

Lesson 2: Faith's Relationship with Evidence

- I. As stated in the first class, there is an inexorable relationship between faith and evidence.
 - A) Faith is not opposed by reason and fact—it is based up them and, in a sense, amplifies them
 - B) In fact, Christians and Unbelievers alike—though especially unbelievers—misunderstand this
 1. Quote from John Gribbin in the book *In Search of the Double Helix: Quantum Physics and Life*:
 - a) “Ask devout Christians whether they believe that Christ died and rose again, and they will say that of course they do. Ask them for evidence, and they will be baffled by the question. It is not a matter of evidence, but of belief; asking for evidence indicates doubt and with doubt there is no faith.”
 - C) Of course, the implication is that all faith is blind and that there is no real evidence that Christ died and rose again.
- II. Now, to be fair, the basic idea of faith is trust. When we believe in God and are willing to show that we trust Him by keeping His commandments the we have shown our faith.
 - A) But, we often misuse the word believe—which is closely related to faith—when we say things like “I believe that Fourth Avenue is four blocks down from here.” What we really mean by that statement is that we're unsure. This is not the kind of belief or faith that a Christian ought to have.
 - B) Christian faith—biblical faith—really means that we would be astounded if we were wrong—we're banking our entire eternity on it!
 - C) Biblical faith has three important traits:
 1. There must be an understanding of what we claim to believe. According to Acts 17:22-31, I must have some understanding of who God is in order to have faith in Him.
 2. We must be ready to act according to our belief. We cannot convince someone we have that strong a conviction without acting accordingly. Faith and obedience are often tied together in Scripture (Rom 10:16, Heb 3:7-4:11).
 3. And, we must have some reason for that belief. There is no doubt that many in the religious world have the kind of faith that our physicist friend highlighted in his book. To give the reason “Just because” when someone asks us why we believe what we believe, then we are clearly not ready to “give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).
 - D) In short, true faith—biblical faith—is achieved when we know *what* we believe, *why* we believe it, and are ready to *act* on our convictions.
- III. Faith and its importance as defined in the Bible
 - A) “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1)
 - B) “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and the He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:16)
 - C) We must believe that “God Is” and there is ample evidence—proof—to that end:
 1. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” (Psalms 19:1). These are not just glorifying words. Evidence/proof from nature is such that those who do not believe are “without excuse” according to Romans 1:18-22. In other words, our faith that God Is is based upon evidence—proof—that God Himself supplied!

2. We believe that God will reward those who diligently seek Him because the Bible itself is a testimony to the faithfulness of God. Hebrews 6:13-20 highlights how God gave and kept His promise to Abraham. Critics will question the infallibility of the Bible—we'll cover that in a later lesson.

IV. Faith and its relationship to proof (John 20:24-31)

- A) The basis for believing because of direct evidence, John 20:24-29: “Doubting Thomas” refused to believe the eyewitness testimony he had heard concerning Christ's resurrection—even testimony from Jesus' closest disciples. After Thomas touched Jesus' nail-scarred hands and spear-damaged side, he believed. Jesus allowed him to deepen his faith with direct physical evidence.
- B) The basis for believing with indirect evidence is found in John 20:30-31:
 1. Immediately following his discussion with Thomas, Christ proceeded to state that belief can come without seeing. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” We are expected to believe without seeing. We have not touched His hands or His side, we have not seen God, and yet we believe. We have written eyewitness testimony and we believe.
- C) It is significant that these verses immediately follow the recounting of Thomas' encounter with the resurrected Christ. We are expected to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God based mostly upon the evidence He presented while on Earth.
- D) Jesus is an historical figure. We now can only study indirect evidence. How do we know George Washington was the first President? How do we know that Abraham Lincoln lived? How do we know Aristotle was a real person? They are all historical figures and history records them having lived—those historical records are based, in part, upon eyewitness testimony that they lived and we also have things they themselves have written. Just because Christ claims to be the Son of God, doesn't make Him any less of an historical figure. The Bible contains eyewitness accounts of His having lived on this Earth. There are also uninspired historical works who describe a man named Jesus from Nazareth who was condemned on a Roman cross. For example, this is in Book 18, Chapter 3 in “The Antiquities of the Jews” by Flavius Josephus
 1. “Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”
- E) This is exactly the point in 2 Corinthians 5:7 where it says we walk by faith and not by sight. We do not need to have seen Christ to believe—we can believe based upon the testimony of others and the testimony of nature.

V. Faith does not, however, require a complete and perfect understanding of everything of deity. We cannot know, for example, everything there is to know of God—we can only know what He has told us.

- A) 1 Timothy 6:16 says that God dwells “in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see,”
- B) Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us that God's ways and thoughts are higher than man's.
- C) There are simply some things beyond our ability to comprehend about God, yet He expects

us to put our trust in Him anyway!

VI. Faith also does not require us to understand why God has done things the way He has.

A) When Abraham obeyed God by faith, he didn't know where he was going (Heb 11:8).

B) Faith should be easy! We don't understand everything there is to know about the engine in our car, but we put faith in that engine every time we turn on the key—we believe that it will work, based upon our past experience with it. And, from time to time, we have probably all experienced our engine failing us. If we can put faith of sorts into an ordinary, imperfect thing that fails, how much easier should it be to put our true faith into the One that will never fail?

VII. Consequences of faith:

A) Our faith in God gives us reason to live, to love one another, to give, to grow in knowledge of the scriptures and to have hope. Ephesians 2:12 describe those without faith as “having no hope and without God in the world.”

B) Acts 8:35-38. True faith makes us act—as we have heard many times, our faith should cause us to obey. That obedience enables salvation. So, understanding evidences, through increasing our faith, will help us “gird ourselves” to work out our salvation!