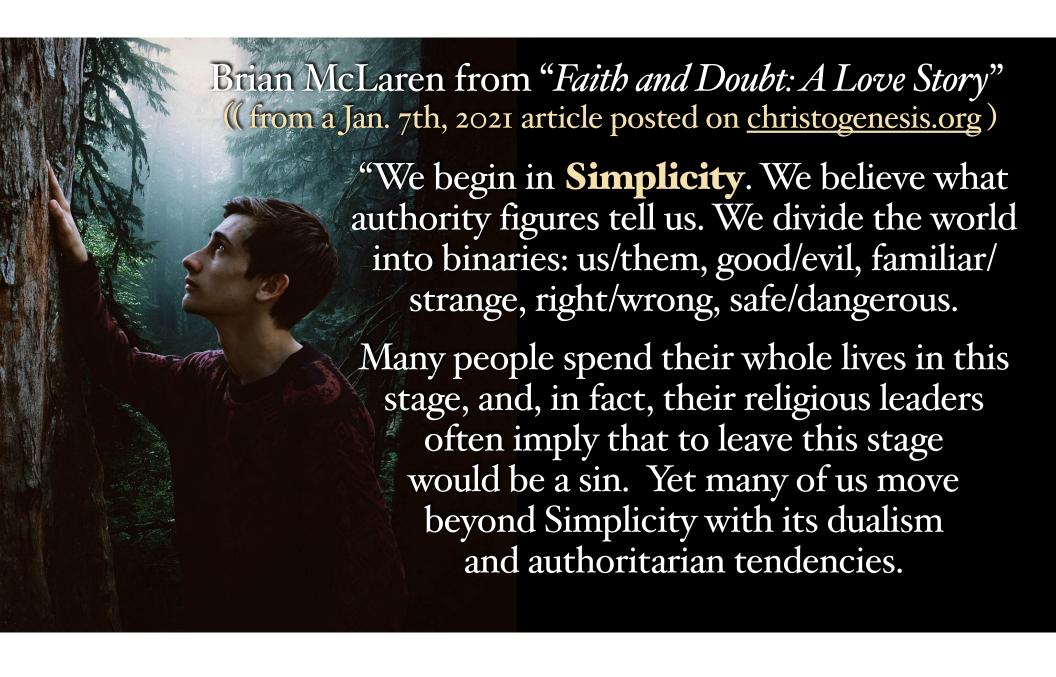
[McLaren explains how fluid and nuanced each stage is; just as we have snowy days in spring or oppressively warm fall days, we find ourselves in different faith stages depending on the day, though one stage may be "home." Brian is careful to point out that one stage is not better than others; like a tree that grows





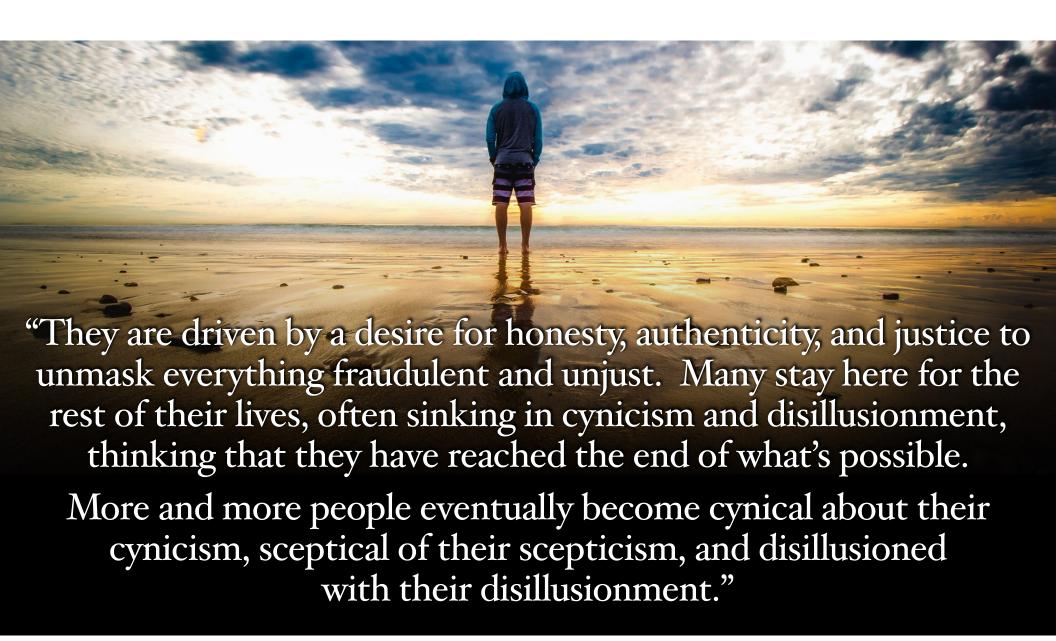


[McLaren argues that we need to de-stigmatize doubt, because it is doubt that leads to a deeper, more loving faith. Jesus challenged the traditional beliefs of the time during his sermon on the Mount; so many verses follow the pattern "You have heard it said ... but I say to you...". It's okay if we are also challenging the traditional beliefs to lead to more love.]



Brian McLaren from "Faith and Doubt: A Love Story" (from a Jan. 7th, 2021 article posted on christogenesis.org)

"We enter into Complexity where we want to think for ourselves and learn all we can. We trade our dualistic authority figures for pragmatic coaches who help us master information and learn the skills we need to survive and thrive. Again, many of us stay here for the rest of our lives. Some, because of (as my colleague and friend Richard Rohr says) "great pain or great love" (along with a great education and cross-cultural travel), move out of Complexity into **Perplexity**. They become suspicious of all belief systems rooted in Simplicity and all success schemes rooted in Complexity.





"They discover a new territory beyond Perplexity that I call **Harmony.** Having mastered the skills and faced the limitations of dualism, pragmatism, and relativism, they are increasingly animated by holism, a desire to see things whole, interrelated and integrated."

Brian McLaren from his book "Faith After Doubt": Why your beliefs stopped working and what to do about it

- I. **Simplicity** (faith involved a deference to authority figures, dualistic thinking, and obedience)
- 2. **Complexity** (faith that values independent thinking and learning, pragmatism, effectiveness, and results)
- 3. **Perplexity** (a stage where faith feels perplexing; you have more questions than answers; you feel sceptical of not only beliefs but entire institutions)
- 4. **Harmony** (a "second simplicity" that has built upon all the previous stages; an acceptance that the world is complex and perplexing while also trusting in God; a humility that God can solve our problems without our understanding them all; faith manifest through love)



Doubt: A Necessary Tool for Growth

(from Richard Rohr's CAC devotional - Feb. 1st 2021)

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DOUBT

"They worshiped him; but some doubted." --Matthew 28:17 This deep anguish characterizes what Brian McLaren describes in his book "Faith After Doubt" Stage Three: Perplexity.

"When I studied the mystics... I learned that they spoke often of [seasons of katharsis] as the painful and necessary process by which we are stripped of know-it-all arrogance, ego, and self-will.

Doubt: A Necessary Tool for Growth

(from Richard Rohr's CAC devotional - Feb. 1st 2021)

(Brian McLaren continues)

"Perplexity, I realized, was working like an X-ray of my soul, exposing much of my so-called spirituality as a vanity project of my ego, an expression of my arrogant desire to always be right, my desperate and fearful need to always be in control, my unexamined drive to tame the wildness of life by naming it and dominating it

with words. The doubt of Perplexity, the mystics helped me see, was just the fire I needed to purge me of previously unacknowledged arrogance. In this way, self-knowledge was another gift that came, unwanted, during my Stage Three descent."

Love Is the Movement; Doubt Is the Method (from Richard Rohr's CAC devotional - Feb. 2nd 2021)

Brian McLaren shares brilliantly how doubt has often been a tool of love, drawing him ever closer to the heart of God. Applying his four-fold spiritual growth process of Simplicity, Complexity, Perplexity, and Harmony to himself, Brian writes: "Looking back on my own spiritual

pilgrimage, I have come to see "the more excellent way of love" as the telos [ultimate purpose] whose gravitational pull has been drawing me first through Simplicity, then through Complexity then downward through Perplexity, and then

deeper still, toward an experience that is too profound for words,

the experience of Harmony.

But the Greatest of these

is Love.

9 Corinthians 13:13

Love Is the Movement; Doubt Is the Method (from Richard Rohr's CAC devotional - Feb. 2nd 2021)

"When I loved correctness in Stage One, yes, correctness mattered, but the love with which I pursued correctness mattered still more. When I loved effectiveness in Stage Two, yes,



effectiveness mattered, but the love that moved me to pursue it mattered still more. When I loved honesty and justice in Stage Three, yes, honesty and justice mattered, but the love that burned in my heart for them mattered still more... Faith was about love all along. We just didn't realize it, and it took doubt to help us see it...

Love Is the Movement; Doubt Is the Method

(from Richard Rohr's CAC devotional - Feb. 2nd 2021)

Brian McLaren continues: "I wish I could go back to that younger, agonized me (in Stage Three Perplexity) and bring this message: I know that your perplexity feels like a dead end. But wait, wait,

endure, persist, do your work, see it through, hang in there, trust the process, and it will become a passageway, a birth canal. You actually need this purgation and unknowing to prepare you for a new depth of living, knowing, and loving. There is much that deserves to be doubted, and if you really care about the truth, you must pursue it, using doubt as a necessary tool. (It's not your only tool, but it is one of your tools.)

