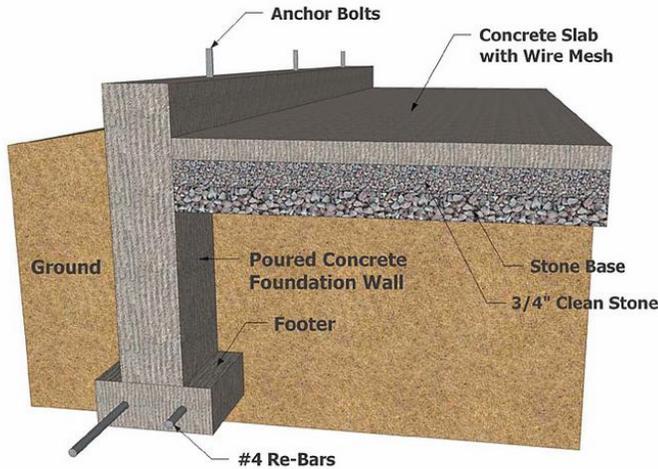


Introduction to Faith, Belief and Truth



Foundations of Belief

Does it really matter what we believe? We all have beliefs, but what are our beliefs based on? If we really examine the basis of our beliefs we might be surprised. It might be a family held tradition or custom going back ten generations. Maybe the basis of a belief is a program we watched in an eighth grade classroom, it seemed to make so much sense at the time! There are literally hundreds of sources that shape our belief systems, including but not limited to:

- Parents and immediate family
- Friends
- Schools (Elementary, Middle School, High School and College)

- Religion, Church, Mosque, Quran, Bible
- Media including television, radio, internet, magazines, books

Ask yourself the question, "Who Am I?" How would you answer this question? For example let's take two hypothetical people, Joe and John, and look into their belief system.

If you were to ask Joe an atheist, he might reply, "I am matter that has been accidentally turned into a living being for a short period of time, when I die, I will be recycled into the earth; there was no supernatural intelligence that formed me. I am just a highly evolved animal"

If the same question were asked to John Christian, he could respond, "I am a creation of God, made in His image, I am a sinner but saved, when I die I will go to Heaven with other believers in Jesus Christ. God knows me and made me for a purpose".

Following up with Joe Atheist and John Christian, we asked them, "Why do you believe this? Joe Atheist might respond, "I was raised in a Christian home, went to church but in college I learned the truth about the world. I have seen the evidence, and I know God does

not exist, evolution proves how life formed." John Christian might have gone to the same church, had similar experiences but he believes the Christian views are true. Why the difference? At points in our life we evaluate the evidence of what we believe, it either confirms or contradicts our viewpoints. In college, Joe saw what he thinks was proof God did not exist, he changed his views based on what he saw.

His foundation for what he believes is now based, or founded on what he learned in college. This is simplification, but I hope it demonstrates the point, how or beliefs are based on foundation of faith. At certain points in our life we put faith in something.



If we asked John Christian the same question, he might say how he prayed one day and God answered his prayer, this proved to him Christianity is true. Again there are many foundations to our faith, what might seem profound to one person is nonsense to another. If John and Joe met there would be clash of views, since the basis of what they believe is so different.

Can John and Joe both be right? No, because their views contradict each other, Joe believes God "Does Not" exist, and John believes God "does" exist, both views cannot be true. They might agree in other areas, but their views on God's existence are diametrically opposed so they cannot both be right. This brings us to the nature of truth. This is also known as the "*Law of Non-Contradiction*" as put forward by Aristotle (384-322 BC), the two contradictory positions cannot both be true "*A is B*" and "*A is not B*" cannot both be true if they are referring to the same thing such as God. God either Does Exist or Does Not Exist, both cannot be true when referring to the same proposition.

The Nature of Truth



There Is Only One Truth

is I could not fly. Truth by its very nature claims to be "Correct, *right or true corresponding to reality*, as opposed to what is *false or incorrect*". Joe Atheist believes the evidence he found in his college classes corrected his false views, he believes God does not exist is "True", Joe believes this corresponds with reality.

Truth is what corresponds to reality. How did the Universe come about? There are many theories, but let look at the facts, the reality of what we know:

1. The universe is here and
2. We are part of it.

What makes something true? Can "something" be true just because someone believes it's true? Believing does not make truth, if a child believes "pink elephants fly", their belief would not make it a reality. It would be false belief as opposed to a true belief. This speaks to the very nature of truth, if something is true, it corresponds to reality, the way thing exists.

If I believed I could fly with all my heart someone might say, "Its "True" for you but not for me, truth is relative". Truth is not relative, truth corresponds with reality.

I think it could be demonstrated that believing does not create reality. I could take my belief and test it against reality. I could climb to the top of the Eifel tower, thoroughly convinced I have the power and ability to fly, then when I jump, my belief system is tested against reality.

When I hit the ground, it will be demonstrated that I could not fly, my belief was false. The TRUTH

Not all theories can be true, the very nature of Truth tells us regardless of what we believe there is only one 'Truth'. Truth corresponds to the reality of how the universe came into existence. Again, Truth by its nature corresponds with reality. Does God exist? Either God Exists or God Does Not Exist, only one options corresponds to reality, only one option is TRUTH.



What is your Worldview?

Our Beliefs shape our worldview

When you wake up in the morning ask yourself the question, who am I? Where did I come from and where am I going? Our response to these questions demonstrates our worldview, how do you view the world you live in. Our worldview is shaped by our beliefs and culture. The original term comes from a German philosophical word *Weltanschauung* (world view) meaning, "a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint"

The way a Muslim views the world is different

from the Buddhist, the Muslim's views are shaped by the *Quran* and *Mohammed* (A.D. 570-632). The Buddhist view is shaped by the teachings of *Siddhartha Gautama* (560 B.C.). The Buddhist sees suffering as illusion of this world, while Muslim sees suffering as part of the struggle of Jihad. The person who believes in God versus the person who rejects God sees the world from a different point, our beliefs that give us the perspective. Trying to see the world from another view point, does not mean you have to agree with the view. As a Christian, I can understand why people might reject Jesus and the Bible; it's my job to demonstrate the reason for faith.

Everybody has "Faith" Even *Atheists*



The next time you go to Starbucks... Ask yourself the question...

Why do I believe this cup of coffee is not poisoned?

Answer you have **FAITH**: Here is part of the logic

1. Based on past experience
2. Based on the people in line before you
3. Based on the reputation of the company and their products.

Your mind makes an immediate judgment and belief that the coffee is **trustworthy** and you can drink it... You have **FAITH**!
Having Faith is not bad...Its just reality...



What is Faith?

Does everybody have faith ¹ or is faith only limited to people who are religious? Let look at the word faith, the origin is an Old French *feid* or *foi* coming from the Latin *fides* meaning "trust, faith, confidence, reliance meaning trust

Some could say I put my "faith" in science not the Bible. What they are saying is they trust science as opposed to the Bible. What is the basis of the trust? The closer we examine the concept of faith; we find everybody has it, not just the religious. The next time you go to Starbucks to drink a cup of coffee, ask yourself the question. *How do you know it's not poisoned?* Why do you put trust in the people behind the counter to give you good coffee and not poisoned coffee? Because you have faith in the Starbucks brand, you have past experience, the people in line before are not falling over and you trust the reputation of the company and their products. If people started falling over and choking on their drinks your faith in Starbucks and the coffee in your hand would immediately be questioned. Faith is such a part of our life we don't even realize



how it's involved in everything we do, without faith we would be frozen into inaction. For example, going on an airplane we trust the company, pilots and the engineering of the plane. Driving over a bridge we put faith in the bridge's ability carry our car to over without falling into the river below. Imagine if everybody questioned the bridge or lacked FAITH in its ability, people would stop and we would have traffic jams. Everybody has a subconscious faith that is not even questioned on a daily basis on everything we do. In each of these examples of faith, there came a point when we put trust the product. We believed what was being offered was real and TRUE as opposed to being false. We believed the bridge could support us, we believed the airplane can take us up into the sky and down

again safely, we believed Starbucks coffee was not poisoned and could meet our thirst for coffee. This concept of faith is also extended to the understanding of Truth. Can we know what is True based on evidence?

Truth and Evidence

Whether we like it or not, we link evidence with the truth. What is presented in a court of law to validate the claims of the defendant and the accuser? Each party presents evidence to prove they are right. The same with any claim of truth, we always look for evidence. If I said to my friend, "I found 500 gold coins in my back yard worth ten million dollars!" he might respond, "show me the proof". He wants to see the evidence for my *truth claim*. Now he might believe me based upon my credibility, but most people would question such a claim, they want to see the



evidence, before they put faith in my claim of truth.

How can I prove to my friend, I found gold coins in my backyard? I could show him the gold coins, along with an appraisal for their value also a video of the find. I could tell my friend to talk to the people who were there as witnesses to the discovery. What is happening is that I am bolstering my claim of truth with evidence, so my friend could put FAITH in my words. Establishing faith based on evidence is not a new concept.

The Bible says Jesus did miracles as evidence to His claim that he is the Messiah (Christ) of Israel promised in the Old Testament. Thomas wanted to see the evidence Jesus had resurrected from the grave, he even said unless he saw the *evidence*, he would not believe the

claim of Truth that Jesus rose from the grave, he wanted confirmation of his faith through evidence.

John 20:24-29

(24) Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

(25) So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands



the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

(26) Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

(27) Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

(28) Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

(29) Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Today, especially in western culture, we live in a evidence based world, claims are not accepted on face value, we want proof like Thomas. Jesus claimed he was the Christ and the proof he provided to the disciples and others were miracles and fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus raised Lazrus from the dead, he

healed the blind, he calmed a storm with his word, he told the disciples

he would be killed and he promised to rise from the grave. This was provided as evidence for his identity as the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel. Jesus understood the nature of humanity, he knows belief rest upon evidence, we want proof for the claim.

God commanded Moses to show evidence (signs) to Pharaoh and doubting Israel that he was speaking for God, first the staff would turn into snake and second Moses' hand would turn leprous and back again.

Exodus 4:1-7

(1) Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'"

(2) The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff."

(3) And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it.

(4) But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"--so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand--

(5) "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

(6) Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow.

(7) Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh.

From our youth, we are trained on the idea of *Scientific Method*, first you have a hypothesis, and then you test it, if the test confirms the hypothesis it is accepted if it does not, you reject the hypothesis. This same training has been applied to faith, is there evidence behind our faith? The answer is yes, but the problem is many believers don't know the evidence. Scripture is the foundation for the Christian faith, the Bible claims to be a supernatural book, the revelation from the Creator of the Universe. The idea of looking for evidence might seem offensive to some, they say it's a lack of faith to seek evidence. The problem is not everybody operates on the same levels of faith. What might be enough proof for one person is not enough for the other. This is especially true in Western culture, which is trained to be skeptical of religious "Faith" claims. In the epistle of I Peter, scripture commands the believer to be ready to provide an answer their faith.

1 Peter 3:15

(15) but in your hearts honor Christ the lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

The word for reason in the Greek is logos, it means logic or logical, so as a believer we should be able to defend our faith in a logical thought out response to anyone who asks. In other words, if someone said to you, why do you believe the Bible is true and Jesus is the Son of God, we should be prepared to respond with a logical answer. We should be able to provide evidence for

the faith we have. This is called Apologetics.

What is Apologetics?

Paul was taken from Jerusalem to King Agrippa after he was accused of treason by the Jews for proclaiming the Gospel. Paul when taken before King Agrippa to give a defense for his actions, the Greek word Paul used regarding his defense in Acts 26:2 was *apologeomai* meaning a logical thought our response.

Acts 26:1-2

(1) So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

(2) "I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews,

The term apologetics means *apo* (defense) *logio* (logical, reasoned), a logical reasoned defense of your position. According to Plato and Aristotle oratory rhetoric was divided into two genres of accusation (*kategoria*) and defense (*apologia*). As believers we are required to be prepared to give an *apologia* for the faith we have.

If you were asked, could you give a reasoned response to your faith? For example if someone asked you, how do you know God exists? How would you respond? Understanding the logic and reason of the Christian faith is the foundation for this class. The Christian faith is not a blind faith, it is logical faith built on a strong foundation of evidence for anybody willing listen to the answer. Presenting the evidence for our faith is apologetics.

Can anybody be right?

Many people bristle at thought of someone claiming their religion is *true* and other religions *false*. How can one faith such as Islam or Christianity be true and billions of others false? Claiming your religion and beliefs are true is labeled by many as intolerance. Larry King, former CNN and radio talk show host, is famous for asking Christian pastors if they believe people who reject Jesus will go to hell? He seems to take pleasure in watching them squirm in their chairs as millions of people watch. If they say yes, then they are labeled as bigoted if they say no, then they reject the claims of the Jesus.

The problem is understanding the nature of "Truth", the word Truth means that something is right and true meaning something therefore must be false and wrong. Even though it sounds nice, its impossible for everybody to be right. If everybody were right, e nobody would ever be wrong. Belief does not make something become "True", as noted earlier, believing I can fly does not prevent my body from crashing to the ground. It might sound friendly and tolerant to utter the platitude saying, "Truth is relative", but its false. If truth were relative, then nobody could be condemned. Hitler's truth would be just as relative as Christian truth. Truth by its very nature is exclusive, that what truth means, something is *True*. How did the we get here? How did the universe begin? Where did life come from? Each of these questions has an Answer, even if we don't know it. Religion and Science both attempt to answer these questions. For example

Question	Secular	Christian
How did the universe	Big Bang, Singularity Everything from nothing	Creator caused the universe begin? to come into existence
Where did life come from?	Chemicals randomly formed into life by accident	Creator caused life, formed humanity in his image
What happens after we die?	Nothing, our bodies decay back into the earth	We go to Heaven and Hell, based on our faith in Jesus Christ

Science is just as exclusive as religion, It claims It has the truth, It claims It view of the truth are correct. The new militant atheism championed by the likes of Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens (deceased) are so convinced they are right, they don't even think the other side should be heard. Christianity claims to be exclusively true, meaning its claims of truth exclude other claims. For example Jesus in the Gospel of John said, ""f am the

way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" ... Jesus (John 14:6) Jesus is clearly saying there is no other way to Heaven except through Him, he is the exclusive way. This should be no surprise, most belief systems are exclusive. Atheism says they are right and others wrong. Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam also see their faith as True and others wrong.

The real question is can we discover who is right and who is wrong? Yes, examining the evidence we can find which belief system is true.

