

EXCERPT



Wandering Toward God *Finding Faith amid Doubts and Big Questions*

October 18, 2022 | \$17, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4717-4

Many Christians assume that doubt will lead us further away from God. However, professor and philosopher Travis Dickinson says that doubt is an important step on the way. It's possible to wander toward God as we ask our questions honestly. As we do, we'll discover the truth, goodness, and beauty of God waiting for us.

The Struggle of Doubt Is Not Sin

There I was in a seminary class, of all places, having a crisis of faith. We were only a few weeks into the semester, but I was seriously doubting my Christian beliefs. My growing-up experience was strongly Christian. If the church doors were open, my family was there, and we were involved. Generationally, my family had been doing formal ministry since at least my great-great-grandparents! And I was all in from an early age. Somehow I made it through Sunday school, summer camp, youth group, countless youth events, Bible college, summer ministry, and international mission trips without deeply questioning my faith. I made a commitment to Christ at a young age and just assumed it was true from that point on. At this moment in seminary it hit me like a splash of ice-cold water—the kind that takes your breath away. I had never seriously considered *why* I should think Christianity is true above all other worldviews.

I'm sure as a kid I asked questions along the way. But there's a difference between considering the truth of Christianity when everyone knows the answer and deeply considering its truth with a real possibility of it being wrong. There's the "let's have a fun discussion about Christianity" sort of considering. And then there's the painful, teary-eyed, scared to death struggle of considering whether it's really true. I had never done the latter until I found myself doubting in seminary.

It is quite common for Christians to experience doubts from time to time. Unfortunately, doubts about our Christian beliefs are often treated in the same way we would treat a common cold. We wait it out, treat symptoms as best as we can (perhaps with a good dose of prayer and Bible study), and hope it goes away. This approach might work for some. But for many others the doubts creep back in, and they return with friends! As the doubts compound, Christianity can begin to be unconvincing for this reason alone. Notice it's not for a lack of evidence. It's simply because there are doubts that are left untreated. Sadly, many abandon their Christian faith because they cannot find a safe place to admit and talk about their doubts. Rather than our questions and doubts being a part of the adventure as we wander toward God, without a safe place to doubt our faith, Christianity can feel like a fake.

My story is different. I leaned into my doubts. I asked those difficult questions in a lonely backroom of a church I had been given to work in while in seminary. I began to read. I had conversations with people further along in their journey than I was. I began to find answers. Even though I still had plenty of questions (and still do today), I began to see my way clear of some problems. I didn't fall away. In fact, I grew stronger. The irony is I became even more well-grounded in my faith. By leaning into my doubts, I came to a place of deeper faith.

How about you? Do you have questions? Are you seeking and searching? Are you doubting? If you have questions about Christianity or are struggling with doubt, I want you to know that *you are normal!* Hear this: *You. Are. Normal.* The honest struggle of questions and doubts is not sin. You are not failing. You are courageous—probably more courageous than others who act like they have it all figured out. I respect you. It's most likely that you are doubting your faith precisely because you are intellectually honest and are seeking truth rather than mere acceptance by your peers. This can be a lonely place, but please hear me: *You are not alone!* Some of the most ardent defenders of the Christian faith wandered toward God with doubts and big questions.

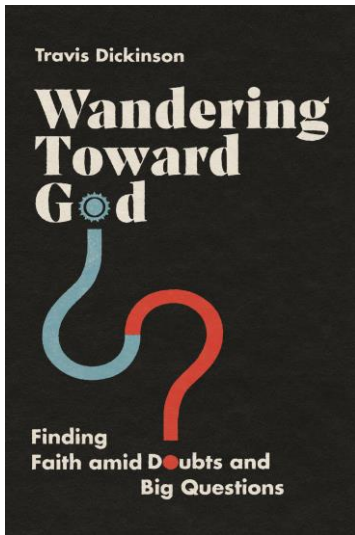


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



EXCERPT



Wandering Toward God *Finding Faith amid Doubts and Big Questions*

October 18, 2022 | \$17, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4717-4

"For a long time, we have needed an informed, fresh new guide in navigating through stormy waters of doubt. Careful to distinguish doubt from unbelief and offering an extremely helpful definition of faith (ventured trust), Dickinson's book has it all. It begins with chapters that clarify doubt, faith, and related notions, along with locating the place of doubt in the process of spiritual growth. It moves on to discuss strategies for dealing with doubt, and it provides accessible answers to specific topics often involved in doubt. A truly wonderful book."

—**J. P. Moreland**, Distinguished Professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, and author of *A Simple Guide to Experience Miracles*

For others who, like me growing up, have never really considered the reasons why you should believe, it's time to do so. Let me be clear. I don't want you to doubt your faith just for the sake of doubting it. Though doubting and deconstructing faith is a popular thing these days and though leaning into doubt can lead to good things (such as, a well-grounded faith), doubt is not good as an end in itself. But I do want you to ask questions. And hard questions often lead to having some doubts along the way. It isn't always easy. But here's the good news: you are reading a book that sees having doubts and big questions as perfectly compatible with having faith and as a normal and valuable part of the journey to a deeply grounded faith.

We don't want to stay in the grip of doubt. Again, doubt is not the destination. We may be wandering but we are wandering toward God. I want you to see that doubting our faith, when approached properly, leads us to knowledge and truth. Pursuing our doubts can bring us to a place of greater faith.

—Taken from chapter one, "Wandering but Not Lost"



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



Q & A



Wandering Toward God *Finding Faith amid Doubts and Big Questions*

October 18, 2022 | \$17, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4717-4

Travis Dickinson is professor of philosophy at Dallas Baptist University. He has taught courses in philosophy and Christian apologetics for over twenty years and has done apologetics and evangelism in more than thirty-five countries.

An Aim for Confidence, Not Absolute Certainty

In what ways do you see doubt as a way to get to a place of greater faith?

Travis Dickinson: Many Christians ignore or retreat from doubts and difficult questions about faith. On my journey, I leaned into my doubts and pursued answers to my questions. As Augustine might put it, my restless heart found rest in God in virtue of satisfying answers to many of my questions. I came to a place of greater faith as a result of my doubts, and I came to see that we need to learn how to doubt well. Christians have doubts and they have questions, but they need a guide for navigating this journey. This is the reason for the book.

What do you say to those who think that to doubt is to do something wrong?

Travis: Some Christians think to doubt is to do something wrong. My book provides an approach for Christians and seekers to ask deep and difficult questions for the purpose of knowing God more fully. Doubts and big questions are not only consistent with an unwavering faith, but they are a crucial part of its pursuit.

Do you think we should all doubt our faith?

Travis: I don't want people to doubt their faith just for the sake of doubting their faith. I want people to come to a place of unwavering faith by finding answers to the deep and difficult questions. They will very likely experience doubt along the process, but this is not the destination.

In your view, what is the path to a well-grounded faith?

Travis: We ought to ask deep and difficult questions about our faith, leaning into our doubts as they come, in order to have a well-grounded faith.

What are your hopes for readers who spend time with the words you share in this book?

Travis: I hope that in having spent time with this book readers can ask questions about their faith, and even doubt their faith, while placing their faith in Christ. I hope they see that faith is a ventured trust and not a blind leap. I hope they accept that they are going to have unanswered questions, and so they should not aim at absolute certainty but at confidence. There are good reasons to believe that Christianity is true, good, and beautiful. There are good answers to the questions about the violence in the Old Testament, the problem of evil, the problem of hiddenness, and Christianity's being culturally outdated. I hope they appreciate these ideas found within the pages of this book.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media