



First United Church of Oak Park

The Importance of Doubts for Faith

John 17:20-26

Caroline Lever and Samantha Duwe, Confirmands

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Caroline Lever:

Hi, my name is Caroline Lever and I am one of the confirmands this morning.

This past year in Quest has been a whirlwind of religious field trips, bible videos, and miscellaneous art projects in between extracurriculars and homework after school every day. Despite this roller coaster of an average week, I found myself calmly thinking on many a Sunday evening about what we had discussed in Quest that morning. Looking back, I should probably have been annotations or other homework, but I mean, hey, I passed freshman year!

Most of the things I noticed myself thinking about had something to do with reality. Throughout my Quest experience, our class talked a lot about science vs. biblical stories; if God is real, why does God let bad things happen; etc. For me, this was and still is the biggest issue I have with God. How can we blindly believe that God created the earth in seven days when there is undeniable scientific evidence supporting the Big Bang and evolution? It just doesn't add up.

Personally, I believe the sciency stuff because I am a big fan of cold, hard facts. But then we talked about it in Quest and I began to understand. You can still believe in a God without believing all the stories about them. It's like with friends. I can say without a doubt that all my friends are good people. However, every now and then I get somewhat annoyed with them, maybe because they chew obnoxiously loudly or don't cover their nose and mouth when they sneeze. I love my friends at all times, but somethings I just don't like certain aspects about them.

It's possible to love someone but be annoyed and dislike them at the exact same time. I think that's how I feel with God. I know I believe in a God, but it's hard to believe all of the stories. This realization helped me choose my confirmation verse, which is "For we walk by faith, not by sight." This community has helped me realize that God, while they might not be a physical being, is everywhere. Is God an old man sitting on a cloud in the sky? Is God even real? I have absolutely no idea. But having faith in a community that believes in God brings me closer to God every day.

Another thing Quest has helped me reflect on is the unity of First United. Every time I walk in here, I am greeted by smiles, hugs, and genuine conversations that I can't get anywhere else. First United is a community that embraces the questions and the doubts that I know we all secretly have. In Quest, we were allowed to air our grievances and talk out loud about our uncertainty with religion. Getting it all out there gave me better opportunities to feel closer with God and to everyone at First United. I encourage all of you to share your doubts, because talking about mine have only helped me become more confident in my faith.

Samantha Duwe

Hello. My name is Samantha Duwe and I am one of the confirmands today and a future member of council.

Faith is a powerful thing. It can give direction, purpose, conscience, and a sense of community. At least that is what faith does for me. For others, it may mean something different because we all have different values and faith is something that should reflect those. However, with faith comes doubt, something often seen as the opposite of faith. People tend to feel bad about their doubts, thinking that it makes them unfaithful. But doubt can lead to growth: a better understanding of ourselves and our faith.

An important point in an article we focused on this year, and that Evan just read to you, is that we do not doubt things that are overly simplistic. And faith is not a simple thing at all; it's complicated. The article states, "the only things we do not doubt are things like $2+2=4$. But who would worship a $2+2=4$ kind of god . . . a god you could understand would be less than yourself . . . only a god we could doubt is worth believe in." Only a God we could doubt is a God worth believing in.

I think this perspective on doubt has helped me when it comes to myself and my beliefs. It reminded me that doubt is something everyone has to confront, even when it is hard to admit. When I made my decision to be confirmed, I knew that doubt didn't have to be a factor because having doubts doesn't mean you don't have faith, too. It also says in the article, "where there is little faith, there is less potential for doubt. Where faith is towering, the shadow of doubt can be that much greater . . ." Meaning, we will have less doubts when our faith is small, but the greater our faith is, the more opportunities there are for doubt to sneak in.

We talked about a lot of different topics in Quest this year, many of them thought-provoking and impactful. But one of my big take-aways has to do with the bible. I came to understand and realize that you don't have to take the bible literally to have faith or to find meaning in the bible. The stories in the bible convey messages about the way we should live our lives which, in my opinion, is much more important than the small details. In different branches of Christianity and other religions, there is more focus placed on differences than commonalities, when we should be more focused on the faith and the foundational values and how we live those out. In our scripture today, Jesus is praying for love and unity for all people. That we are one with him, one with God, and one with each other. Not just Christians, but all people.