

# Questions about Knowing by Faith

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# Knowing by faith

Faith includes, combines, and surpasses:

- **Givens:** starting point and standard
- **Credulity:** accepting testimony
- **Faculties:** abilities working properly
- **Relating:** personal interaction

By faith we embrace God's interaction with us, perceive his glory with our inner heart, accept his testimony, and take his written and living Word as our starting point and standard for truth.

# Questions about knowing by faith

- Is it arrogant to be confident in knowing God?
- Is it hateful to know Jesus is the only way?
- Is it judgmental to say we are right and others are wrong?
- Can you really know you have eternal life?
- Is faith ever unclear or unsure?
- Why do we need faith if we have knowledge?
- Is it irrational to believe strongly in the face of contrary evidence?

# Is it arrogant to be confident in knowing God?

- We know the physical world is real. Would it be humbler to say we don't know?
- We know Abraham Lincoln was President. Would it be humbler to doubt this?
- We know fire can burn flesh. Would it be humbler to be unsure about this?
- I know my wife loves me. Would it be humbler to worry that she hates me?

**Confidence is not necessarily arrogance.**

# False dichotomy between facts and values

- **Facts:** The claims of science and math are objective truth.
- **Values:** The claims of religion and morality are subjective opinion.

Knowing by science and math is no more real or objective or certain than knowing by faith.

# Is it humbler to be skeptical?

- *Agnostic* is a word coined from Greek, meaning “without knowledge.”
- A Latin equivalent would be *ignoramus*.
- If you say, “I’m agnostic,” are you humbly admitting that you’re an *ignoramus*?
- Or are you proudly boasting that you’re a brilliant skeptic? You don’t know, so nobody else can possibly know—and you’re smart enough to know that!

## **Misplaced humility**

What we suffer from today is humility in the wrong place... A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed.

Nowadays the part of a man that a man does assert is exactly the part he ought not to assert—himself... The new skeptic is so humble that he doubts if he can even learn...

We are on the road to producing a race of man too mentally modest to believe in the multiplication table. (G. K. Chesterton)

# **Is it hateful to know Jesus is the only way?**

In the modern world we must recognize a pluralism not only of races and cultures but also of religion, which means that Christianity is not the only way. Such religious hate statements should no longer be tolerated and the organizations promoting them should be challenged. (David Frawley, a Hindu also known as Vamadeva Shastri)



# **Objecting to Christianity**

There is only one God, one book, one saviour, one final prophet and so on. Most Christian missionaries try to get people to accept Christ as their personal saviour and Christianity in one form or another as the true faith for all humanity. A religion that is pluralistic in nature like the Hindu cannot have such a conversion-based ideology. (David Frawley)

# **Objecting to conversion**

Conversion is a sin against the Divine in man... As we move into a global age, let us set this messy business of conversion behind, along with the other superstitions of the Dark Ages.

We are all God. There is only one Self in all creatures. Who is there to convert and what could anyone be converted from? The soul is Divine... The soul cannot be saved. It is beyond gain and loss. (David Frawley)

## **It's hateful to say we don't need salvation.**

The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. **If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar** and his word has no place in our lives. (1 John 1:7-10)

## **It's hateful to call God a liar.**

We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. **Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar,** because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:9-12)

## **It's hateful to call Jesus a liar.**

- Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)
- It is more loving and humble to believe the all-knowing Son of God than to contradict him. It is more hateful to call Jesus a liar and God the Father a liar than to believe the Father's testimony to his Son.
- It's hateful to block others from Jesus.

# Lost without knowledge

Because they hated **knowledge** and did not choose the fear of the LORD... therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way... the simple are killed by their turning away (Prov 1:29-32)

My people are destroyed from lack of **knowledge**. (Hosea 4:6)

Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the **knowledge** of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind. (Romans 1:28)

They are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on **knowledge**. (Romans 10:2)

# Is it judgmental to say we are right and others are wrong?

- Is it judgmental for a parent to say she is right that  $8 \times 7 = 56$  and that her child is wrong to say that  $8 \times 7 = 54$ ?
- Is it judgmental for a scientist to say the earth orbits the sun and to say earlier scientists were wrong to say the sun orbited the earth?
- Is it judgmental for a doctor to say penicillin will cure an infection and that a patient is wrong to believe snake oil will help?

# **Believing in nothing**

In the world it is called tolerance, but in hell it is called despair. The sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, enjoys nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing but remains alive because there is nothing which it would die for. (Dorothy Sayers)



# Can you really know you have eternal life?

- Official Roman Catholic theology says that most Christians should not be sure of their own salvation. A favored few can know their eternal destiny, but the rest can only hope, wait, and work.
- God wants Christians to know: I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

# What is true faith?

True faith is not only a **sure knowledge** by which I hold as true all that God has revealed to us in Scripture; it is also a **wholehearted trust**, which the Holy Spirit creates in me by the gospel, that God has freely granted, not only to others but to me also, forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, and salvation. These are gifts of sheer grace, granted solely by Christ's merit. (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 21)

# Is faith ever unclear or unsure?

- Jesus says, “You of little faith.” (Matthew 6:30, 8:26, 14:31, 16:8, 17:20)
- Little faith might not see clearly or know surely. Though weak, it may be real faith.
- Even weak faith may hold real knowledge. We know things with varying degrees of clarity and certainty. We might be unclear on some points yet have real knowledge. We might be unsure at times and yet truly know, though not with full certainty.

# Why do we need faith if we have knowledge?

- Some people say, “If you know it, you don’t need faith.”
- Knowledge is not just a thing you store in your mind like a bike in a garage.
- Your social setting, actions, and heart can reshape your mind and change what you previously thought you knew.
- If you lack faith in God, your knowledge can be overthrown by Satan at any time.

# **Heart-faith sustains reason**

Reason may win truths; without Faith she will retain them just so long as Satan pleases.

There is nothing we cannot be made to believe or disbelieve. If we wish to be rational, not now and then, but constantly, we must pray for the gift of Faith, for the power to go on believing not in the teeth of reason but in the teeth of lust and terror and jealousy and boredom and indifference that which reason, authority, and experience, or all three, have once delivered to us for truth. (C. S. Lewis)

# **Is it irrational to believe strongly in the face of contrary evidence?**

- Would it be irrational to believe you did not commit a crime even if lots of evidence seemed to point in your direction?
- Would it be irrational to believe in a dear, wise, capable friend even if things happened that you couldn't understand or explain?
- Believing “evidence” rather than God may show disloyalty, not rationality.

# Analysis or acquaintance?

- **Material analysis:** Examine a thing that you can measure, control, and dissect.
- **Personal acquaintance:** Understand what a person is thinking and feeling, and how that person regards you. This knowledge depends on the other person's revelation and on your receptivity.

# **It makes sense to believe strongly despite “evidence.”**

- **Our minds are too small to figure God out:** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:9)
- **Our minds are too fickle to hold out against Satan without God’s help:** For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. (Matthew 24:24)
- **Faith involves knowledge by acquaintance.**



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## We know!

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life... We **know** that anyone born of God does not continue to sin... We **know** that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We **know** also that the Son of God has come and has given us **understanding**, so that we may **know** him who is **true**. And we are in him who is **true**—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the **true** God and eternal life. (1 John 5:13, 18-21)