

Do I Want Faith?

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“And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’ And the Lord said, ‘If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and be planted in the sea’; and it would obey you” (Luke 17:5-6).

Does Faith Just Happen?

Some are convinced that one is either born a “believing type” person or not, or that certain people are just prone to faithfulness. Others have a more haphazard approach to faith, assuming that it is unpredictable, untenable in the long run, or is accidental. But does faith just happen? Does it grow from a traumatic experience, or an overwhelming emotional attack? Quite to the contrary, scripture indicates that faith is, in large part, the result of an intellectual and logical process. It involves evaluating truth (*“Examining the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so”* [Acts 17:11]) and reading (*“So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”* [Romans 10:17]). It is a choice, arrived at not by coincidence or accident, but sheer determination. Notice the recurrence of the word “know” in Peter’s speech in Acts 10:34-43, and the conclusion he comes to that examining testimony and evidence leads to belief.

Not only that, but the innate ability to believe in God is within every person, not just people who are gullible or weak-minded. *“If we are indeed created in the image of God, is it surprising that we should wish to relate to him? Might not a human desire for God be grounded in the fact that he brought us into being, with an inbuilt capacity to relate to him?”* (*Intellectuals Don’t Need God and Other Modern Myths*, McGrath, p. 97). While many refuse to intellectually embrace God (Romans 1:28), they still must find something to do with the capacity for faith! Call it belief in evolution, atheism, postmodernism, humanism, or even something as basic as devotion to a celebrity, political agenda, or hobby – whatever the manifestation happens to be, every human yearns for the inexplicable, the metaphysical. *“He has set eternity in man’s heart, yet so that man will not find out all the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Is faith the expression of a perpetual emotional high?

Others have the mistaken idea that faith is nothing more than mere feelings, or that one’s faith must not be very strong if he or she is not always “feeling” it. But the Bible is filled with examples of strong believers who were not constantly on a religious high. What do you suppose Paul’s emotional condition must have been during his many hardships (2 Corinthians 11:24-29)? He even goes on to say that he was often “weak”! Real faith stays steady in spite of flighty feelings, which can be very deceiving (Proverbs 16:25, 28:26). All of us experience highs and lows in our religious experiences, but the true measure of our faith is revealed by how well we do when faced with a series of discouraging events.

What do I want to do?

“Men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light... But he who practices the truth comes to the light” (John 3:19-21). Often, a lack of belief boils right down to our most fundamental desire. If we want to do good, faith can be found. But if we want evil, if we want to follow our impulses, if we are really not that interested in changing our habits and attitudes, then why should it surprise us that our faith is weak? Contemporary scientist Francis Collins observes, *“There are all kinds of agnostics; some arrive at this position after intense analysis of the evidence, but many others simply find it to be a comfortable position that allows them to avoid considering arguments they find discomfoting on either side. I was definitely in the latter category. In fact, my assertion of ‘I don’t know’ was really more along the lines of ‘I don’t want to know’. As a young man growing up in a world full of temptations, it was convenient to ignore the need to be answerable to any higher spiritual authority”* (*The Language of God*, pp. 15-16). A person who wants to live in the darkness will always find a plethora of reasons to lack faith – from questions about the Bible’s authenticity to hypocrisy amongst Christians, from the nature of man to the nature of God Himself. On the other hand, somebody who wants to find answers will always be satisfied with what he finds in Jesus Christ. *“Taste and see that the Lord is good”* (Psalm 34:8).