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What Drives Christian Faith?

James 1:2-3: (NASB) ²*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*

Is Christian faith different? Is it somehow more magical or extensive than the faith of other religions? Is it less credible than the faith we have in science or medicine? Is Christian faith based on long-standing traditions, feelings, the Bible, or what church you go to? Is Christian faith transformative? Should Christian faith be a recommended staple in everyone's diet?

What is faith?



 **An anomaly that won't survive, *The Meaning of the 21st Century*, James Martin (film, based on a book of the same title)**

- *Each of us can contribute on a daily basis to the elimination of our species. We are just sort of exceeding everything. We are outgrowing the earth, in a sense. We are well beyond the point of no return. No one can afford to remain ignorant of these issues and not do something about them. This is our make or break century. It's probable that we can be much better off than today by the end of the 21st century. What is absolutely certain, however, is that we can do this only by being careful with our planetary capital. We are the first species that can plan our own destiny, but on an evolutionary time scale, we have been here only the minutest period of time. It could be that we are an anomaly that is not going to survive.*

On this program, we will talk about having a "Faith Factor," a takeoff on the television show, "Fear Factor," where people compete to face their fears. What is the basis of the Faith Factor in this film? The participants are putting their faith in humankind to change the destiny of the world.

Hebrews 11:1: (Rotherham) *But faith is of things hoped for, a confidence, of facts, a conviction, when they are not seen...*

Interestingly enough, "confidence in things that are not seen" is also a definition of fear. Faith is confidence things will work out; fear is confidence they will go wrong, thus the Fear Factor vs. Faith Factor.

This next story is a dramatization of a story of a college professor who challenged his students about faith in God.

 **How is this God good, *FAITH*, Pan Pacific Film Festival**

- *Is God all powerful? Is God good? My brother died of cancer, even though he prayed to God to heal him. Most of us would attempt to help someone who is ill, but God didn't...how is this God good?*

This might make you think of **James 4:3:** *You ask and receive not because you ask amiss.*

The New Testament only uses one Greek word for "faith:"

Faith: Strong's #4102, persuasion, credence, conviction. Reliance (esp. upon Christ for salvation) constancy (in such profession). (By extension the system of religious) truth.

But the same word was translated as *assurance* here in Acts: **Acts 17:31:** (KJV) *Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given **assurance** <4102> unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

What is the basis of the "Faith Factor" of the *assurance* in this text?

True faith can be described as trust, which implies that there must be some reason or reasons for the trust to even exist. Here the Apostle Paul uses a factual event, the resurrection of Jesus. He is given assurance/faith in that God raised Jesus from the dead. He uses this as proof that God will do what He says will come to pass.

Credulity (noun): readiness or willingness to believe especially on slight or uncertain evidence (gullibility)

Often Christian faith is looked at by those outside of Christianity as credulity, but that is not the case. Biblical faith has surety and conviction behind it whereas credulity has only a willingness to believe. We need to all know *why* we believe what we do so that it can be transformative in our lives. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are always to have a reason for our hope.

Is faith a necessary part of life?

A “living faith” requires action! Hebrews 11:6: It is not possible to please God without faith.

 **What if truth no longer was, *Losing Faith in Faith, Post-Modernism, YouTube***

- *What happened is at some point we realized that we were in a seam of history where the bedrock of our civilization that we believed would be unchangeable - the progress - the very notion of progress, the notion of truth, the reliability of reason, our trust in the historical process was somehow collapsing. This began to be talked about as early as 1979. There was a French philosopher named Jean-Francois Lyotard who spoke about what he called “the canopy of truth” that was collapsing. What he meant by that was that we grew up in a time where you discuss what is true and what is false. You give five reasons why this is true. But what if the whole concept of truth is under attack? What if people are not even sure if there is a truth to be known?*

What is the basis of the “Faith Factor” in this philosophical approach? Truth has become “what I think it ought to be.” Truth becomes relative to where I am in my life and what is good or right or true for me personally. That creates a big problem in society.

True faith is solid ground to stand upon. Matthew 8:26 Psalms 107:29 Psalms 31:1

...Continue in THE faith: Colossians 1:23: The faith is already in place. It does not have to fit what we individually like because it is something bigger than us.

Our faith can be based on many different things:

- Science: A system of knowledge based on study and observation
- Medicine: The science and art of preventing and curing disease
- Opinion: One perception of reality versus another
- Preference: A personally preferred perception of reality
- Tradition: Specific patterns of the past used as a template for the present and future
- History: Using the accounts of the past as a tool to prepare for the future
- Astrology: Relying on the alignment of stars and planets as tools to plan your life
- Prophecies: Nostradamus, The Mayans etc...
- Paganism: We are the gods
- The Secret: The concept that the universe waits for your direction to fulfill your life
- Atheism: The belief that God does not exist or should be ignored
- The Bible: A book of history, prophecy, philosophy, tradition, medicine and science

The bottom line is that all of the above approaches to life or parts of our life rely on faith. We all have faith. Is our faith strong; is it credulity or a mixture of the two? In many of these cases, our faith is well-placed, necessary and will yield life enhancing results - such as faith in medicine and faith in the Bible. In other cases, our faith would be better placed elsewhere.

Jude 1:3: ...not a faith you make up as you go, but the faith of the saints. We can have faith in God’s plan for the ultimate redemption of mankind.

Is faith appropriate for children?

Matthew 7:7-11: Do we not want what is best for our children? How much more does God want to give to us? What better gift do we have to give than faith that produces gratitude?

Proverbs 22:6: God has a plan and it is His will that all men should be saved.

Multi-generational faith is reflected in the Scriptures: 2 Timothy 1:3-7

The progression of faith: Romans 10:14-17



))) **Real faith releases miracles, Bill Winston, preacher**

- *What is faith? Confidence in God! This Gospel was never meant to be preached with all this revelation and no proof. When you start operating in righteousness, the miracles will take place. (Yelling) But if you've got no self-esteem...if you are always intimidated, if you're living so close to the world that, like Sampson, all of a sudden you lose your strength because you think more of Delilah than you do of Jesus...*

What is the basis of the "Faith Factor" in this Christian perspective? A lot of emotions and excitement of the moment. Will that drive you to live a changed life? We believe the recipe for real, true faith is building the foundation of faith brick by brick, proving things to be true.

James 4:3: We are not to ask from a standpoint of ego.

Is all faith the same?

))) **No faith in God or immortality, outgrowinggod.com**

- *Without religion we would no longer have faith in an invisible God to give us hope. Instead, we would have to find hope in the proven potential of the human intellect, the intensity of our will to survive and the depth of our capacity for goodwill. Without religion, we lose the promise of immortality on the far side of death. We would instead be left with the sober conclusion that this life and our present reality is the only one we have, and as such we need to make the most of it.*

Again, what is the basis of the "Faith Factor" in this approach? The faith in human intellect and compassion.

What about Paganism? (From a pagan website) "Paganism is a religion of nature, in other words Pagans revere nature. Pagans see the divine as immanent in the whole of life and the universe; in every tree, plant, animal and object, man and woman and in the dark side of life as much as in the light. Pagans live their lives attuned to the cycles of nature, the seasons, life and death. The Bible tells that man was made in the image of God. The Pagan gods and goddesses of the ancient Pantheons are made in our image which is the other way around."

Paganism's origin: Genesis 3:4-7: Satan presents the temptation to *be like God*. He was the father of Paganism right at the beginning. It is a misrepresentation of God's true will for mankind.

Proverbs 16:18: (NKJV) *Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

(Source: Wikipedia) Atheism is, in a broad sense, the rejection of belief in the existence of deities.The term *atheism* originated from the Greek *ἄθεος* (*atheos*), meaning "without god(s)", used as a pejorative term applied to those thought to reject the gods worshipped by the larger society... The first individuals to identify themselves using the word "atheist" lived in the 18th century. Arguments for atheism range from the philosophical to social and historical approaches. Rationales for not believing in any supernatural deity include the lack of empirical evidence, the problem of evil, the argument from inconsistent revelations, and the argument from nonbelief. Although some atheists have adopted secular philosophies, there is no one ideology or set of behaviors to which all atheists adhere.

The biblical definition of Atheism: Ephesians 2:11-13: (NKJV) ¹¹*Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹²that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world.** ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

Without God: Strong's #112 *atheos* (ath'-eh-os); godless KJV-- without God.

It takes great faith to be an Atheist!

What makes Christian faith different?

The Bible teaches us to prove our Christian faith - to NOT be credulous: 2 Timothy 2:15

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22: Faith requires action.

Christian faith develops through testing: James 1:2-8: Trials = Joy?!? How can that be? Perhaps that reminds you of: 1 Peter 1:7: *That the trial of your faith being more precious than gold that perishes.* How do you get the pure gold that everyone sees as so valuable? Literally it is tried by fire in order to be purified. The analogy is to our Christian faith. Testing produces endurance. If we are not continually developing our faith, then it is not worth very much.

Christian faith is evidenced in the testimony of our lives: James 2:14-18: We should live and act differently, approaching life in a godly way. We should be rejoicing even if we are in trial and temptation.

 **Believe God, Bill Winston, preacher**

- *(Yelling) I believe! Put your faith in God from now on and you won't have misplaced faith in whether or not this doctor's report was right...what the newspaper said...have faith in God no matter what reports might come into your life. Just make up your mind that I'm gonna have faith in God!*

Just remember that God does not “plow the road” for you in your life. God allows you to plow it yourself because that is where faith is developed. We work through these things by His grace, but they are not removed. Faith is not just a feeling.

Christian faith cannot be vital without expression: James 2:24-26

What can we do about wavering faith?

Check your blood pressure: Colossians 1:23: Be grounded and settled. If you are all bent out of shape about circumstances, your spiritual blood pressure is too high. Faith should help to steady you.

Check your sources: Ephesians 4:11-15: Are you finding your foundation of faith in the places you worship, or is your faith built on traditions and emotionalism? Within the Christian community, we were warned there would be craftiness and scheming. We need to be on guard!

Check your baggage: 1 Peter 5:7-9: We carry around doubt, fear and lots of other baggage. We need to check that baggage with God. The word “casting” here literally means to throw. Throw your cares to God and just take your carryon filled with your Bible!

Check your God: Is God all powerful? Yes! What does that mean? Psalms 89:11-14: We would love our system of government to be based on righteousness and justice! Check what God you are worshipping because the God the Scriptures describes is a wise, compassionate, loving God with a plan from the beginning to the end.

Check your ego: James 1:5-7: True godly wisdom does not develop where ego exists.

We want to make sure our Christian faith is grounded on that which is secure and godly. If not, we need to fix it.

**So what drives Christian faith...?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Kathy!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**