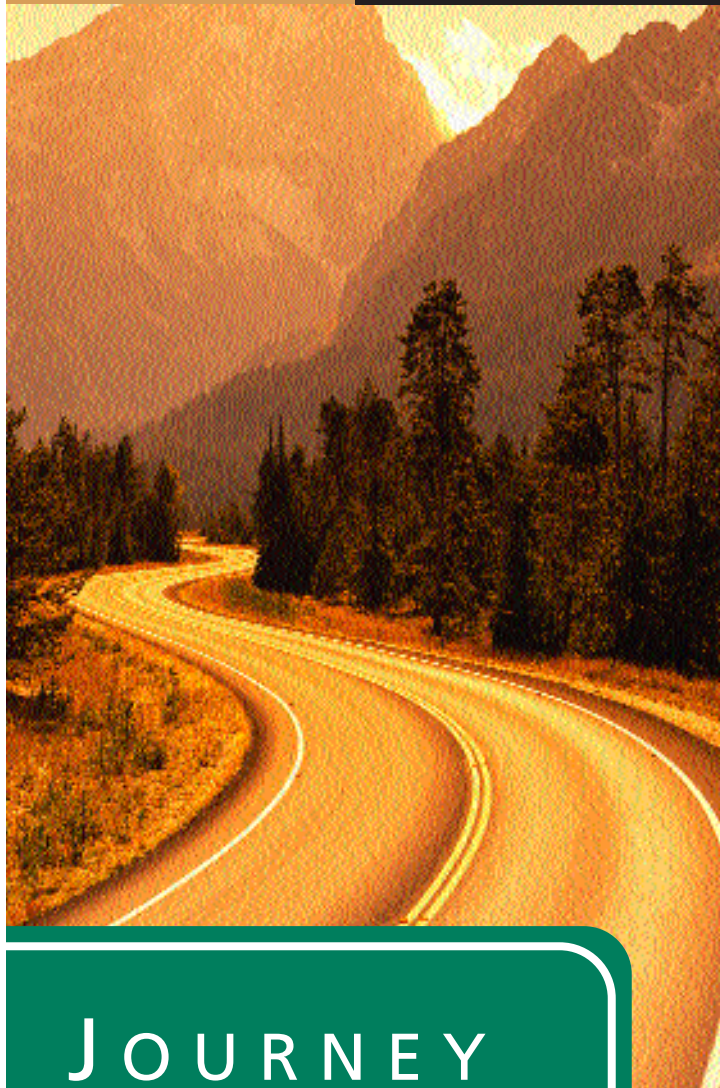


volume 4



JOURNEY
TO FAITH

Faith That
Makes Sense

Faith That Makes Sense

“Fanatic: a person whose extreme zeal and piety goes beyond what is reasonable; zealot.”
—*Webster’s New World Dictionary*

A number of years ago, a prominent Christian TV evangelist claimed that if his TV followers didn’t send in enough money, God was going to take his life. It was a wild and outrageous claim. All the TV stations carried the “news” and the ensuing report that donations were flooding in from the evangelist’s loyal followers. Enough money came in, and the evangelist is still around.

God spared him, the evangelist claimed, because of the generosity of his followers’ faithfulness. The only thing that was flowing in faster than the money was the sarcastic skepticism and accusations that the “faithful” were gullible, mindless sheep who enjoyed (and possibly deserved) being fleeced.

More recently, another well-known TV evangelist, famous for his right wing politics, claimed that the prophet Mohammed was a terrorist, infuriating the Muslim community. This news made the headlines and Christianity was again viewed as the refuge of the misinformed and “fringe” element.

In other news, an anti-abortion protester murdered an abortion doctor all in the name of God and Christianity and saving babies. Trying to prove the sanctity of life by murder? Is this the thinking of a sane individual? Is this what Christianity leads to?

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When the popular *Harry Potter* series was first published by British author, J.K. Rowling, some Christians began protesting what they saw as an attempt to introduce children to Satanism and witchcraft. Soon wild accusations against the author began to circulate.

Only later did anyone bother to discover that what had been circulating was a satirical response to criticism of the *Harry Potter* books. None of what had been said was true. But that didn't stop many who held *Harry Potter* book burning parties. This occurred despite the fact that Rowling admitted that she believed in God, not magic.

Who hasn't been driving along and seen a car literally covered with Christian bumper stickers of every kind, or switching channels and

noticed Christian TV with hosts covered with expensive jewelry, too much make-up and making claims that God wants every Christian to be healthy and wealthy? On any given street corner in any

Some claim that a Christian has two brains: One is lost and the other is out looking for it!

major city you are sure to find someone walking around with a Bible and a sign assuring everyone that the end is coming soon!

Given this kind of information, it is only natural that many people look at Christianity as the last refuge of the ignorant, a sanctuary for emotional and social cripples. Some claim that a Christian has two brains: One is lost and the other is out looking for it!

The claim that Christianity is fanatical can be hard to dismiss. Winston Churchill was famous for saying, "a fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject." But is that fair?

When a certain professional basketball player speaks, acts and dresses outlandishly, no one begins to claim that professional basketball players are all crazy. The institution of basketball is

not automatically assumed to be the refuge of outlandish people with outlandish habits. When corporate executives of large companies are discovered to have been guilty of corruption, we realize that business is not the cause of this corruption and that not all business people are corrupt as well.

In every field there will be people who do not truly represent the guiding principles of the organization or group they represent. Unfortunately, the more brazen the activity and claims, the more newsworthy the people become. Newspapers and news organizations feed on these kinds of personalities, knowing that their exploits will sell papers and attract attention.

Thousands of honest business people are tainted with the wide brush of criticism applied to those who were greedy and dishonest. When one doctor is found to be overcharging his patients, public outrage often leads to stereotyping of the honest physicians. When several big name lawyers flout and abuse the legal system, all lawyers' reputations are tarnished.

The fact that certain people make outlandish claims or act inappropriately does not necessarily mean that what they purport to represent is suspect as well.

- What is Christianity anyway?
- Is the typical Christian the stereotypical person he or she is often made out to be?
- Do we throw the baby out with the bath water?
- Can Christianity ever be taken seriously by intelligent, educated people?
- Are you destined to become fanatical if you become a Christian?
- Does Christianity really make any sense?

A RATIONAL EXPLANATION FOR LIFE'S DEEPEST QUESTIONS

While science is a valuable tool and has led to many exciting and important discoveries, it is unable to answer some of the questions that are most important to us.

- Why am I here?
- What is the real purpose of my life?
- What happens after death?
- Am I unique in the world or just an accident?
- Is there a world beyond this one that we cannot see with our physical senses?

These are the questions that Christianity provides a logical and reasonable answer to. Science cannot prove or disprove the existence of God. But the fact that science can't prove God's existence doesn't mean that God doesn't exist. As one author put it, "God is not discoverable or demonstrable by purely scientific means, unfortunately, for the scientifically minded. But that really proves nothing. It simply means that the wrong instruments are being used for the job."

As Billy Graham once said, "Faith is not anti-intellectual. It is an act of man that reaches beyond the limits of our five senses." There are realities that cannot be proven using the senses of smell, taste, touch, hearing and sight.

- Have you ever seen an idea?
- Can you see love?
- Can you prove faith?
- Can you scientifically prove memories?

We know that ideas, love and faith surely exist, but we can't prove them using scientific methods. There are certain truths that cannot be verified or disproved through science.

If we accept the idea that God is an infinite being, then we must also accept the reality that it is impossible for finite beings to completely understand him. The moment we could completely understand God we would be greater than God, able to fully understand him. Therefore he could not be infinite and therefore he could not be God. The very fact that God is infinite takes belief in him beyond the reach of human reason alone.

The Christian belief that God exists and must be approached by faith, not by reason alone, helps to answer many of our deepest questions. God reveals himself to us in order for us to know exactly what he is like.

The Bible reveals to us that we have a purpose in this life and that we were created with the purpose of worshipping and glorifying God. The Bible also reveals to us that God exists in a dimension that our five senses cannot identify.

Many scientists today are beginning to look seriously into the idea of intelligent design. Modern scientific theories of how we came to be simply fail to adequately answer the incredible complexity we see.

Take the human body for an example. The average human heart pumps over 1,000 gallons a day, over 55 million gallons in a lifetime. This is enough to fill 13 supertankers. It never sleeps, beating 2.5 billion times in a lifetime. The process of exchanging oxygen for carbon dioxide is so complicated that, as one scientist says, "It is more difficult to exchange oxygen for carbon dioxide than for a man to be shot out of a cannon and carve the Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin as he passes by."

To publish the DNA information in one cell would take 300 volumes, each volume 500 pages thick. The human body contains enough DNA that if it were stretched out, it would circle the sun 260 times! The body uses energy so efficiently that if it were a car using gasoline, it would get 900 miles to the gallon!

The more we learn about our bodies and our world, the less likely it appears everything occurred by chance. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that Paul Johnson, in his book *The Quest for God* wrote, "The most extraordinary thing about the 20th century was the failure of God to die. The collapse of mass religious belief, especially among the educated and prosperous had

The average human heart pumps over 1,000 gallons a day, over 55 million gallons in a lifetime. This is enough to fill 13 supertankers. It never sleeps, beating 2.5 billion times in a lifetime.

been widely and confidently predicted. It did not take place. Somehow God survived, flourished even.” Belief in God helps to answer the questions that science simply cannot.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT UNSCIENTIFIC

Christianity seeks to ask and answer the same questions science asks. Some of the most important founders of modern science—Copernicus, Isaac Newton, Carl Linnaeus—were Christian. Christianity teaches that God is rational, logical and orderly, therefore these scientists deduced that his creation must be the same. They believed it was not only possible, but imperative to study our world to learn more about God.

Many have sought to characterize Christianity and the Bible as “unscientific” and therefore unreliable. A popular accusation is that Christianity is an outmoded belief, clinging to ancient and archaic ideas like the medieval Christian belief in a flat earth. There are still many today who accuse Christians of being an unlearned group of “flat-earthers.” The phrase is intended to suggest that Christian beliefs are behind the times, out of touch with modern science and rationality.

They believe that medieval Christians clung to the idea that the Earth was flat, and it took the voyage of Christopher Columbus to convince backward Christians that the earth was spherical. Unfortunately, this was never true. It is a modern myth.

Augustine, perhaps the most important of early Christian thinkers, who lived about a thousand years before Columbus, knew the earth was round and not flat. All educated people throughout Europe knew the earth was round and not flat. There were no skeptics to convince.

Thomas Aquinas, in the 13th century, the most profound and prolific of medieval Christian theologians, observed not only that the earth was spherical, but that it could be proved both mathematically and physically.

The Flat Earth myth was a fable begun by early 19th century Enlightenment thinkers who were bent on discrediting the church and Christianity, especially during the Middle Ages. Leading historians have tried to correct the misinformation, but the myth remains etched in many people’s minds, proof, for them, of the irrationality of Christianity.

This stereotype of Christians as gullible, uneducated and backward has prevailed despite the fact that some of our greatest schools of higher learning—Harvard, Yale, Princeton and many others—were started by Christians as Christian schools designed to educate believers. The idea that Christianity is therefore anti-intellectual simply doesn’t wash.

Have you ever wondered why intelligent, well-educated people would buck popular opinion and degrading stereotypes and cling to faith in God? One of the compelling reasons is that each person, at some time, senses that there is more to life than what we can verify scientifically.

The fact is that our hearts and minds can imagine something greater, something better than just what we see in this life. Millions of people have achieved everything our world says you need to achieve to be happy and successful, and yet find themselves unhappy and discontented.

Their accomplishments, education and training cannot provide the answer to this inner restlessness. Science cannot provide the answer because it does not even recognize the dilemma as being valid. If we live in a closed world of cause and effect, there is nothing greater than what we see and experience here on earth.

This feeling of restlessness is universal. It is a type of spiritual disease, as cancer and AIDS are physical diseases. We have applied all our scientific knowledge and technology to these physical diseases—with some success. But science has no answer to this inner restlessness—this disease of the soul.

Jesus came to earth to show us that our inner restlessness is not proof we are crazy, we are, in fact, lost and empty. Being lost and empty is part of being human. When Jesus came he proclaimed himself to be the cure for our soul disease. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

To a world that had a hint that our physical life wasn’t all there is, he said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25).

Jesus provides the missing puzzle piece of our lives. He reminds us that our temporary lives on earth have a purpose, that we are not mere biological accidents. We must understand that our human lives are part of a larger world and a greater purpose than just personal peace and happiness. The experience of literally billions of

As penicillin was the answer to so many of our physical ailments ...so faith in Christ is the answer to our soul disease.

Christians throughout the ages is that our souls find rest in Jesus Christ.

As penicillin was the answer to so many of our physical ailments and has saved so many lives, as the

polio vaccine saved millions from crippling diseases, so faith in Christ is the answer to our soul disease. Spiritual ailments require spiritual solutions, and faith is the spiritual solution to our soul disease.

Christianity, far from being unreasonable, provides a coherent, logical worldview. Millions have embraced Christianity because it makes sense. It not only makes sense given the incredible complexity of the world we live in; it is a more reasonable belief system than any that are offered as substitutes.

Instead of starting out with the assumption that there is no God, Christianity starts out with the idea that God exists, based on the compelling

evidence in creation itself as well as the evidence of the human heart. Unlike animals, we can imagine, dream and envision a better world. We can see beyond this world and our own limitations. Science and human reason do not provide the great stumbling blocks to Christian faith that many assume they do.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT A POLITICAL AFFILIATION

A major civil war has been going on in Ireland for many years between those who identify themselves as the Protestants and those who see themselves as the Catholics. It is called a “Christian” war, though it is largely political.

Unfortunately, in many places the word Christian has taken on a political, rather than a spiritual meaning. In such a case, to be called Christian defines not so much your personal spiritual beliefs, but your political views. This has led to tragic misunderstanding.

Even in America, some believe that Christians are found in one particular political party. The truth is that there are Christians in virtually every political party in America and around the world. There is no true “Christian” political party, because Christianity deals with spiritual truths, not political ideas.

Jesus did not come to stimulate political activism, but to bring us into a relationship with God and provide eternal life to all who would believe in him. When Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come unto me,” he was not encouraging us to join a political party, or identify with a particular ideology—he was inviting us into a personal relationship with himself.

CHRISTIANITY IS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

If Jesus’ kingdom was of this world, he would have set up an earthly political kingdom and ruled over it. But, when the Roman governor, Pilate, asked during Jesus’ trial if he were an earthly king, Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not

of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36).

This is why Jesus’ words are so powerful for us today. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Jesus invites each person into a personal relationship with himself, not into a political party or ideology. It is faith which Jesus asks of us, faith that he is who he says he is and he will do what he said he will do.

Still, there are always those who don’t want to take a leap into the darkness, as they believe faith to be. They feel that any act of faith is devoid of reason and therefore criticize all who claim to have faith. Yet, every human being expresses faith, even those who do not believe in God.

EVERYONE HAS AND EXPRESSES FAITH

You cannot live without exercising faith every day. It would be impossible. This idea may be surprising to you, but think about it. Every time you drive your car up to a light signal and it turns green, you proceed only by faith. You are trusting first that the light is working properly, and second that those who have a red light are indeed going to stop. You can’t insure that they do. You take it by faith. Occasionally we learn that this faith is misplaced. Yet, we have no choice. Either we live by faith or we remain effectively paralyzed.

When you walk into a building, you trust that the people who built the building did so properly and the roof will not cave in while you are there, as has happened in certain places. Whenever you eat at a restaurant you are trusting that the people who prepared your food did so in a sanitary manner and that your health is not at risk.

For example, a few years ago hundreds of people booked vacation cruises, assured that their cruise would be safe. This assumption was a matter of faith, for they could not prove that the cruise ships would be safe. They trusted the management company who ran the cruises. Yet, soon hundreds of people on different ships began to get sick. Their faith had been misplaced.

Have you ever driven over a tall bridge that spanned a body of water? When you drive over that bridge, you are trusting that the builders built it properly and that it won’t collapse the moment you drive over it. The fact is that we simply could not live in this world without faith.

Even those who detest the very word “faith,” and deny the existence of God, exercise faith continually. The only difference between those who deny the existence of God and those who don’t lies in those ideas in which they place their faith. If you do not believe in God, you are limiting expressions of your faith to yourself and other humans.

Christians simply place their faith in God, as he has revealed himself through the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ. His character and acts are what we place our faith in. Living by faith is not a choice; the only choice you have is where you place that faith.

Have you ever asked yourself what your faith is in? You are exercising faith whether you have been conscious of it or not. But what has your faith been in? We can place our faith in science, or in people, or in nature, or love, or fate, or any number of things. Regardless of where we place our faith, each of us exercises faith continually.

Has your faith in people and things always proven reliable? Chances are it hasn’t. Most of us have been let down. Our leaders let us down, our friends let us down, our heroes fall off their

Even those who detest the very word “faith,” and deny the existence of God, exercise faith continually.

pedestals and things we once believed to be true turn out to be false. What is proclaimed to be scientifically true today is disproved tomorrow. It is life itself that often doesn't make sense. Only God can help us make sense out of it.

FAITH IS A LIFESTYLE

Faith has been characterized by some as a “leap into the darkness.” But it is hardly that. God does not ask us to suspend our intellects, or turn off our minds to exercise faith. Faith doesn't mean that we are gullible.

Christian philosopher C.S Lewis, one of the greatest minds of the 20th century, wrote “God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than of any other slackers. If you are thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you that you are embarking on something which is going to take the whole of you, brains and all. But, fortunately, it works the other way round. Anyone who is honestly trying to be a Christian will soon find his intelligence being sharpened. One reason why it takes no special education to be a Christian is that Christianity is an education in itself.”

Someone once said, “God does not expect us to submit our faith to him without reason, but the very limits of reason make faith a necessity.” Faith is therefore not a leap into the darkness, it is a step into the light. It is an acknowledgment that nothing makes real sense in our world apart from belief in God. As C.S. Lewis said, “In science we have been reading only the notes to a poem; in Christianity we find the poem itself.”

Faith is believing that absolute truth as revealed in the Bible actually exists and that we have a reliable anchor in the storms of moral, political, philosophical and social change we see all around us. Human ideas are constantly changing, but God does not change. He never has to learn or adjust his ideas to new situations.

Faith reasons that if there is a God, and he has indeed revealed his perfect will through the Bible, then there is absolute truth. If there is

absolute truth, then there is a right and a wrong. Everything is not relative. There is a truth that applies to everyone in every situation, exempting no one. Faith recognizes that God revealed this truth to us through the Bible so that we could know about him, and about ourselves.

Faith is the firm conviction that there is more to life than what we can see, hear, taste, touch and feel. Faith does not deny reality, it finally discovers ultimate reality, the reality that we were blind to before.

Scientists are constantly discovering new places and galaxies in space as our scientific investigation tools improve. We are constantly discovering new life forms and making discoveries that change everything we thought we knew before. What we knew before was not necessarily wrong, it was just incomplete. We could only see so far. We needed more information.

Faith allows us, like the new sophisticated technology available to us, to see things we could not see before. Faith recognizes that there is another world that we can't yet see, as surely as there are galaxies that we haven't yet discovered with our powerful scientific tools. As you could not hope to see cells and molecules with the naked eye, so you could not hope to see God without faith. Faith is the only lens with which we can finally see God.

Through faith we can live, think and act confidently in an ever-changing world. Christianity is expressed most powerfully through following Christ in our personal and professional lives. It is not merely an ideology, or a different worldview—it is a relationship with the God who created our world. Christianity recognizes that the world we can see is only part of the real world. There is another world, as real as ours, made by God. This life is a preparation for the next world.

Perhaps you have always thought Christians and Christianity made no sense. You might have been afraid of what you would turn into should you become a Christian. The fanatics you have

seen might have scared you away from faith. But true faith is nothing to fear. You will not be committing intellectual suicide. You will, for the first time, be able to answer the most pressing questions of life. And you will find more than an answer; you will find a relationship with your Creator.

You have been expressing faith your entire life. Many times your faith has been misplaced. Isn't it time you began to place your faith in Someone who won't let you down? Faith in the God who made you and loved you enough to die for you—it just makes sense.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- 1) Can anyone believe what the Bible says?
- 2) Hasn't the Bible been proven wrong?
- 3) What makes the Bible any more special than any other religion's holy writings?
- 4) Can an educated person afford to trust the Bible's accuracy?
- 5) What makes the Bible unique among all other books?
- 6) What do I stand to gain if I read the Bible, or stand to lose if I don't?
- 7) What is the Bible anyway?
- 8) Why should I place any faith in the Bible when it was written by fallible men?

These and other questions will be discussed and answered in our next volume, *Journey to Faith, Volume 5: The Bible*.