

“When Doubts Arise”  
Jeremiah 29, 32  
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I have been a part of Young Business Leaders since 1984 and one of the exciting things that we have been praying about for these 20 plus years is to launch a women in the marketplace ministry. Over the last three years we have prayed and set up a couple of studies across the city with a couple of events but our biggest event happened a few weeks ago where we had about 235 women from the marketplace to come which was amazing. We heard from a woman who had taken over her husband’s business when he was killed in a plane crash and she was a single mom running a construction business. We have started to launch this ministry in a couple of cities so if you are interested please let us know here at Briarwood.

I’d like to start by asking you this question. What are some of the crazy things God asks people to do in the Old and New Testaments? He asked Abraham to leave a land that he knew and go to a land that He would show him. He asked Noah to build an ark and there had never been rain on the earth. He gave Joshua the strategy to march around the city of Jericho seven times on the last day. He asked Abraham to take his son, the heir that God had given him, to sacrifice him.

When you think about what God had asked these people you have to think they must have been confused initially and trying to figure God out. If you have never been confused about the will of God let me dismiss you right now. If you’re like me who tries to figure out all that God is doing then I think this message is for you. So let’s start by looking at Jeremiah 29 and we’ll see how people were confused as a nation and Jeremiah was confused as an individual. They are trying to make application here.

Jeremiah is a Prophet of God and he is to live this prophecy. His whole life was a demonstration of what God was going to do to Judah. He was also a Prophet who was to proclaim this to the people of Judah. God kept saying ‘didn’t you learn from Israel?’ Assyria took over Israel and they were following the same pattern only worse. The Babylonians are going to come and in Jeremiah 29 he is writing to the exiles.

Jeremiah 29:4–7 says [4] *“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: [5] Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. [6] Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. [7] But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”*

Basically it is saying you’re going to be conquered by these people you hate and these people who are going to destroy everything you have known that was good, this is where I want you to go and flourish in that city. Sound like an easy assignment, doesn’t it? Yet that is what He told them to do. God kind of explains it a little bit further down in the chapter.

Jeremiah 29:11–14 says [11] *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. [12] Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. [13] You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. [14] I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.*

This nation Judah had to wander. God, what are You doing here? Isn't there another way? In fact, Habakkuk asked God if there was another way when they needed to be punished. God said He was going to send the Babylonians to conquer them. Habakkuk said in the vernacular, that's not a good plan for that wasn't what he intended with that question. So this nation had this confusion and doubts as these questions came up.

Jeremiah also had some questions. You can imagine what God was asking him to do for his whole life. He and Isaiah both told God the people wouldn't listen to Him but Jeremiah 32 is a very interesting chapter. God tells Jeremiah to go buy some land from Hanamel his cousin but the only problem was that the Babylonians had already conquered that land. There was no way that Jeremiah was going to get that land and to the day of his death he never possessed that land. It's kind of like God saying go buy a house at the beach but I don't want you to ever go there. So Jeremiah was confused and probably thought 'Have I prophesied wrong about what's going to happen? Why are You asking me to buy this land from my cousin when I'll never see it?' So Jeremiah prays for understanding.

Jeremiah 32:16–25 says [16] *“After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD, saying: [17] ‘Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. [18] You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, [19] great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. [20] You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day. [21] You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror. [22] And you gave them this land, which you swore to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. [23] And they entered and took possession of it. But they did not obey your voice or walk in your law. They did nothing of all you commanded them to do. Therefore you have made all this disaster come upon them. [24] Behold, the siege mounds have come up to the city to take it, and because of sword and famine and pestilence the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. What you spoke has come to pass, and behold, you see it. [25] Yet you, O Lord GOD, have said to me, “Buy the field for money and get witnesses”—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.”*”

Jeremiah doesn't understand. He's confused. Have you ever felt confused saying 'God, I'm confused? God, I don't understand? God, I don't know what You're doing? Why have you allowed these circumstances to happen to me? Why this sickness? Why are my kids this way? Why are my parents going through this? Why didn't I get this promotion? Why are others recognized and not me?' There is confusion. There is wonder. This is where Jeremiah was.

What happens when we have this confusion that we don't understand? Our default is to generally have fears and doubts about God. We begin to doubt God's plan and His promises. The sons of Korah say in Psalm 42:1–6a, [1] *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. [2] My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? [3] My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” [5] Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation [6a] and my God.*

The Psalm goes on to talk about his questions, his hurt, his anguish, his depression almost. He ends the Psalm similarly by saying 'why are you cast down, oh my soul, hope in God

for He will deliver you.’ We have to do what Jeremiah did here for as he asked God the question he started recounting who God was, and what God had done. He began to preach the Gospel to himself. In my family we try to have some life themes as a family. One of them is don’t doubt in the darkness what God has revealed in the light. Don’t doubt in the hard times what God has already revealed. Here Jeremiah was trying to recount the goodness and greatness of God.

Matthew Henry says ‘We are bound to follow God with implicit obedience yet we should endeavor that it may be more and more intelligent obedience.’ It’s not wrong to ask the questions, it’s just where do we take those questions? Peter says to whom shall we go Lord for You have the Word of eternal life (John 6:68).

What are the source of our doubts? In the book In Two Minds by Os Guinness he talks about two sources of doubts and I’ve chosen for adding one from myself. He says the first one is in gratitude. When you read through the Old Testaments and Psalms in particular it constantly talks about how Israel is the nation for God because of what God had done for them but they constantly forgot God. When you forget you are ungrateful.

One of the things I pray for myself every day is that I will have a grateful heart. This past fall I found myself having a grateful heart with what I call an edge, where I would say ‘God, I’m grateful for this or that but I would have much rather You have done it this way or this is good as far as it is but can’t we go a little further?’ It wasn’t a whole hearted gratitude but more like a conditional gratitude. I don’t think you can be grateful and really doubt or fear God.

Another source Guinness points out is a wrong view of God. Certainly our view of God can be too small. We can make Him after our image instead of us being after His image. We had a speaker named Abdu Murray who was a Muslim who became a Christian who now works with Ravi Zacharias’ ministry. He had an atheist roommate and he said they had great discussions in college. Abdu said after he became a Christian he tried to share the Gospel with his roommate who had all these intellectual questions and after Abdu had answered all of them his roommate said ‘why would God allow a mother to die of cancer when the son was only 10 years old?’

That’s what happened to his roommate so his view of God was one that God was punishing him. Abdu said to him ‘Do you think an unlimited Being in power and knowledge could in that realm of possibility work that for good?’ His roommate really struggled with this at first but he realized that if God had infinite knowledge there would be the possibility that He could work it for good. Abdu led him to the Lord and his roommate became a Christian.

Since God has infinite knowledge and power do you think His plan might be greater than us? A lady asked F.B Meyer a question about prayer and said ‘Is there anything too small to ask God?’ Meyer said ‘Madam in light of who God is there anything big to God?’ We have a wrong view of God.

We can let our emotions get ahead of us and that can be a source of doubt. We can fear to believe that God has our best interest in mind which is kind of an offshoot of a wrong view of God. Here is my own view about doubts. Our misconceptions and misinterpretations of events get in the way. Confession is good for the soul but bad for the reputation.

I was at the mayor’s prayer breakfast this year and there were a number of people on the platform. In the news about every day is whether players in the NFL are going to stand for the National Anthem or not and I noticed when we had the National Anthem at the breakfast that everyone on the platform stood except one guy. All kinds of things started going through my mind when I saw this and then when they asked him to come up and speak he rolled his wheelchair up to speak. This story makes me look bad for what I was thinking about him but

think of how I was preconceived to think of something and I was totally wrong. What appeared to me to be negative, he ended up being a very impressive young man. So wrong misconceptions and misinterpretations can be the source of our doubt.

So what can we do? Remember who God is. I think every year we ought to read or reread a book on the attributes of God. He is holy, righteous, sovereign, good, merciful, faithful, omnipotent and omnipresent. He never changes. He is all knowing. Just go through the list. That is what Jeremiah did and God said the same thing. Jeremiah 32:26–27 says [26] *The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: [27] “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?”*

Remember who God is. Remember and reflect on your many blessings. We live in a country where we’re free. Think about Martin Luther and all he went through in terms of the Reformation and the battles back and forth with the state and the Catholic Church at that time. We can worship and believe what we believe. He has given us children, grandchildren, parents and spouses. Even for those whom we have lost, we can be grateful to God for the time He gave them to us.

Remember what sin does. Remember we live in a fallen world and that we’re flawed human beings. In counseling we hear all too often ‘all I wanted was a spouse that would make me happy.’ No one in this world can fulfill that dream. They will fail. We live in a fallen world. We are all sinful.

Remember only God is trustworthy and faithful. Remember that He had bound His happiness up in our good. J.I. Packard in the book Knowing God says ‘God has voluntarily wrapped up His glory, His happiness in us as His preachers as we love and serve Him.’ He is self-sufficient. He doesn’t need us but somehow in His sovereignty and His will He has bound His happiness and glory in our response. What an amazing statement! I would say life is not fair. What I see from the runway God sees from the air control tower and I have to trust Him through that.

Watch and pray for God’s answers. We are a favored child of our God so we can pray boldly, expectantly, and He commanded His Disciples in the garden to watch and pray. Paul says to pray with an awareness (Ephesians 1:18). Think about the parable of the faithful servant (Luke 12:35–48), those who are ambitious and trusting God with their talents and gifts. So we need to watch and pray for God’s answers.

Sometimes it just comes down to saying ‘Thy will be done.’ In that book In Two Minds by Os Guinness he talks about supposing us to be resistant fighters. Let’s say we’re behind enemy lines and we’re a part of the resistance. We are seeking to overthrow those that have captured us. One of us meets the leader of the resistance and he doesn’t look like or act like the way we think he is supposed to be but he says ‘I’m the leader of this resistance and I want you to trust me. You have to trust me even if it doesn’t appear that what I’m doing is for the good of the resistance because some of my actions may look contrary to what we’re trying to do.’

You might see this leader delivering people who are prisoners but then you might see him strategizing with what seems to be the enemy and it appears he isn’t on our side, but we met and know the leader of the resistance and we trust him. We trust that he knows what he is doing and that he has our best interest in mind. And that he wants to deliver us so that we can be free. I think that is a great illustration.

Every Sunday I like to walk from my house to the church. My house is not that far from the church. There is a song by Hillary Scott and it’s amazing what this song captures in terms of what this study has been about. These are the lyrics to Hillary Scott’s song *Thy Will*;

*I'm so confused  
I know I heard You loud and clear  
So, I followed through  
Somehow I ended up here  
I don't wanna think  
I may never understand  
That my broken heart is a part of Your plan  
When I try to pray  
All I've got is hurt and these four words*

*Thy will be done  
Thy will be done  
Thy will be done*

*I know You're good  
But this don't feel good right now  
And I know You think  
Of things I could never think about  
It's hard to count it all joy  
Distracted by the noise  
Just trying to make sense  
Of all Your promises  
Sometimes I gotta stop  
Remember that You're God  
And I am not, So*

*Thy will be done  
Thy will be done  
Thy will be done  
Like a child on my knees all that comes to me is  
Thy will be done  
Thy will be done  
Thy will*

*I know You see me  
I know You hear me, Lord  
Your plans are for me  
Goodness You have in store  
I know You hear me  
I know You see me, Lord  
Your plans are for me  
Goodness You have in store*

I think that is what God is asking us to do when our doubts and fears arise and we're confused. He says 'I'm the Leader, trust Me.' As we come to the communion table the greatest utterance of 'thy will be done' took place in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed in

Luke 22:42, [42] saying, “*Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.*” Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, we are grateful for what You have done. Thank You that even as God the Son, the Incarnate, the sinless One, in submission to the Father said ‘Thy will be done’ and as a result we are reconciled and rescued with You and we have the privilege of communion with You, the greatest need we’ve had since the Fall so we celebrate that with You as we come to this Table. Lord, for those who have doubts, fears and confusion, by Your Spirit, by Your Word, by the blessings of the evidences You have given us help us to trust You to be a faithful servant of Yours for we pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

### Power Point

#### WHEN DOUBTS ARISE

- I. When We Don’t Understand
- II. Fears and Doubts Arise
- III. The Source of our Doubts
- IV. What can or shall we do?
- V. Watch and Pray for God’s answers
- VI. Thy Will Be Done