

The Christian Faith is an Evidential Faith



Is There Any Other Kind?

Sometimes Christians have a mistaken definition of "faith". Because faith is sometimes described as believing in things that cannot be seen, Christians often think of faith as an act of believing in things that have no evidential basis. In essence, some Christians believe that "true faith" is believing in something in spite of the evidence or believing in something when there is no evidence to support the belief in the first place!

But this is not the Biblical definition of faith. While it is true that God is a Spirit and cannot be seen, it is not true that there is no evidence to support the existence of the unseen God. While we may not see anyone throw a rock in a pond, we may indeed see the ripples that the rock created on the surface of the water and come to the belief that someone threw a rock into the pond on the basis of this evidence. In a similar way, there are many good reasons to believe that God exists, and the Biblical model of true faith involves examining the evidence for God's existence.

The Christian life is more than a life of blind trust. It is a life of rational examination that challenges each of us to evaluate the evidence, form a conclusion and then share that conclusion with the world around us. Let's examine the Biblical model of evidential faith:

1 Christians Are Called to Use Their Minds

God tells us that we are to love Him with more than our heart. We are to have a relationship that is emotional and intellectual:



Matthew 22:37-38

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment."

When we examine our world and the evidence for the existence of God, we are worshipping God with our mind and this kind of worship pleases God.

2 Christians Are Called to Understand the Value of Evidence

God has given us a number of good evidential reasons to believe that He exists and that Jesus is who He says He is. We are not called to have blind faith, but to have a well reasoned, evidential faith:



Acts 1:2-3

...until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.



Acts 17:2-3

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths

reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead



Acts 17:30-31

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

The Greek word used for “proof” in Acts 17:31 is “pistis”. The word is derived from “peitho” which is a Greek verb that means “to convince by argument” that something is either true or false. The word is also used as a verb to describe one’s “assent” to a point in light of the evidence, or to describe the inner “certainty” that one can have as a result of trusting the evidence. But interestingly, this word that Paul uses for “proof” here, although it is used in 244 other places in the New Testament, is never translated elsewhere as “proof” or “evidence”. In every other appearance in the scripture, this word is translated as “faith”. The Biblical notion of “faith” is to place one’s confidence and trust in something that can be demonstrated with “proof”, “evidence” or a “convincing argument”. Biblical faith is not blind; it is rooted in evidence.

3 Christians Are Called to Examine Their Beliefs

God wants us to know what we believe and why we believe it. We’re not called to numbly trust everything that might be taught in our world today, even if some Christian teacher is the source! We’re expected to be critical, skeptical and thoughtful:



Acts 17:10-11

And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.



1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good...



1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Skepticism is important to the Christian faith; skepticism causes us to examine what we believe and search for the evidence that confirms our beliefs. God honors this kind of skepticism because He knows that it leads to a deeper faith in Him. There is a place for skepticism in the life of the Christian because it causes us to “examine the Scriptures daily”.

4 Christians Are Called to be Convinced of What They Believe

God wants us to be certain and base our certainty on evidence that can be articulated to others who may have doubts:



Romans 14:5

Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.



2 Timothy 1:8-12

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.



2 Timothy 3:14

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them...

Conviction is the result of certainty, and certainty is the result of evidential confidence. We are called to be convinced by mastering the evidence that supports what we believe. The Christians life is not one of “wishful thinking” or “hope in the unreasonable”. It is a life of certainty, grounded in the evidence.

5 Christians Are Called to be “Case Makers”

Once we have examined the evidence and have come to the conclusion that Christianity is true, we are called to be ready to make a strong defense for what we believe:



1 Peter 3:15

...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence...

The Christian life is a rational and reasonable life that is rooted and grounded in the evidence of the Resurrection and the truth of the Bible. Christians are saved by placing their trust in Jesus, but Christians become a powerful force in their world when they commit themselves to being “case makers” for what they believe.



It's All Because of Evidence

Christians can be “case makers” precisely because the Christian faith is an evidential faith. When we, as Christians, argue for the truth of the Christian Worldview, we are not sharing an opinion. There either is a God, or there is not. Jesus is that God, or He is not. Salvation comes through Christ alone (as Jesus Himself maintained), or it does not. This is not a matter of opinion, personal preference or wishful thinking. The Christian faith is grounded in evidence that can be assessed and evaluated. The Christian faith is an evidential faith.