



EXPOSITION

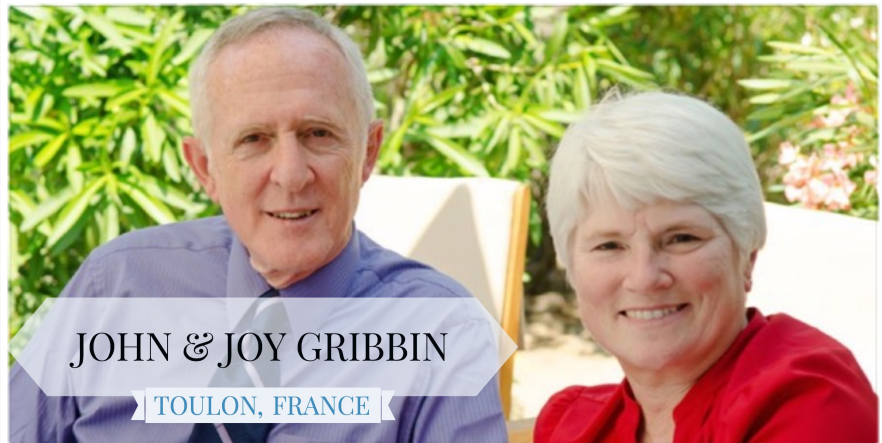
Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



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From My Window

The Wright Brothers by David McCullough is not just a story about the famous first flight in Kitty Hawk in 1903. It is a story of human perseverance. Two brothers — bicycle shop owners — were filled with what McCullough calls “unyielding determination” that man could fly. It took about four years for them to “crack the aeronautics code.” This included building kites to test their theories — only to watch them smash to the earth, listening to numerous people who thought they were “fools,” erecting a wooden wind tunnel to measure air currents, and finally, constructing a double-winged, 50 pound “man-carrying glider” without wheels! Their persistence led to the first-ever flight of twelve seconds! As I read this story of amazing resolve, I think of 1 Cor. 15:58: “Brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that you labor is not in vain.”



Alumni In Ministry Spotlight

John & Joy Gribbin (MBS, 2009) have been model missionaries of longevity and faithfulness to the call of God upon their lives. They have served in France with Missions to Military for 37 years. They have not only been reaching into the French military with the Gospel, but they have also been reaching the French people through their church. France is a difficult place to minister; it is not open to the Gospel. For example, in the Fall of 2016 they held two Bible conferences and passed out over 10,000 invitations, but less than a dozen people responded. Although John and Joy are retiring in 2017, we pay tribute to them for their dedication to Christ and thank God for their determination and perseverance. We love you, John and Joy, and pray God’s richest blessings upon you both!





Truth for the Agora: Are You a Doubting Worshipper? (Matt. 28:17)

We do not expect the terms *doubt* and *worship* to be spoken or written in the same context. The essence of doubt is hesitation, which is to experience an inner caution or reluctance to commit. The fundamental idea of worship, however, is to trust, adore, and give allegiance to one who is worthy of worship. It would be assumed that these words are mutually exclusive, but they are actually used *together* by Matthew in two extraordinary narratives.

The New Testament writers use the verb “worship” (*proskuneō*) over 60 times. It is a term that routinely expresses the believer’s adoration and devotion to God (Rev 4:10; 5:14; 19:10). What is most fascinating is its scarcity of usage in the four Gospel accounts to describe the relationship between the 12 disciples and Jesus. In fact, the Gospel writers use this term only three times to depict the 12 disciples adoring Jesus, and one is a *post-ascension* reference (Lk 24:52). Of the two remaining usages, both are found in Matthew, and both include the term “doubt” (*diatizō*) in the context. This fact alone pushes me to look deeper.

In 14:22-33, Matthew develops the well-known story of Peter walking on the water towards Jesus in the midst of a storm. At the climax of the story, Peter becomes afraid of the fierce wind and begins to sink into the sea. Upon his cry for help, Jesus immediately rescues him and says, “You have a defective faith, why did you doubt?” Upon joining the others in the boat, the disciples “worshipped him,” and for the first time in Matthew, they call him “the Son of God” (v. 33). The parallel passage in the Gospel of Mark adds a fascinating apex to this story: “their hearts were hard” (6:52). With this conclusion, Mark makes it clear that Peter was not alone in his divided condition. While all the disciples openly worshipped, they did so with hesitating hearts. They adored Jesus at the moment for their protection at sea, but their hearts struggled to give him the full allegiance he deserved.

The second time we read of the disciples worshipping with hesitating hearts is in the Great Commission passage at the close of Matthew’s Gospel (28:16-20). Seeing the resurrected Christ for the first time, “they worshipped him, but some doubted” (v 17). Matthew does not stipulate which disciples doubted, nor does he explain his words. But I echo the question Carson asks in his commentary, “Why [do any] doubt at all?” (*EBC*, 593). Matthew, however, gives the distinct impression that the disciples of Jesus were mixing worship with hesitation. What they saw had yet to fully affect their hearts.

To put these two passages into perspective, one must understand Matthew. He was part of an inner circle of 12 men who hesitatingly followed Jesus. Yes, he had left all to follow Jesus (cf. 9:9), but Matthew described himself and the other men with a *unique term* translated “little faith” or better, “defective faith” (*oligopistos*, 6:30; 14:31; 8:26; 16:8; 17:20). The disciples had the opportunity to walk with Jesus himself during those significant moments of history; yet they had hesitating hearts. They could not seem to trust him who controlled nature (14:22-33), and who rose victorious over the grave (28:16-17)! As for us today, I wonder . . . do we have hearts that are holding back though we publicly announce we are followers of Jesus? Are we like the disciples, worshipping but doubting?