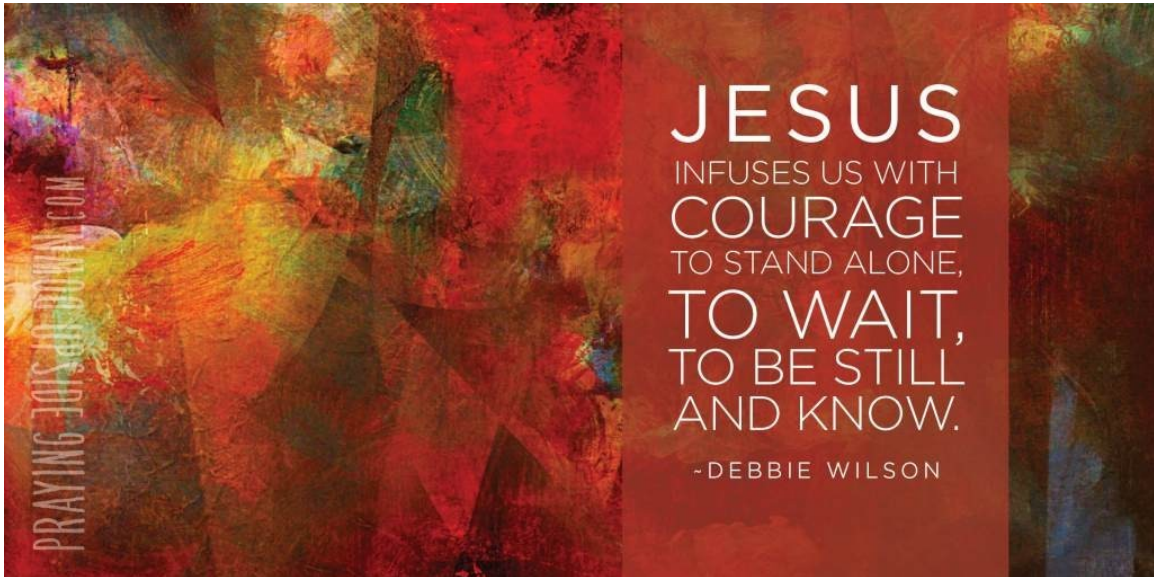


5 Tips for Dealing with Doubt And Identifying Destructive Thoughts



Time was ticking, and I had to give my decision. I knew what I wanted. But every time I thought about saying, “no,” doubt assailed me.

You're wimping out. If you had faith you'd say yes.

I've thought of doubt as a nebulous feeling of uncertainty. But, I've learned some doubts have a diabolical side. What feels like paralyzing indecision may be a taunt from the enemy.

The devil can plant thoughts in our minds. He gave King David the idea to take a census of Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1-3). He was behind the lie Ananias and Sapphira told Peter about a gift they gave to the church (Acts 5:3-5). He also sows destructive ideas in our minds.

Jesus called the devil a liar (John 8:44) and the thief who comes only to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). The Bible also says he's a slanderer and accuser (Revelation 12:10).

The better we know Jesus, the better we're able to identify Satan's influence.

I received an email from a friend asking me to send cash to help her because she'd lost her passports. Even though the email came from my friend's account, the message didn't sound like her. I spotted the hoax because I knew my friend. The better we know someone the less likely we are to be hoodwinked by an impersonation.

Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and follow Him. Below is an acronym to help you distinguish between the devil's darts and your Shepherd's leading. Protect yourself by learning to recognize the message or intent hidden in your doubts.

DARTS are:

1. **Destructive:** sent to rob and destroy. Their purpose is to draw us away from God's good and satisfying will. They push us toward something we feel uneasy about by causing us to doubt the validity of our reservations. Or they pull us away from something good. *You'll offend your neighbor if you invite her to Bible study.*
 - Jesus' words bring life and peace.
2. **Accusing:** condemning, criticizing, and blaming. They tell us how selfish and rebellious we are to want something or how cowardly we are not to do something. The devil misused Scripture when he tempted Jesus. If a verse oppresses you, the enemy is twisting it against you. *If you weren't so—selfish, cowardly, or unforgiving—you'd...*
 - Jesus never uses guilt, shame, or bullying to motivate us.
3. **Rule-oriented:** relying on standards for righteousness instead of Jesus' imputed righteousness. These thoughts tell us if we don't obey their bullying command then we aren't being loving or good Christians. For example: *Good Christians always sacrifice. If you don't help him how will he ever come to know Christ?*
 - Jesus reminds us that our righteousness is found in Christ, not in our performance.

4. **Tempting:** offering ways to meet your needs apart from God. *People will respect you if...or Hurry, you'll miss out.*
 - Jesus infuses us with courage to stand alone, to wait, to be still and know.
5. **Slandorous:** maligning the character of God, other people, or yourself. *God doesn't care about you. Or, Your spouse is so stubborn.*
 - Jesus reminds us that He is with us, for us, interceding, and guiding. His Spirit bears witness with ours that we belong to Him and empowers us with love and patience.

When God showed me the nature of my doubts, I was able to say “no,” with confidence. The next time you’re faced with confusion, ask yourself, “Is this legitimate doubt or a diabolical dart?” Then follow your Shepherd with confidence.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7 NIV).