





# THE FAITH QUESTION

The One who doesn't *need* anything, *wants* you.

BY ERIN CASEY

From the beginning of time, humans have looked for guidance—for hope—from something or someone outside themselves. Ancient religions looked to nature, idols or symbols. Today, people tend to trust in what they can see or possess: a home, money, family, even celebrities.

## THE FAITH QUESTION

The problem with putting your trust in possessions or people is that sooner or later they prove fallible or temporary. The devastation wrought by the fires in Southern California left thousands of people without homes and destroyed the belongings they worked years to acquire. People, whether a parent, a spouse or a celebrity, can be fickle. Parents, though they try not to, often fail their children. The divorce rate is a clear indication that people can hurt others with their actions... or simply change their minds. And celebrities? Even those who maintain their integrity under the pressures of stardom are not perfect, nor are they permanent. Sooner or later they'll grow too old for the camera and, like the rest of us, come to the end of their years.

The question becomes, then, is there anyone we can trust with certainty—someone who never changes and will never fail us? Throughout history, only one being has been recognized as perfect, all-powerful and unchanging.

### The Self-Existent One

When the Israelites were suffering as slaves in Egypt, the Bible says God heard their suffering. God told Moses that he had seen the abuse the Israelites were enduring and that he was answering their cries for help. And, more than simply freeing these people, God's plan was to give them their own land. He had selected a place where their crops and herds would flourish. (Exodus 3:7-10)

God chose Moses to go to Egypt to free the Israelites from Pharaoh. But Moses didn't think he was the man for the job. He tried to argue his way out of the assignment. Finally Moses asked, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?" (Exodus 3:13 NIV)

God's response was definitive and puts the permanence of his *being* in perspective.

God told Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' ... Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the

*God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.*" (Exodus 3:14-15, NIV)

I AM. LORD. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was recognized by Hebrews in the Old Testament (and by Jews and Christians today) as *the Almighty*, the Creator.

The use of all capital letters in the name LORD was purposeful. It specifies the Hebrew name for God, *YHWH*, which is often translated as *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*. This was the most holy or respected name for God and it is defined as the "Self-Existent One."

Self-existent. It's a concept we have a hard time understanding. For humans—indeed



for all life—there is always a beginning. But God is without beginning; he simply is.

### You Are Wanted

He exists without need for anything, and yet he created our world and all of its inhabitants—you. Why? Not out of need, but out of desire. God wanted you.

God desired a relationship. In Deuteronomy 6:4, immediately after Moses introduced the Ten Commandments, he tells the people, “The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.” (NLT)

Throughout the Bible, and even today, God shows his compassion and intense love for his people, not wanting them to suffer, but to prosper. And he wants our love in return. In truth, if God could create the entire universe and human bodies so scientifically complex, he could have created us with an inability to not love him. But he didn't. He gave each person the ability to choose to love him and to put our trust in him.

### Faith for a Better Life

The Self-Existent One is unchanging. God describes himself as “The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.” (Exodus 34:5-7, NLT)



## The Case for Faith

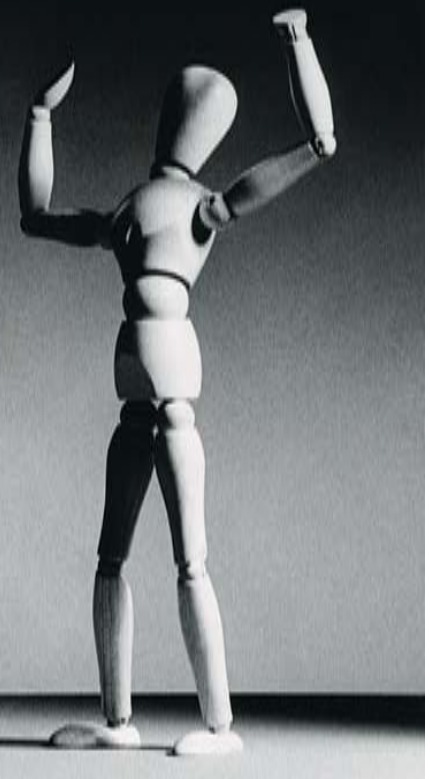
Faith isn't always easy. For some, questions block the path to total belief in God and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Former atheist Lee Strobel is an exceptionally critical thinker. As a journalist covering the legal beat for *The Chicago Tribune*, asking questions served him well. Never content to take things at face value, Strobel took his toughest questions about faith, God and Jesus to task. He interviewed who he refers to as “the most knowledgeable and ardent defenders of Christianity” and documented his conversations and discoveries in *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity*.

The questions and beliefs that perplexed Strobel are shared by many. Questions like, If there is a loving God, why do evil and suffering exist? How could a loving God allow innocent children to be killed? Strobel also addresses how the inability to scientifically explain miracles too often stops people from fully believing that God exists and that he is exactly what the Bible says.

If you or someone you know is searching for answers to questions about God, the first place to look is the Bible. It's a road map laid out to bring people to a better understanding of the Christian faith. The answers it holds can be tested and proven without contradiction. Another helpful resource is Strobel's book, *The Case for Faith*.

Faith is personal. It's not something that can be decided for you by your parents or your spouse. Before you determine what to believe, do your research. Study the Bible for yourself, seek people who can help you address the questions that may be holding you back. Because without question, what—or in whom—you believe, matters.



If God had just freed the Israelites, that alone would have demonstrated his love. But his plans were greater than anything those tortured people could imagine at the time. As with Moses, God's plan for our lives is always more significant than our own plan. By trusting God to lead the way, Moses' life, and the lives of the people he led out of Egypt, changed forever.

Because God is unchanging, he still desires more for his people. And by accepting his word and his son, Jesus Christ, on faith, we, too, are promised a better life than we can imagine. Following him is the first step to enjoying a more fulfilling life on earth. And, better still, it's the first step to the promise of eternal life in heaven. ❖