

44 - Facts and Fiction About Faith (Part 4)

Rev. Dr. John Bartol

Misconception # 4: I find it next to impossible to believe in Christianity. I recognize that faith works for others, but not for me.

On the surface this objection seems justified by our previous discussion regarding doubts. However, subtle differences emerge between honest and dishonest doubt. An honest doubter keeps an open mind and heart toward the truth and eventually finds some real answers. Dishonest doubters use unbelief as an excuse for not taking Christianity more seriously. They seldom, if ever, examine the evidence supporting the claims of faith.

The problem becomes not, "I can't believe because the facts won't let me," but rather, "My mind is made up and regardless of the evidence, I do not want to believe!" The problem arises not from the absence of evidence, but rather its suppression. Various arguments can be used as a smokescreen to avoid accountability to God. As Francis Bacon once said, "Man prefers to believe what he prefers to be true."

Our doubts may be rooted in moral difficulties as well. Not honest doubt, but dishonest sin prevents many people from believing. It is more convenient to make excuses than exercise moral discipline. When a person takes issue with the Apostles' Creed, the real problem may be with the Ten Commandments. It is so hard to believe because it is so hard to obey!

But, what about the person who is sincerely seeking God. How can weak faith become stronger? If you want to grow flowers, don't go to the North Pole; you can achieve better results closer to home. So, if you want your faith to grow, go to places where faith is being actively lived out in the lives of everyday people. Feed your mind with faith-building materials – books, tapes, music and web-sites that examine the evidence pro and con, and give you hope that you can connect with God.

Are such places available? God could have sent angels to make the connection between a seeking soul and Himself. But He has commissioned His followers, sinners saved by grace, to pass on the good news. Here in our beautiful valley, there are people from many church backgrounds, meeting regularly for prayer, worship, Bible study and mutual support. Hopefully seekers can find friends who exemplify strong faith and character and learn from them.

However, and I include myself, I fear that church members have not always been good advertisements for the faith we claim to possess. We must earn the right to share our faith with others! Friends do not care how much we know until they see how much we care. I like the definition that says, "A Christian is one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread." In order for faith to be real it must be lived out daily in the spirit of Him who said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35)