

Life Takes Faith

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD?

by Erin Casey

It's difficult to go through the day without faith, even if you don't consider yourself a spiritual person. Whether getting on an airplane or going to college, life takes faith.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines faith as unquestioning belief, complete trust or confidence. The Bible defines faith this way: *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.* Hebrews 11:1.

It is with hope that thousands each day entrust their lives to the pilots, crews, even the machines to get them from point A to point B safely. And college? How much faith does it take to invest years of one's life and tens of thousands of dollars in a pursuit to someday find gainful employment? The only thing colleges guarantee is a piece of paper acknowledging graduation—if you graduate. They can't promise a job or an income to anyone hoping to create a better life for themselves in the future.

Yet we hop on airplanes without a thought and expect our children to attend college.

Why then is it so difficult to have faith in God and His son, Jesus Christ? Evidence of God's design is visible throughout nature. The perfect arrangement of the planets, the impossibly complicated inner workings of the human brain, even the detailed symmetry of a spider are all evidence that God exists. While He remains unseen, evidence of his presence is everywhere.



Faith & Facts: Is the Bible Trustworthy and Relevant Today?

Written over a span of 1,500 years by more than 40 authors in three languages with one congruent message, the Bible has withstood the test of time. Throughout the ages, rulers have tried to eradicate the Bible and Christianity. And yet, while these formidable adversaries conquered nations in their attempts to wipe it out, they are long since gone while the Bible and its message remain.

Put to the Test

Evidence of the Bible's reliability far surpasses those of other ancient writings. The precise system the Jewish scribes used to copy the text from scrolls is only one example of the care that was taken to set down the manuscripts that exist today; when evaluated against other ancient writings, none compare to their number and timeliness. When put to any number of scientific, bibliographical and historical tests, the Bible has more evidence proving its accuracy and reliability than any comparable document of its age.

Amazing Relevancy

The topics discussed in the Bible are as relevant today as they were 2,000 years ago. Money, greed, sex, divorce, relationships and childrearing are only a few of the many issues and temptations with which we grapple today. As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes, "there is nothing new under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

Come to Your Own Conclusion

One of the most valuable lessons my father taught me was to never be satisfied with someone else's version of the truth, especially when it came to the Bible. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell offers additional insight and resources for learning more about the statements made here about the Bible's reliability. As for its relevancy, study the Bible and compare for yourself its message with the issues we face today.

Who's in Control?

If the Bible is reliable (see sidebar), why is it difficult to believe that God created you on purpose, for a purpose and that His plan is greater than any you could design for yourself? Maybe one reason it's difficult to have faith in God is because it requires admitting that we're not in complete control of our lives. But whether your faith is placed in God or in the people in the oncoming highway traffic, the reality is there's very little in life over which we have complete control.

From Psalm 139:13, "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb," (NLT) we know God intentionally creates each person. He also has a plan for each person's life. In Jeremiah 29:11, the prophet Jeremiah relates God's word to His people saying, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. 'They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.'" (NLT) God then offers to answer His followers' needs in verses 12-13. "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek with all your heart." (NIV)

Jesus reissues that offer in Matthew 11:28-30, "Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.'" (NLT)

Unlike an invitation from a college, this offer is open to everyone—regardless of race, financial status, age or education—and it comes with a promise. "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:16-17 (NLT)

The only thing required to take advantage of this offer is faith.

The Difference Between Faith & Religion

Too often, the perceptions some people have about faith become entangled with religion. Religion is a human way to describe, define or deal with faith. Religion is not a critical aspect of faith. Similarly, some people have the potential to confuse religion—rules, regulations and rituals—with faith.

The church is not a place. It's not a building. The church is not a denomination. A church is a gathering of people who share the faith that Jesus Christ is God's son and their Savior. Christians meet around the world in homes, and in buildings large and small, to learn about and worship God together.

And because the church is comprised of humans, no church is perfect. People, by nature, fail every day. We let our temper, our selfishness, our doubt and our pride trip us... that's why we need a Savior. In Romans 3:22-24, the Apostle Paul explains that the gift Christ offers is freedom from and forgiveness for our faults, shortcomings and sins. "We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." (NLT)

By attending a church that seeks to answer questions of faith with the truths found in the Bible, you're likely to find a place where you can grow in your faith and relationship with Jesus Christ. When you're there, keep in mind that everyone is on a level playing field, everyone has been offered the same freedom and forgiveness. Also realize that everyone, even those honestly searching for truth, slip up regularly. But, thankfully, through faith, we have hope—even assurance—of a better future. ❖