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## Dealing with doubt

I think it's obvious when I say that my generation has had an extremely different upbringing. We are constantly being stimulated, mostly by our phones but also by the world events that are going on around us, natural disasters, international conflict, and activist movements. There is so much going on in the world that we struggle when we aren't receiving immediate stimulation. People don't think anymore, we have so much useless information spilling into our brains. I don't know exactly how it was for generations above me, but in my generation, no one goes to church. In the entire cohort of even a Christian school, almost no one goes to church, and almost no one has a personal relationship with God. And it's become easier and easier to be distracted when there are these other things, real-world events or the endless scroll on your phone. Growing up in a world of stimulation and exponential growth in that direction, there are too many other things to do, to fill your time, to fill your brain space. And so whether people believe God exists or not they just don't care. Church isn't stimulating. A relationship with God isn't exciting.

These are the thoughts of so many people they can easily become the thoughts we have floating around our minds. It's so sad. **Yes, some people simply doubt the existence of God,** and there are debates and proofs and evidence in amongst all that discussion. But this is the doubt that is so much harder to address, doubting that a relationship with God actually matters. How do you deal with this doubt, because if you don't care about working on your relationship with God why would you care about working with overcoming this doubt? And we can't deal with someone else's doubt. It's impossible to hand on a personal appreciation for God, to deal with the apathetic attitude.

**Unfortunately, one of the only ways for so many people to deeply understand God's worth is by learning the hard way.** Life splashes them in the face with ice-cold water, and then maybe they turn to God. Sadly, it has to come to that sometimes. It's the hardness of our hearts that keep us on the straight and wide. The definition of a hard heart has always had connotations of stubbornness and rigidity. But I think that today, a hard heart is an apathetic one. Israel was stubborn, but today, we just don't care. With so much else going on, God is the last thing on our minds.

**I have a mate** who I have spiritual chats with all the time, and he believes in God, but he doesn't do anything about it. We were talking about it one time and I was pressing just a little bit and eventually, we derived what he was feeling as being: 'I think being a Christian is a good thing, and I know I should be, but I just want to experience the world front now, without any obligation to anyone or anything.' He has a fear of missing out on the experiences that this life has to offer. **He believes in God but he doubts His worth.** And the thing is, often these people are fully aware - but this is a decision of life or death, something amazing or nothing. And still, they just can't be bothered. And I don't know what to do about it. What can you do about it?

Now of course, just because we have overcome this doubt in the past does not mean that we are free from it. I'll be the first to say that over COVID, I got lazy with my faith. I struggled to see the worth of attending the meeting online. I wasn't getting much out of it, and I was

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finding it easier to miss. And because I was spending less time talking about God, I spent less time thinking about Him. I drew just a little distant and quite frankly I enjoyed doing other things.

Over the beginning of the COVID era, I did a lot of camping with mates. And often it would go over the Sunday morning as well. And in the end, I hit a point where I had to think about it because going

camping isn't bad, camping is fun. But it is bad if it's taking me away from what's important.

I didn't want to have to differentiate between camping with mates in my relationship with God even though I was beginning to feel that was the decision I had to make. And so at the start of this year, I decided to set a new way in my life, not one of segregating the things I like to do and the relationship with God I want to have but integrating them. I decided next time I went camping and it fell over a Sunday I was going to do a reading regardless and ask the boys if they wanted to join me for it. And so one time we woke up on a Sunday morning camping on sand islands in the middle of Lake Macquarie and we read something from Matthew and then we talked about it. It was a little bit weird at first, for some of the boys it was the first time talking about spiritual things outside of what their parents had taken them to when they were younger. But now it's a regular thing we do, to the point where if we are camping often I have a mate ask me if we will be doing church in the morning and they're excited for it. We were boys who are lazy with our faith, but since I decided to actively integrate it into a tonne of different aspects of my life, I have seen so many good works of God within that circle of friends. We began recognising the true worth of having God in our lives and it has completely changed the type of relationship we have with each other. We've developed our friendship into a fellowship.

I was chatting with someone else recently who was making a point to me that they didn't want the 'days of their youth' to be wasted. That they're not going to have the time and opportunities that they have now later on in life so they felt this urgency to experience facets of life that they didn't want to miss. Things like working in a small country town, travelling the world on a budget, living in the forest, then getting a dream job, reaching financial freedom, and then the rest. And obviously, these things aren't in essence bad, they're not things you necessarily have to be avoiding. But then this person and I began talking about how some of those things might make church life a little bit more difficult. **And then it became another conversation about how I manage my faith while managing my fear of missing out.**

We were talking about it and there was this moment of realisation. It was that by faith, our fear of missing out vanishes. People get so caught up in experiencing every experience in this

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life, they want to do this and achieve that, tick that off... Because for them, when you die, that's it. Your ability to experience is over. But we do not have to live with this fear, for we know that something incomparable and incomprehensible is coming. Let that melt away your apathy, let that deal with your doubt.

In dwelling on this topic, I have drawn three conclusions for myself, and I hope that these may help you deal with your doubt and help deal with the doubt of those people around you. Recognise apathetic attitudes in your faith, actively integrate your relationship with God into your every day life and the things you enjoy doing, and remember that God's promise is worth more than everything you could try to replace that with.

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