

# Counselor's Corner

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**E**astertide brings the story of Thomas, often dubbed Edoubting Thomas. His utterance of "show me...And then I will believe" is his claim to notoriety. Show me, then I will believe...As post-resurrection people of faith, we too utter Thomas' plea, yet live more often in uncertainty rather than the certain belief. We treasure the Christ's words, "Blessed are those that believe and have not seen." Ironically, belief, to be vital and life-giving needs creative attention.

At a workshop I recently attended on Emotional Intelligence in Couples' Therapy, Dr. Brent Atkinson talked about assumed belief and its impact on our relationships with others. Often what we believe to be true about others will determine how we choose to act. For example, if I believe my partner is deliberately late just to irritate me, I may choose to respond with contempt or anger, feeling disrespected and mistreated. Or, if I believe my neighbor is nosy or too curious about me, I may choose to respond in fear or paranoia, protecting myself from her. Both of beliefs may be true, but maybe there are other explanations.

Our belief structure is not an easy process to change, yet if we are open to other possibilities, our optional

responses can multiply ten-fold. My spouse may be late because he was speeding and got pulled over. He may be late because he got a flat tire on the way home or he got a phone call from a dear friend that caused him to stop and talk safely from the side of the road. If I choose to believe something different than his disrespect for me, my greeting to him when he walks in the door might change from "why do you treat me this way?" to "how was your day?" Dinner might taste better as well! My neighbor may not be nosy, but rather lonely, missing human contact. She may not be curious but rather gregarious and an expert conversationalist who loves to talk. If I choose to believe something different about her, the wooden fence between our houses may fall apart rather than be replaced with thicker bricks.

Unexamined beliefs can build blinders or binders that keep up from seeing the truth. Beliefs, open to exploration and creativity, may bring deeper conviction, closer connections and clearer sight. Thank God for Thomas, doubting Thomas.



*Mary Keen*