

Defining Faith

As you know, I've spent a lot of time over the last year and a half talking with atheists and skeptics about the issues that divide us. We've talked extensively about Darwinian evolution, morality and a number of other key issues, but one of the questions that we keep coming back to in so many of our discussions is a fundamental one: **what is faith?**

Unbelievers generally argue that while *our* worldview is predicated on faith and superstition, *their* worldview is predicated on facts and science. And they can be very arrogant about this. One of the "new atheists," Sam Harris, has said, "Faith is the license religious people give themselves to keep believing when reasons fail." In his documentary *Religulous*, Bill Maher said, "Faith means making a virtue out of not thinking." In a YouTube video entitled "Richard Dawkins: Faith," Dawkins defines faith as "belief in something for which there is no evidence." Dawkins is also on record for saying that: "Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, perhaps even because of, the lack of evidence."

In other words, we Christians don't have any real evidence for what we believe. We're either deceived, ignorant or deluded, because there's no good reason to believe in God. But they – the unbelievers – have laid aside the superstitions of a bygone scientifically-illiterate era, and have come to understand that the idea of 'god' is unnecessary, unfounded and unrealistic. Oh, and all those great scientists in history who were believers – men such as Copernicus, Francis Bacon, Johannes Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Isaac Newton and countless others – well, they had to *claim* a belief in God or they would have been ignored or even persecuted; or they just didn't know better. Because anyone who values evidence and science and reason can't logically believe in the supernatural.

This is a very common misconception among believers as well. Some Christians argue that faith *inherently* precludes evidence, advocating so strongly for "blind faith" that they blast any efforts to *seek* evidence as the result of a lack of faith and a misguided allegiance to human wisdom and pride. When a sincere Christian begins looking for evidence to support their faith, they are often told, "You just need to believe," or even worse, "You need to trust God," as if the person seeking evidence doesn't trust God and needs to be rebuked.

But let's be honest. For all too many Christians, a dismissive attitude toward evidence doesn't necessarily reflect a deep sense of conviction or unwavering faith in God. It may be that they are committed to being Christians no matter what because that's how they were raised, or because it's a cultural thing. And many use the term "faith" as a cover for intellectual laziness. Rather than putting in the time and energy to *develop* true, substantive, defensible convictions, they use "faith" as a copout and yet somehow manage to come out of it looking like the stronger Christians – the *true* believers, if you will. I've talked to SO many Christians over the years who fall into this category. Whether it's a matter of tradition or laziness for them, the fact is, they are unable to defend their faith and really don't feel pressed to do so. They live in a so-called Christian nation, have a Christian family, and

figure that they might as well continue carrying the torch...or at least dragging it apathetically at their side.

Think about it. How many Christians (1) have put in the time to study and develop real reasons for their faith, (2) are able to answer the tough questions posed by unbelievers, and (3) see it as important to do so? What about you? Do you see faith as a blind acceptance of religious dogma? Is it just a label you wear because of who your family is or the country you live in? Does faith preclude evidence? Does faith *demand* evidence? And I'll even toss in this question: even if faith and evidence can coexist, can our desire and demand of evidence be so strong that faith loses its meaning for us?

But let me make this more personal...

When I was navigating my own crisis of faith – the one to which I've alluded many times in recent weeks – I found myself having very serious doubts about the **quality** of the evidence undergirding my faith. Many of the atheists with whom I'm acquainted are scientists. The gentleman I debated in September is a biologist; he works in a lab and does research for the University of Nevada. At least one is a physicist and another, a neuroscientist. These are not only smart people, they are very active in the scientific community. And they were constantly pressing me and challenging me about the nature of my faith and the quality of the evidence I gave for my faith. They spoke of the empirical nature of their research, the stringency of the scientific method, the peer-review process and the importance of falsifiable evidence – that is, evidence that has the potential of being proven right *or wrong* and is therefore testable. Then they would look at me and say things like, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." And as I went through my crisis of faith, I remember thinking that even though I had evidences for my Christian faith, those evidences weren't always extraordinary in nature. So I began to wonder: "am I so desperate for evidence that I'm making more out of certain evidences than I should?" And, "Am I going to extreme lengths to make ordinary evidence *seem* extraordinary to feel better about my faith?" In other words, was I using presuppositions, unfalsifiable claims and weak evidences to disguise my "blind faith" as "reasonable faith?" In the end, did I just believe in Christ because I had been taught to and wanted to? My atheistic friends had challenged me to such a degree that I found myself questioning the validity of my faith.

If I've struggled with these questions, I know that so many others have. So for the next thirty minutes or so, I'd like to answer these questions, not only for the sake of skeptics and unbelievers, but for our sake as well...and especially for our sake. As people of faith, it's imperative that we understand what faith is and isn't.

Faith is famously defined as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" in Hebrews 11:1. I'd like to begin by giving you both the Strong's and Thayer's definition of the word *faith* in this verse; then I'd like to explain what the verse itself (as well as its context) says about faith.

The word faith is from the Greek word *pistis*. Strong's defines *pistis* as "persuasion, that is, credence; moral conviction (or religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher) – assurance, belief." Thayer's defines it as, "conviction of the truth of anything" and also "belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ springing from faith in the same." What these definitions tell us is that faith is not a shallow belief in something. Rather, it's a deeply rooted sense of conviction and involves a degree of trust or commitment. To put it another way, faith isn't wishful thinking in the face of uncertainty and doubt. The person who says, "Well, I don't *know* that God exists, but I'm just going to be safe and believe anyway" doesn't have faith; that's wishful thinking. The person who lays claim to faith, not because they sincerely believe in God, but because they want their life to have meaning, or because they're afraid of death...do not really have faith. Again, faith is defined as "persuasion...moral conviction...and trust." This is what the word itself means.

Now consider with me how faith is further defined in Hebrews 11. Again, it defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." There was a time when I used this verse to teach that true, biblical faith is predicated on evidence. After all, the word "evidence" is in the verse! But that's obviously NOT the writer's point. The point is that faith itself is the evidence, or proof. In other words, that deep sense of conviction is so strong and persuasive that, in the believer's heart and mind, there is no doubt. If someone asks you, "What is your evidence for believing in God?" is there something physical that you can point to? Can you lead them through the pearly gates for a brief tour of heaven? Is there a meet-and-greet with God Himself scheduled for this Friday that they can attend? While certain people in history were privileged with such experiences, those experiences were not what defined their faith. What ultimately defines our faith – what makes us people of faith – is the strong, undeniable conviction we have within us.

And this conviction is *so* strong that the Hebrews writer calls it a "substance." It may not be physical, but for us, it's so real that it might as well be physical! That's what true faith is! We're told in verse 27 that "By faith [Moses] forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). Even though we cannot see God, our faith makes God visible to us in a sense. And it's the strength of our inner persuasion – the power of our conviction – that serves as the evidence of God's existence *for us individually*.

To help us understand this, consider with me the example of **love**. A scientist might tell you that the love you have for your children and your spouse is nothing more than a series of chemical reaction in your brain. As I've pointed out before, this makes the love you have for your spouse on the same level as a methamphetamine high – they are just two different chemical reactions. But you and I both know that love is much deeper, more virtuous and of higher value than a drug high. While this perhaps cannot be proven scientifically, our experiences have developed an unwavering conviction in the virtue and value of love! It's something that we "just know" is true. That's the same kind of intuitive conviction that we have about the existence of God. It's not something we can prove empirically, but it's

something we *know* intuitively.

Now, perhaps you're thinking that if faith itself *is* the evidence for God's existence – if our faith isn't predicated on external reasons and evidences – that we are indeed left with a faith that is blind. A skeptic might ask, "What is the evidence that God is real?" and all you can say in response, based on Hebrews 11 is, "You just have to believe," with the only addendum being, "If you will just believe and trust that God is real, you will come to know that He is real!" So it sounds like we're asking people to blindly trust that God is real and that everything the Bible says about Him is true. And if this is true – if the only substance to faith is faith itself, how can we see our particular faith as credible and the faith that other people have in other gods, goddesses and myths as somehow displaced? In other words, the person who preaches the gospel of the flying spaghetti monster has as much evidence as I do for the God of the Bible if...if...the *only* evidence for our faith is our faith.

I want you to note, however, that I haven't affirmed that there is no external evidence for the Christian faith *or that* true, biblical faith precludes evidence. All I've affirmed is that true biblical faith can be so strongly held and so intrinsically felt that it serves as evidence for God and the hope He's given to us. **How this faith is established and how it's nurtured is a different matter entirely!** If faith is a seed, it certainly will grow into a plant and will produce fruit – our hope and our conviction are the fruits of our faith – but how is the seed planted, and how is the soil fertilized to bring about the establishment and progress of faith? That's the question. I would suggest to you that true faith – because it is a conviction and persuasion of the mind – demands an impetus, a reason, or reasons...and this is where external evidences play a role.

Let me clarify once again that a person who *claims* faith in Christ merely because he is following in the footsteps of his parents or in the tradition of his fellow Americans is not a person of true, biblical faith. And the person who *claims* faith in Christ so that he can have social benefits from a church, or whose religion is merely a status symbol, is, again, not a person of true, biblical faith. Biblical faith – let me make this clear – is a sincerely held conviction of the truth of something unseen. The key word there is "sincerely." If true, biblical faith is a sincerely held conviction, it is planted in the human intellect and developed in the rich soil of the mind.

The question then becomes: by what reasons and evidences does this sense of conviction (faith) take root in our minds and come to fruition? In 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle writes: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a **reason** for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Believers are called to always be ready to articulate their reasons for believing in Christ and living for Him. This implies that our hope/our faith are defensible. In other words, our faith shouldn't be and really *cannot* be blind; our faith must be more than tradition or wishful thinking. There are reasons and evidences to which we must appeal in the defense of our faith.

I'd like to pause briefly to ask you what your reasons are for believing in God and trusting

in Christ for salvation. If someone came up to you and asked you that question, would you have an answer ready? And would your answer spring from a heart of conviction, or would you merely be parroting reasons and evidences that you've heard from fellow Christians over the years? And finally, how strong is your conviction? I want you to think about these questions as we continue our study this evening.

What I'd like to do at this point in our study is metaphorically pose these same questions to a few believers in recorded, biblical history. Not only were these people of strong faith and conviction, they had clear reasons for believing. *What were those reasons?*

During the patriarchal age covered in the book of Genesis, a man named Job lived in the land of Uz; "and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." I think we all know the story of Job. He had everything, then lost everything, went through a "crisis of faith" of his own and came out of it a stronger believer than he was before. While he argued with his well-intentioned but antagonistic friends, he said the following, recorded for us in Job 19:25-27:

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

This passage makes it clear that Job wasn't just a religious man; he was a sincere and passionate believer. He didn't believe that God *might* exist; He affirmed that God did exist. "I KNOW that my Redeemer lives." And he didn't just *hope* that one day he would see his Creator and spend eternity with Him; he *knew* that he would. For Job, faith wasn't wishful thinking, but rather a sense of conviction and certainty that so overwhelmed him that he yearned in his heart for the realization of his faith, that moment when he'd lay eyes on God.

What made Job such a strong believer? What would have been *his* defense of *his* hope?

In Job 9:8-10, Job said, "*He [God] alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea; He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; He does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number.*" Here, Job appeals to the beauty, order and intricacy of the natural world – the creation of the Creator, the handiwork of the master artist. And most of us would agree with Job that this is a powerful testimony of God's existence. Time, chance and purely natural causes cannot account for the universe.

In Job 10:8, he said to the Lord, "*Your hands have made me and fashioned me, and intricate unity.*" In a similar vein, Job saw the complexity of biological life as evidence of God, just as an intricately woven tapestry or a carefully engineered machine is evidence of an intelligent mind.

In Job 28:12, Job asked the question, “*But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?*” In other words, “what is truth?” and where can truth, knowledge and wisdom be found? Men have been asking these questions for thousands of years. Philosophers make all kinds of attempts to articulate wisdom to us, but notice what Job concluded, beginning in verse 13: “*Man does not know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living. The deep says, ‘It is not in me’; and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ It cannot be purchased for gold, nor can silver be weighed for its price.*” Job saw that man’s pursuit of wisdom was vain – all these secular philosophers are just blowing hot air. Now to the crescendo of Job’s discourse on wisdom, in verse 23: “*God understands its way, and He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens, to establish a weight for the wind, and apportion the waters by measure. When He made a law for the rain, and a path for the thunderbolt, then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out. And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.’*” What’s the point here? The point is that God’s wisdom alone is effective. Does anyone really think that the commonly-held philosophies of moral relativism and postmodernism which have given us transgenderism, same-sex marriage and a laughable intolerance of divergent views and lifestyles are sustainable? They are a flash in the pan! But God’s wisdom can be anchored in truth and reality, is effective, sustainable and fulfilling. Job saw this as evidence of God, and those of us who have experienced God’s wisdom as did Job would agree wholeheartedly.

So Job’s faith in God was strong. And while his faith was “the substance of things hoped for [and] the evidence of things not seen,” it was anchored in experiences and observations that are common to every man – the beauty of the natural world, the complexity of biological life, and the supreme wisdom of God’s wisdom and truth. Job certainly had “reasons” for his hope and could have offered a solid defense of his faith in the face of critics.

Moving on from Job, consider with me the example of King David. In Psalm 19:1, David agreed with Job’s testimony when he wrote, “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.*” David, who spent his youth as a shepherd on the hills of Israel, slept under the stars night after night, and developed, through observation and meditation, a profound faith *in* and respect *for* the architect of the stars. David went on to say of the heavens, “*Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*” In other words, humans of every geographical location, culture and language can understand the resounding sermon being preached and proclaimed by the starry preachers and terrestrial evangelists of the natural world – there is a God, and He is full of glory!

David was also in agreement with Job when it came to his deep, profound respect for the wisdom and word of God. In Psalm 19:7-10, he extolled the truth and transformative power of God’s laws, testimonies, statutes, commandments and judgments.

While there are many other examples of personal faith in the Bible, for the sake of time we'll consider just one more: the faith of the apostle Paul. While writing to an associate in the ministry, a young man named Timothy, Paul write, "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Just as Job said, "I know that my Redeemer lives," Paul was equally certain. He didn't just *think* and *hope* and *wish* that his faith in Christ mattered; he knew that it mattered; he knew God and was convinced of the truth of God's promise! As I explained earlier, because faith is a sincerely held conviction of the mind, the mind must be engaged. True faith, in other words, demands a firm basis in the intellect and reasoning power of man.

So in regard to Paul, what persuaded him to *know* that God and His promises were true? I think this is a very interesting case study, and I could probably spend 30 minutes to an hour really delving into the foundations and pillars that supported Paul's rich faith in God, but again, for the sake of time, I'd like to quickly point out three reasons...

1. First of all, as a Jew, Paul was **grounded in the Old Testament law**. Throughout his writings, he referenced the prophecies of the Old Testament, the wisdom of the Old Testament and the grand scheme of redemption – which Paul called the "mystery of God" that unfolded throughout the Old Testament and found its fulfillment in Christ. Paul claimed that the Scriptures were "inspired" by God in 2 Timothy 3:16, and no doubt this belief was anchored in a life of studying and experiencing the Word.
2. Second, Paul's faith in Christ specifically could be traced to a personal encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus in Acts 9:1-9. Jesus actually spoke to Paul, saying, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," to which Paul "trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?'" Certainly, a personal encounter or experience with Christ would be a segway to faith in Christ for a lot of us. Now, one might say that such experiences are very personal, subjective and therefore unconvincing for others. After all, if personal experiences are evidentiary, how can we then condemn Muhammad who claimed to hear the voice of Allah, or Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, who claimed to have encountered the divine? The difference here is that Paul's experience with Christ didn't stand alone but was rather concurrent to an established and well-supported system. Likewise, for many Christians today, their personal experiences serve as an evidence FOR THEM of the veracity of their faith – answered prayers, the effects of God's grace in their lives, a transformed life, experiencing God's providence and plan – the way He works in our lives and guides our steps – the love and fellowship of the church, the intuitive resonance of that heavenly hope, and so on. None of this is empirical, per se, but when understood and experienced on a personal level, faith is often the result, as it was for Paul.
3. And finally, Paul cited the resurrection of Christ as evidence of the Christian faith in 1 Corinthians 15:1-19. He wrote that Jesus was seen after His resurrection by Cephas, by the twelve and then "over five hundred brethren at once." As Doy Moyer pointed out in March when he held a meeting for us, the claim wasn't that they saw Jesus'

resurrection, but that they saw Him alive again after His death and burial. That's an historical statement, not a theological one. *How* He could be seen alive after His death is where a theological claim is made. And as Paul says here, the resurrection of Christ was prophesied "according to the Scriptures." The testimony of Scripture as well as the eyewitness testimony of hundreds of people were sufficient to prove to Paul and so many others that Jesus had been raised from the dead, that He was the Son of God, and that, through faith in Him, we, too, can conquer death.

So let's recap what we've discussed so far...

- "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Defined as persuasion, conviction and assurance, faith is not the equivalent of wishful thinking or even the choice to believe in the face of uncertainty. Rather, the effects of faith, like those of love, are so strong and deeply felt that faith becomes a substantive evidence, or proof, of God Himself.
- Because faith is defined as inward conviction of the mind, it is anchored in the intellect and will of man. For this reason, faith not only *doesn't* preclude external evidences and reasons, external evidences and reasons are actually required to bring the seed of faith to germination and ultimately, fruition.
- Throughout the Scriptures, we see examples of men who had such evidentiary faith in God – men such as Job, David and Paul. As we noticed, they appealed to the beauty and majesty of the natural world, the complexity of biological life, human nature, the wisdom of God, the eloquence, harmony and prophecies of Scripture, personal experiences as well as the resurrection of Jesus as evidences that, for them, made faith in God not only reasonable, but necessary.

Before I bring my lesson this evening to a close, I'd like to make a few additional observations about faith, so I hope you'll bear with me.

First and foremost, while faith does not preclude external evidences and proofs, it is still *faith*. Faith is not certainty based on the sight of the eyes; rather it is certainty, or trust, based on the preponderance of evidence. What this means is that while there are evidences and reasons to support our faith, these evidences can only take us so far. And for many people, this simply isn't good enough.

When I was preparing for my debate last year, I fell into a mode of thinking that I could **prove** the existence of God to those who questioned or rejected His existence. I just had to find the perfect argument, and then I had to articulate it eloquently enough.

What I came to realize, however, is that even though the weight of evidence overwhelmingly leads me and so many others to put our trust in Christ for salvation, many cannot and will not come to these same conclusion because of...PRIDE! Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 3:2 that "not all have faith," and in 1 Corinthians 1, he says the following: "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness." In other words – and this is very

important so pay close attention – there are a lot of people who do not approach the evidence objectively with a willingness to accept whatever the conclusion might be; rather, they have the attitude that the evidence must (1) meet their own arbitrary standards, and (2) lead them to a conclusion that they deem rational and worthy of merit.

I can tell you that there are a lot of people out there who reject Christianity, not because they've weighed the evidence and found it wanting, but because they don't like the conclusion. I'm reminded of the person who refuses to believe in God because they see Him as a tyrannical bully, or because they despise the thought of hell. All this proves is that you don't like God, not that He doesn't exist.

Along these same lines, there are those who refuse to accept anything unless the evidence meets their arbitrary standard. If something cannot be proven empirically and subjected to the scientific method and peer-review process, they will not accept it. To put it another way, they don't just want evidence, they want evidence that is so conclusive that faith itself isn't necessary. In the process, they demand a God who satisfies their intellect and demands.

First, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 that “not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” This is because “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise” – why? – so “that no flesh should glory in His presence.” God “hates the proud but gives grace to the humble.” He is seeking people who will humble themselves before Him – their Creator and sustainer – not people who want to proudly and arrogantly force God to submit to their terms and conditions.

Perhaps you reject the notion that it's prideful and arrogant to have high standards of evidence, or to refuse the intellectually lazy path of religious *faith*. But here's why it's prideful: we are all people of faith, even the most committed naturalist and scientist. Socially speaking, they have faith that life has meaning and purpose, that there are certain moral realities and that love has deep, intrinsic value. On a historical level, they have faith that this universe started with the Big Bang, that life came from non-living material and that billions of years of random mutations and evolutionary processes have yielded life as we know it today. And this is all accepted even though it hasn't been observed.

In a YouTube video entitled “Richard Dawkins: Faith,” Dawkins defines faith as “belief in something for which there is no evidence.” But then he later distinguishes between what he calls “blind faith” (or religious faith) and faith that is “based upon **confidence** in the scientific method, in the scientific peer review process.” In other words, Dawkins amazingly acknowledges here what so many atheists reject – that scientists and evolutionists *do* have a degree of faith. He tries to elevate “scientific faith” above “religious faith” by saying it's based on “confidence,” but isn't that somewhat subjective? It doesn't matter how you slice it, an admission such as this (which many atheists will grudgingly admit when pressed) destroys this perpetuated false dichotomy between scientific empiricism and the “blind faith” of religious dogmatism. It's not facts versus faith, or science versus superstition. The question is: where does the preponderance of evidence lead us? And: which conclusion is

more reasonable? Because for each one of us, no matter our worldview, there comes a point where we have to step beyond the raw data and facts and have faith in where that data is most likely pointing us. For the atheists, they put their faith in *nature* as the “Blind Watchmaker” (as Richard Dawkins would say). For theists, we’re putting our faith in God as the “Intelligent Watchmaker.”

So atheists are prideful because not only do they reject God *a priori*, they mock our faith and even the very notion of faith, all the while resting their own worldview on faith. And what this proves is that they are not merely academics who want good evidence, but people whose hearts are hardened against the very God who made them. C.S. Lewis, in his work *Mere Christianity*, said, “A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.”

I cannot help but be reminded of what the prophet Jeremiah said to the Jews of his day:

He said in Jeremiah 10:6-8, “*Inasmuch as there is none like You, O Lord (You are great, and Your name is great in might), who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due. For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; a wooden idol is a worthless doctrine.*” The only difference between the nations of Jeremiah’s day and the many skeptics of our time is the nature of the idol – for them, it was an object representing a false deity such as Baal or Molech; for the skeptics of today, it is their own intellect that they worship, an intellect that is wrapped up in the gospel of brute materialism and the false religion of Darwinism.

So we’re all people of faith. It’s an undeniable part of the human experience. After all, we’re such finite creatures inhabiting such a small speck of dirt in a vast universe in such a small sliver of time...so for us to make grand assertions or accept grand conclusions about the greater purpose of the universe, we must humbly admit that faith is what bridges what we observe and what we conclude. I’m not making the “god of the gaps” argument, but pointing out that God is the only logical conclusion *in light of what we know*.

In closing, there’s one final point that I want to make about faith. Faith isn’t merely an intellectual bridge between what we observe and what we conclude, at least, not for the Christian. Because the conclusion or object of our faith is God, faith is very much **relational**. To put it another way, our faith commits us to God and enters us into a relationship with Him. And because that relationship is ongoing, faith is a lifestyle of trust that will culminate in heaven where, in God’s presence, faith will no longer be necessary.

I sincerely hope that my lesson has clarified the nature of true faith, but more than that, my hope is that if you haven’t put your faith in Christ, that you will humble yourself and do so this evening. If you decide to do so, make sure that you’re not just drawing an intellectual conclusion, but that you’re making a commitment to God. “For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day.”

If we can encourage you or help you in any way this evening, please let us know while we stand and sing the song of invitation...