

# be still and know

## how we find certainty instead of doubting

expanded study for journaling or discussion

The more we know, the more we realize how little we know. And this is both good and bad: It's great for humility, curiosity, and continued growth, but it's not always so good when you actually are right but you doubt yourself.

For example, a few weeks ago when we were helping friends move, we pulled into a storage facility right as some other people were leaving. The security gate was open to let us in, and then it closed behind us. We drove across all the rows of storage units, and...our friends weren't there.

"They said it's the one by the church, right?" Yep, that's what they said...but we're smart enough to know that there are things we don't always know, which means this *might* not be the only storage facility near the church. Maybe, after we got separated along the road, they went to some other place we're not aware of, because no one else in our party – which was originally a convoy of six or seven vehicles, including a giant U-Haul – were there.

We pulled back up to the closed gate and waited for the sensor to kick in. Buuut there was no sensor. Instead, there was a code box for customers...and we weren't customers.

Visions of passing Sunday afternoon locked in a storage yard with five kids flashed through my mind. Fortunately, the sign had the company's phone number on it, so I called that while Vince called our friend to let him know our situation.

My call went straight to voicemail. "Hi, we're helping some friends move," I began, "but we must've gone to the wrong storage facility–"

Vin, on the phone with our buddy: "Hey! We pulled into the storage place but–"

Me: "– the gate was open when we got here because some people were leaving, but then it shut behind them–"

"–uh huh...yeah, no, we're here–"

"– and we don't have the code to get out, so we're stuck inside. If you could call me back AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, my name is Shannon and my number is 907–"

"They're on their way," Vin said, hanging up. "They missed the turn."

" – what? Wait, they're coming? OHHhhh – Okay, nevermind, disregard, this is the right place and our friends are on the way, thankssomuchhaveagreatdaybye." It's fine, we're fine, please don't call the cops, etcetera, etcetera.

Moral? You can be right but still think you're wrong because you're early, or you're alone, or everyone else is wrong, or you're afraid, or a million other reasons.

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Have you second-guessed yourself or doubted what was right because you were...

- early or ahead of schedule?
- alone?
- everyone else was wrong, or just doing something different?
- afraid?

Are you doing that in a situation right now? Where do you feel over your head, struggling with doubt?

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When we know enough to know we don't know everything we need to know (kudos if you don't have to read that at least twice), it can be a little intimidating. Inhibiting. Unnerving.

In seasons of deep growth, we realize more than ever that there are so many people who already know what we need to know. In any given situation, there are people who can do this better. Who have the right answers, and all the training. Who don't make things awkward, or aren't accidentally rude (sigh), or had polished beginnings that make our raw edges seem to stand out all the more.

We feel over our heads in the deep end, but **Jesus is asking for trust and intimacy, not impressive performance.** Not back up plans, not fail-safe programs. Not our know-it-all, I've-got-this, watch-what-I-can-do mentalities. We like those things, because they puff us up and make us look good. But we've got some dying to the flesh to do.

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but wisdom is with the humble.

– Proverbs 11:2

So we have to know enough to know that we don't know everything.

But also, and just as important: **We have to remember that the Lord tells us what we need to know when we ask Him.**

If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.

– James 1:5

Do we really believe that, though? Because here's the next part, and it's where we tend to get hung up:

**But ask in faith, never doubting**, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

– James 1:6-8

Well, great, what does that say for us? *I thought this was the right place...but no one else is here...and I must've got it wrong somehow.*

But no, that's not doubting or double-mindedness. The "doubting" referred to in that verse is not condemnation for not knowing something, or being confused, or having a misunderstanding, or getting the rug pulled out from under you. **It doesn't mean we always have to be certain about everything.** God already knows we don't have all the answers; that's why we're asking in the first place.

In the original Greek, the word for doubting here is *diakrinó*,<sup>1</sup> and we learn more about it when we look at the root words it's made from: *dia*,<sup>2</sup> which means "through," and *krino*,<sup>3</sup> which means "to judge." So you could say that this doubting is "through our own judgment" – or, *arguing with God because we think we know better.*

Here's how it goes: We don't know, so we ask, and He answers. That seems like a simple flow chart, pretty straightforward.

But we tend to get muddled in the "He answers" part, because that's where the flow chart forks into two options: We either believe Him and act on what He said, or we doubt Him – *diakrinó* – and argue.

Because we do hear His answers, but sometimes before we have a chance to put our pants on and act on them, the enemy hisses into our ears, and it's the same thing he said in the very beginning. "Did God *really* say...?" And we start to have doubts.

*Did I really hear God? Was that really Him? Is He really that good? Is the answer really that simple? That full of joy? That much of a relief?*

Or, just as often: *But I don't want to \_\_\_\_\_ (wait, move forward, obey, abstain, be alone, whatever). It's too \_\_\_\_\_ (hard, radical, uncomfortable, soon, expensive, whatever). That must not have been Him.*

And there we are, a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind, double-minded and unstable in every way. In this case, we must not expect to receive anything from the Lord because He already gave it to us but we said, "Ehhh, I don't think so, no thanks."

Doubt is not the same as not knowing something, or being confused, or having a misunderstanding, or getting the rug pulled out from under us. **Doubt is arguing with God - not believing or trusting Him and His goodness.**

Let's sort this out. When is a time you felt confused, uncertain, or caught off guard?

How was that different from a time when God told you something, and you argued with Him?

Was your level of peace different in those situations? In which situation did you feel closer to God?

What is one situation you're asking God wisdom for right now?

What did He say?

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But also, sometimes we start to act on what He said, but then circumstances shift and we question the original plan.

After a year of no broody hens,<sup>4</sup> our darling Uno decided at the very end of summer that she wants to hatch chicks again. It's not the best time for it, especially in Alaska, because our winters usually start around mid-October.

So I searched "broody hen in fall" and scoured the internet for answers. And the consensus from chicken keepers all over, including cold climates, said Yes, go for it. But still, this is Alaska. So I prayed some more, hemmed and hawed, and discussed with the husband and kids. We all agreed, sure, let's do this. Uno and her eggs would need to be moved to a more protected coop, but we've done that before, no biggie.

We didn't know, so we asked, and got answers. Easy peasy.

And then we moved Uno...and she threw an absolute fit. Refused to sit on the eggs. Tried to rush us to get out of the new space. Clucked and scratched and rolled in the dirt. Poked her head through the fence to make faces at the other hens.

She totally *diakrinó*-ed, like she forgot that this is what she wanted in the first place. Meanwhile, the warm eggs sat in the neglected nest, getting cooler by the minute.

I wavered, and second guessed, and did a little *diakrinó*-ing of my own while I watched her fuss: *Should we have moved her so soon? Maybe we should've put her in the other spot. Or used the other box. Or left her for a few more days. Or, or, or...anything, because this doesn't seem to be working.*

But no, I remembered. We clearly heard *Yes, do this*, and we knew she had to be moved. She couldn't stay where she'd been because it wasn't a safe place to hatch chicks. And we couldn't move her to the other place she brooded in last year because it wouldn't be warm enough in the fall.

The Lord knows this hen and this process better than we do. We can trust Him. And we can remember that just because things don't *look* like they're working, it doesn't mean they actually *aren't* working. They're just still working out.

So, how do we know what's from the Lord, and what isn't? How can we be certain?

**We have to know Who we're dealing with.** When we know Him, we recognize Him. And when we look toward Him, we become like Him.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.  
And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror,  
are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another,  
for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.  
– 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

When we know Who He is, we know better who we are. And as we abide, we remember that we have the mind of Christ<sup>5</sup> and can know the things we need to know, and can reject the things that are beneath us.

**But be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.**

For if any are hearers of the word and not doers,  
they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror;  
for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like.

**But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere,  
being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.**

– James 1:22-25

Wouldn't we like to be blessed in our doing? We have to act on what we hear, *and persevere*.

**God is instilling in us the faith to walk in a little uncertainty and discomfort without doubting Him.** When we obey *and persevere*, we can handle the tension that comes between our act of obedience and the fruit it eventually bears. This is how we can be still and know.

After about 40 minutes – longer than I'd like, but not really that long in the scheme of things – Uno finally settled on her eggs. I peeked in on her, and she had knocked over the food and kicked dirt in her water and made a general mess of things, but she was sitting on those eggs like it was her great mission. (Which it is.) We both made it through the doubting and arguing and trusting our own judgment, and settled into trusting the Lord for a nest of chicks in fall.

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Are you struggling with any of these?

- doubting that you heard Him
- accepting (and not arguing with) His answer
- you obeyed, but the situation doesn't look like it's working out

What does persevering in obedience look like for this situation?

Read and/or copy 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 and James 1:22-25.

Ask the Lord, "How are you transforming me to look more like You in this situation?" What does He say?

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Can I throw one more wrench in the works here? One of the biggest reasons we doubt – or argue with God – is because we're actually afraid of what we want.

Often, we're afraid of freedom. Here's what that might look like:

- Fear of healing because it changes our routines, what we're used to, and how we (and others) see us
- Fear of Jesus following through with His word and promise
- Fear that it's "just what we want" and not really what God wants to give us
- Fear of what the Lord will ask us to do in return, as though we're making a deal with the devil – and ooh, do you see how deceptive that is?
- Fear that we'll get in trouble if we rock the boat instead of maintaining the status quo

...so it feels safer to doubt God's voice. Our judgment is better than God's judgment because He's really not as good as the Word says He is (but we would never say it that way, of course).

We know what we're already dealing with and we can just live with it. We *don't* know what change might bring, or if we can handle that – and if we're honest, that's because we're not trusting God in any of it. We are afraid, so we hang onto control instead of letting go in surrender.

If you recognize yourself in any of these thoughts, it's time to examine where those thoughts come from.

**Not all thoughts are our own thoughts.** Something flies into our head, and we *think* it's our thought because it sounds like our voice, therefore it must be from inside us...right? But we're horrified by some of what we hear, not knowing the depths of where those thoughts come from.

But no, they're not all from us. Many of them – particularly the ones that contradict the things we know and leave us feeling confused and double-minded in their wake – are planted by the enemy, attempting to get us to make agreements with him.

He whispers, "God doesn't love you" and even though we know that's not true, we wonder if it is...and the more we wonder, the more we slide out of truth and into agreement with the enemy. He sneers, "God doesn't want to give you that" or "God's mad at you" or "That's too good for you" or any other statement that rejects God's truth and goodness.

We can recognize these counterfeit thoughts by the instability and confusion they bring. *I know this is wrong; why am I thinking it? Or, I know this to be true; why am I having such a hard time believing it?* Because the enemy wants you to. We have to learn to identify and filter out those attacks, to take every thought captive.<sup>6</sup> And we do that by knowing which spirit we're dealing with.

It doesn't mean we always have to be certain about everything. It just means we have to be certain about God, and His goodness.

And without faith it is impossible to please him,  
for whoever would approach God must believe that he exists  
and that he rewards those who seek him.

– Hebrews 11:6

When we're in over our heads, we want our default to be trust and intimacy, not insecurity and performance. Because when our default is corrected, we move forward in boldness and peace.

We have to remember what we heard in the first place. **We have to remember that the Lord tells us what we need to know when we ask Him.** He really does.

God is offering us freedom<sup>7</sup> in the areas we've learned to be rigid, restricted, lazy, inhibited, intimidated, and stifled. When we trade those in for His freedom, we have the margin to be disciplined in the ways He actually wants us to be, which brings joy and beauty and order, rather than the empty pride of a checked-off box or feeling of superiority.

The old flesh is dying off, and we find life underneath it.

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As you ask the Lord for answers, are you fighting any of these fears? What does that look like?

- Fear of healing because it changes our routines, what we're used to, and how we (and others) see us
- Fear of Jesus following through with His word and promise
- Fear that it's "just what we want" and not really what God wants to give us
- Fear of what the Lord will ask us to do in return, as though we're making a deal with the devil – and ooooh, do you see how deceptive that is?
- Fear that we'll get in trouble if we rock the boat instead of maintaining the status quo

As you examine those thoughts, what lies can you identify that are at the root of them? List as many as you can.

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As you examine those thoughts, what lies can you identify that are at the root of them? List as many as you can.

For each lie, what is the actual truth that you need to remember and declare?

**We find great healing in confession and repentance.** A simple prayer you can make is, "Jesus, I'm sorry for agreeing with these lies. I know that \_\_\_\_\_ (insert the truths that confront the lies) and I repent of believing otherwise. I break off any agreement I've made with the enemy and I take my thoughts captive according to Your word, power, and authority. Thank You for growing me in freedom, maturity, and peace."

Read and/or copy 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Hebrews 11:6.

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## footnotes

1. <https://biblehub.com/greek/1252.htm>
2. <https://biblehub.com/greek/1223.htm>
3. <https://biblehub.com/greek/2919.htm>
4. <https://copperlightwood.com/2025/06/save-day.html>
5. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%20%3A6-16&version=NRSVUE>
6. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2010%3A3-5&version=NRSVUE>
7. <https://copperlightwood.com/2025/07/risk-it-all.html>

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Portions of scripture in **bold** are the author's emphasis.

This study is an expanded version of "Be Still and Know," an article that was originally published by Copperlight Wood here: <https://copperlightwood.com/2025/08/be-still-know.html>