

Questions

Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried.

-- Gilbert K. Chesterton

"Just as the Christian has his moment when the clamour of this visible and audible world is so persistent and the whisper of the spiritual world so faint that faith and reason can hardly stick to their guns, so, as I well remember, the atheist too has his moments of shuddering misgiving., of an all but irresistible suspicion that old tales may after all be true, that something or someone from outside may at any moment break into his neat, explicable, mechanical universe. Believe in God and you will have to face hours when it seems obvious that this material world is the only reality: disbelieve in Him and you must face hours when this material world seems to shout at you that it is not all. NO conviction, religious or irreligious, will, of itself end once and for all the fifth-columnist in the soul. Only the practice of Faith resulting in the habit of Faith will gradually do that."

-- C.S. Lewis

Every once in a while, ... no quite often, I talk to people about circumstances in their lives which pose questions that seem unanswerable. There is something in me that feels obligated to concoct a response. Sometimes I try. In the end I come up with a few options, most of which don't satisfy me. Rather than offer some half-baked possibility, I opt for silence or an embarrassed, "I don't know." I don't think we accomplish anything to try to explain God in those moments. He can and He does speak for Himself. This morning I'd like to talk about questions as building blocks of faith.

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the **testing of your faith** develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be*

*mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a **double-minded man**, unstable in all he does." (James 1:2-8, NIV84)*

1. Answers can be highly overrated.

- An answer cannot take away the pain of loss. Knowing the answers to life's disappointments, loss, tragedies ... does not lessen the pain.
- A question answered always leads to an unanswered question. The more I learn, the more I realize that I don't know.
- Often we are looking for an answer that we like ... not necessarily the truth.
- Everyone has an answer today. Too few have questions.

- There is no such thing as a good answer to a bad question and sometimes our difficulty arises from asking bad questions.

- Sometimes the question is the answer.

2. A truly solid faith is built on questions, not answers.

Anyone who thinks that a strong faith-filled Christian has all the answers, is sorely mistaken. Faith believes despite the questions.

It is a significant evidence of belief that we even blame or question God.

A true atheist is no more concerned with disproving the existence of God than an adult is with disproving the existence of Santa Claus.

If there were no God, there would be no atheists.

3. A truly solid "I know" is more experiential than informational.

There is no particular virtue in belief as mental assent. The devil believes in God.

Reality orientation. A person's truest beliefs come into line with their perception of reality. Cheap truth. Costly truth.

We cannot truly say that God is faithful until we have experienced His faithfulness. For many ... too many Christians, their faith is based on the experience of others. We have never tested what we believe.

Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that you may understand.

... St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him." □ Hebrews 11:6

Faith in antagonism to common sense is fanaticism, and common sense in antagonism to faith is rationalism. The life of faith brings the two into a right relation.

Common sense is not faith, and faith is not common sense; they stand in the relation of the natural and the spiritual; of impulse and inspiration. Nothing Jesus Christ ever said is

common sense, it is revelation sense, and it reaches the shores where common sense fails.

Faith must be tried before the reality of faith is actual. "We know that all things work together for good," then no matter what happens, the alchemy of God's providence transfigures the ideal faith into actual reality. Faith always works on the personal line, the whole purpose of God being to see that the ideal faith is made real in His children.

For every detail of the common-sense life, there is a revelation fact of God whereby we can prove in practical experience what we believe God to be. Faith is a tremendously active principle which always puts Jesus Christ first - Lord, Thou hast said so and so (e.g., Matthew 6:33), it looks mad, but I am going to venture on Thy word.

To turn head faith into a personal possession is a fight always, not sometimes. God brings us into circumstances in order to educate our faith, because the nature of faith is to make its object real.

Until we know Jesus, God is a mere abstraction, we can not have faith in Him; but immediately we hear Jesus say - "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," we have something that is real, and faith is boundless.

Faith is the whole man rightly related to God by the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

-- Oswald Chambers