**DON’T BE SO LOGICAL**

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(John 20:19-31)

That disciple Thomas is hard to figure out, isn’t he? Thomas saw the many miracles Jesus performed, yet he hesitated to accept Jesus’ resurrection. He wanted proof, but why? Logically, Thomas should have accepted the resurrection since, as a disciple, he had witnessed many of Jesus’ miracles. But not our doubting Thomas--he apparently accepted some of the amazing things about Jesus’ life but, illogically, not all of them.

I guess I shouldn’t complain, though, because I’m a lot like Thomas myself. Maybe you are too. I’m not always logical, and I don’t like to admit it. True, most of us are logical with math and computers, but when it comes to people and relationships, we’re prone to be illogical. Logic may click when you’re playing dominoes, but it’s not for understanding what makes people tick.

Sorta like the Las Vegas gambler who wins big bucks at the Blackjack table using logic to tote up cards to 21. But illogically, he then bets his entire winnings on a single pull of the slot machine handle, and the casino gets all its cash back. Whatever.

And look at us Christians. We love some people, but illogically not others, even though God tells us to love everyone. We believe people are born sinners but act surprised when they sin against us. Not very logical. We pray for God to help us with some things, but not others. We anticipate going to heaven at the end of our lives, yet we fear death. We give money to the church but not to our needy neighbors. Logical it ain’t.

But whoever said people are logical? Certainly not the Bible. God told Adam and Eve it wasn’t right to take a bite out of the tree of life but, soon after, God heard the crunch of their forbidden lunch. Then illogically, Adam and Eve acted surprised when God ended their garden picnic.

Abraham believed God that he and Sarah would indeed have a son in their old age, but illogically, he got Hagar the maid pregnant, just in case. David wrote numerous Psalms about how much he loved and trusted God but illogically stole Bathsheba from her husband and had him killed. And even more illogically, Bathsheba then stuck with David. Go figure.

Peter illogically concluded he could walk on water along with Jesus: SPLASH! Paul illogically assumed God gave him the green light to break the Ten Commandments to martyr Christians. John the Baptist flunked logic when he expected Jesus to break him out of the royal dungeon. Pontius Pilot illogically claimed he wasn’t responsible for Jesus’ death since he, quote-unquote, washed his hands of the whole affair.

For sure, logic is a key facet of the human psyche, but it’s not the whole ball of wax. The feelings and emotions that make us human are hardly logical. And how logical is it to worship Jesus when we’ve never even seen him? We don’t believe in ghosts and spooks, do we?

If the opposite of logic is faith, does that mean logical people are atheists? Of course not, but it does show that we humans were created to function on more than one wavelength. The same creator who gave us logic, also gave us faith to believe in him and emotions to love him. Faith doesn’t clash with logic--they’re just two different human capacities plugged into separate AC-DC circuits.

Logic helps us determine why our car tire went flat, while faith helps us believe Jesus had a resurrected body. Faith and logic can co-exist if we’ll accept that our minds and bodies are separate, but co-existing, miracles in themselves. We have the capacity to believe objective facts of the mind right along with subjective emotions of the heart and spirit. God didn’t intend for people to be 100% logical--that’s for computers and those not-so smart phones.

Poor old Thomas--like us, he wanted everything to be logical, so he wouldn’t have to rely on illogical faith. When told of the resurrection, he scoffed, and off went his faith switch. Actually, I doubt that doubting Thomas deserves his nickname any more than fellow disciple Peter deserves our jeers for his many “foot-in-the-mouth” gaffs. Peter too had his doubts, or he wouldn’t have denied Jesus three different times.

And several other disciples dismissed the illogical rumors of Jesus’ trial and execution. Some of them even jockeyed to be top dogs in the earthly kingdom they logically expected Jesus to build as king of the Jews.

No doubt about it, doubt is definitely one thing we share in common with the disciples. Some Christians have doubts almost as strong as their faith, like the father who begged Jesus to grant him enough faith to believe Jesus could heal his demon-possessed son.

We doubt because we’re unsure what life’s about. We doubt because of the many things we have to do without. We doubt because our faith sometimes runs out. To doubt is to be human.

When we take stock of the fallen world and its never-ending uncertainties, trials, and confusion, is it any wonder we doubt? Health and poverty cause continuous doubt and worry for many. We doubt blue skies and sunshine will be around long before the dark clouds and storms return. We doubt there will ever be a lasting time of peace free of war and crime. We doubt our health, our happiness, and our financial security. We doubt anything and everything politicians say. We doubt, with great logic, that the Dallas Cowboys will ever win another Super Bowl!

We doubt God will bless us because of our sinful nature, even though we’ve received forgiveness, which some Christians also doubt. So, to cushion disappointment, we dampen our hopes and expectations--and keep on a-doubtin’.

But I have a hunch that God gives us a pass for doubting. Without doubts, we wouldn’t need a savior and shepherd, would we? God sent Jesus into the world to help us cope with the fickleness and frustrations of life that push our buttons.

So, do you have doubts about eternal life? Then listen to Jesus the master carpenter: “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if itwere not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” “Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.”

Doubts about sin and forgiveness? “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

Doubts about overcoming life’s sorrows and problems? Then accept Jesus’ invitation to “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

Any doubts about being loved and cared for? Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.”

Did you catch the how-to remedy for doubt in our gospel reading from John 20? How did Jesus deal with Thomas’ unbelief in the resurrection? Did he scold Thomas and call him an unbeliever? Nope. Did Jesus chide Thomas and demand that he try harder to believe? Nope.

Jesus simply showed his physical wounds to Thomas, and poof! Thomas’ doubt crumbled. Like Thomas, our struggling faith is also strongest in life when we encounter Jesus. And there it is in two words--the formula for winning the bout with doubt: ENCOUNTER JESUS.

Recollect how Jesus gently admonished doubting Thomas for wanting proof of the resurrection: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” Well, Jesus was talking to us right along with Thomas.

We’re blessed when we overcome our doubts about Jesus, in spite of not seeing him like Thomas did. In fact, we’re doubly blessed, because we see Jesus working in our lives, and so can others. When we have Jesus in us, he goes through us to others who don’t know him or who doubt him.

When people realize that you, like Thomas, have overcome your own doubts about Jesus, their doubts may fade, like the warm sun burning off storm clouds. People don’t need theology or a church service to encounter Jesus for the first time. They can see him in our unconditional love for them, accepting them just the way they are, as Mr. Rogers was so fond of saying.

Jesus accepted Thomas and his other dysfunctional disciples just the way they were, an illogical mixture of faith and doubt, logic and illogic. He didn’t judge them or assign them Bible verses to memorize. He simply said, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

Fish for people? How do we do that--buy a twenty thousand dollar bass boat? No, we don’t need a boat, fishing line, or fishing license. Just find someone who doubts that anyone really loves them; or who doubts their self-worth; or doubt they will ever find lasting happiness in an unforgiving world. Who better to resolve these doubts than those of us who already trust Jesus because of what he has done in us, for us, and around us? Christ will do it in their lives as well, as he continues to work in us.

But where are these people who feel unloved and doubt God? Just look around--they’re in every city, every neighborhood, every home, every workplace, and every church. People lost in doubt are everywhere. We live in a doubting society in doubting times. We’re running out of optimism and hope, so we swear more than we care; serve self and wealth; and lie more than we cry.

But as humbling, stumbling followers of Christ, we dare to care. We accept others, sins and all, and let the Holy Spirit take it from there. We encourage rather than judge. We give rather than take. We help others get a new heart and a new start. We make amends and say amens. What Christ did in us, he can do through us in the lives of those he leads us to.

Christ shines in and through us when we:

* Treat an illegal immigrant like a member of the family
* Over-pay a minimum wage worker
* Say something positive to a divorced spouse
* Greet a street person and buy them some fast food
* Overlook the slovenly appearance of an addict and hug them
* Forgive our boss
* Stop criticizing and complaining
* Give a job to an ex-con
* Smile at the tough guy downtown
* Soften our expectations for someone who can’t meet them
* Encourage the loser and the boozer
* Give someone a third chance
* Don’t exploit the customer
* Hold the hand of a lonely kid or shut in
* Wait an extra hour for the tardy
* Give an apology but don’t ask for one
* Look the other way, swallow our pride, and shut up even when we’re right

Actions like these make one thing very clear: God’s logic is just the opposite of human logic. We find it logical to serve ourselves, while self-sacrifice is God’s logic. No wonder we’re so full of doubt. Deep down, we’re doubting ourselves, and for good reason: we’re imperfect, fallen creatures who live in illogical ways. In this world, we’re all doubting Thomas’.

But when the son of God’s light shines through us to others, we can restore many a doubting Thomas. Removing doubt is what Christ is all about.

Say, can you do the two-step? It’s the dance that chases doubt away. Dance step number one: don’t let logic rule your life. Dance step number two: (Watch out, here comes the worst four-letter word you’ve ever heard): W-A-I-T. Yes, the antidote for doubt is to wait. Don’t do anything--nothing at all. Just wait. Wait on God. Let him take action--no doubt it’ll work out.

When you encounter logical thoughts or illogical feelings that make you doubt, don’t try to figure ‘em out. Let God help you escape. Trust Him to handle your fate. But give him time to get out of the gate. You can wait. Aw, Americans hate to wait; we want to act. Now don’t be like that. Just wait. W-A-I-T. We have the faith to wait; in fact, it’s the bait that feeds our faith.

Logic won’t help us, nor will doubt. Let God work it out. He can and will, but it takes His special skill. Do the two-step: step one; step two; then wait for God to dance with you! Amen.