

Questions About Knowing By Faith By David Feddes

Faith in Jesus is not just a matter of feeling or guessing or wishing. Faith is knowing. Faith is not just some wild leap in the dark that has nothing in common with other ways of knowing. Faith includes, combines, and surpasses the ways that we gain knowledge in general. In a previous article, we looked at several ways of knowing:

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

We know some givens, or first principles, as our starting point and standard. We learn many things by believing what we're told by others. We know through our senses and abilities working properly. We know persons through relating and interacting. These are healthy ways of gaining knowledge more broadly, and they are healthy ways of knowing by faith. Faith knows some things as givens requiring no further proof. Faith knows by believing testimony from God's Word and God's people. Faith knows through the faculty of the God-sense in our inner self that God enlivens and enlightens. Faith knows through relating, through personal interaction with God, by which we discover more and more of him and of his ways. Faith brings all these ways of knowing together. 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. Faith isn't mere opinion. We *know* by faith. But the moment we say this, questions arise.

- 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?

Let's look at each of these in more detail.

Is it arrogant to be confident in knowing God?

If you are confident in knowing God is real, in knowing God loves and saves you, in knowing what God teaches about right and wrong, heaven and hell, and various other realities, people might say, "You are so arrogant. If you were humble, you'd be a lot less sure. You wouldn't say that you know these things."

Is it arrogant to know something for sure? Not necessarily. We know the physical world is real. Would it be humbler to say we don't know? It's not a matter of being humble. If we know it, we know it. Nobody calls us arrogant for knowing the physical world is real. The reality of the physical world is knowledge that we take as a given. Likewise, we take God's reality as a given. Knowing that God is real is not a matter of humility or of pride; it's just recognizing reality.

We know Abraham Lincoln was president. Would it be humbler to doubt this? Would it be better to say, "I'm not so sure if that guy Lincoln ever lived or if he ever was president"? No. We have reliable testimony from people and from books that Lincoln was once president, so we believe it. In fact, we know it. There is no great humility in doubting this. We know Lincoln was

president by testimony. There's no pride in knowing it; it's just a truth we accept. Likewise, we accept God's testimony that Jesus is his own Son and that he raised Jesus from the dead. Knowing this is not a matter of being arrogant; it's just recognizing reality.

We know fire burns flesh. Would it be humbler to be unsure about this? Suppose I say, "Rather than arrogantly claiming to know that fire burns flesh, I encourage you to stick your hand in the flame and find out for yourself. I don't want to push my opinion on you." If I said that, you might say, "What kind of nutcase are you?" We know that fire burns flesh. It's not just an opinion, and it's not arrogant to say we know it. We know it by the experience of our faculties or by what others have said about their experience of fire, and it's helpful to know. It's not arrogant to know what you know. Likewise, when a Christian knows that hell burns unrepentant sinners, it's not arrogant to know this. It's just recognizing reality.

I know my wife loves me. Would it be humbler for me to worry and say, "Maybe Wendy really hates me. Even though she promised to love me 'till death do us part,' and even though she's been showering me with kindness and affection all these years of marriage, maybe she secretly hates me." No! I know absolutely that my wife loves me, and it's not arrogant of me to know that. I've got a great wife. If you doubt whether your spouse loves you, that's not a sign of humility. It means either that you don't have a very trusting heart or that you don't have a very good spouse. I know my wife loves me, and I know God loves me. It's not arrogant to know this. It's just recognizing reality.

Confidence is not necessarily arrogance. Some things you just know.

Why is it that some people say you're arrogant if you claim to know things about God or to know things about right and wrong? It's mainly because we live in a society with a false dichotomy between facts and values. This mindset wrongly imagines that all claims of science and math are objective truth, while all claims of religion and morality are subjective opinion.

In this view, it's not at all arrogant to know something about science or math. If I say I know the moon orbits around the earth, people won't say, "How can you be so arrogant?" If I say I know $3+3=6$, they won't say to me, "You are so arrogant! You should be more humble and consider the possibility that $3+3=5$." People won't accuse me of arrogance for confidently knowing something from the realm of science or math, because they view science and math as facts, as matters of objective truth.

When it comes religion and morality, however, many people would accuse me of arrogance for claiming to know. That's because there is a bad habit of thinking that religion and morality are matters of subjective opinion or personal taste. In this view, faith deals only with values, not facts, and we have the right to confident knowledge of facts but not of values. If something is just a matter of personal taste or opinion, then it's arrogant to insist that you know the truth and that everybody else also ought to regard it as true.

This false dichotomy, this mistaken way of dividing facts and values, overestimates the factuality of science and math, and underestimates the factuality of Christianity. The Christian faith is about facts, not personal opinions. If you take God to be real and the Bible to be true, you are dealing with facts, with reality, and you are not arrogant for knowing what you know. Knowing by science and math is no more real or objective or certain than knowing by faith. Science is a human set of models for explaining reality. Math is a human set of symbols for interpreting reality. Math and science are not pure reality itself but models and symbols that give us partial knowledge of reality. In some respects, the knowledge of God is more real and more objective than math. God is more real, unchanging, and permanent than anything else, so God as the object of knowledge is more objective than any other object. The Bible is God's Word

expressed in human words, so no merely human symbols or models can give us the same level of accuracy and certainty as the Bible provides.

We must reject the fact-value dichotomy and realize that biblical truths about God and morality are facts, not mere values or opinions. When we understand this, we will recognize that it's not a matter of arrogance to say that we know God and his truth when we accept Jesus and the Bible. Of course it's possible to be overly arrogant, to be surer of things than you should be. If you really don't know what you're talking about, it is foolish and arrogant to talk as though you do. But if you really do know God, you're not necessarily arrogant to say so.

Is it humbler to be skeptical? Some people think so. They equate humility with uncertainty. *Agnostic* is a word coined from Greek, meaning "without knowledge." Some people say, "When it comes to God, I'm agnostic. I don't know. And nobody else knows either." Often they think they are quite humble in saying, "I don't know." The word *agnostic* seems humble, trendy, and smart. But the Latin equivalent of *agnostic* is *ignoramus*. It doesn't seem so trendy or smart to be an *ignoramus*. *Agnostic* has a much better ring to it than *ignoramus*, but the root meaning is the same: "I don't know." If you say, "I'm agnostic," are you humbly admitting that you're an *ignoramus* who doesn't know God? 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! It turns out that some skeptical agnostics are very arrogant because they assume that if they don't know something, nobody else could possibly know it. Those who accuse Christians of being arrogant for knowing the reality of Christ may be revealing more about their own arrogant ignorance than about the arrogance of Christians.

Humility is a virtue, but not the wrong kind of humility that insists nobody can know anything. G.K. Chesterton wrote,

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.

Chesterton wrote those words a century ago, but they are more relevant than ever. In recent years, postmodernism has spread the notion that nobody knows anything very objective. People are too mentally modest to believe the truths of God or the basic facts of math, and yet they're very sure that they want what they want when they want it. That's misplaced humility. We ought to be much more humble about our own desires and urges and our sense of how things ought to be, and a bit less humble about the facts that can be known if we pay attention to God. If we know God's truth, we can be confident without being arrogant.

Is it hateful to know Jesus is the only way?

If knowledge of God marks you as arrogant in some people's eyes, then knowing Jesus as the only way of salvation brands you as a hater. David Frawley, a Hindu also known as Vamadeva Shastri, says, "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." Without asking whether it's *true* that Christ is the only way, Frawley simply dismisses the claims of Christ as "religious hate statements." Mr. Tolerance *will not tolerate* Christianity's claim that Jesus is the only way. Frawley objects to Christianity and to conversion. He complains that in 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. Hindus accept that there are many paths, so naturally they will not feel compelled to get everyone to abandon their own path and follow the Hindu path instead. In fact there is no one Hindu path but rather a variety of paths, with new paths coming into being every day.

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.

It sounds nice to say all religions are true, but in the same breath, Christianity is said to be false. Christian teachings that all people should believe one Bible and one Savior are called "superstitions of the Dark Ages." In the Bible the Lord says, "You shall have no other gods before me," but Hindus flatly deny this. They honor various gods and goddesses and even say, "We are all God." No wonder a Hindu spokesman called it "an insult ... to tell Hindus that they are all sinners and that only Jesus can save them." If all of us are God, who needs a Savior?

But we're not God; we're human sinners. There are not many gods and goddesses worthy of our worship; there is one God. There are not many paths to God; there is one, and his name is Jesus. True religion is not a matter of "generating your own spiritual experience." It is a matter of God revealing himself to you through his Word.

Frawley substitutes his version of Hinduism in place of Christianity. He insists that no path is better than any other. Let's think about that. For centuries some forms of Hinduism in India supported the burning of widows upon the death of their husbands. By contrast, the Bible says that true religion is "to look after widows in their distress" (James 1:27). Are all paths the same? One path says to care for widows; the other path says to burn them. Some versions of Hinduism and other Eastern religions say that if you are poor, it is because of bad things you did in a previous life, and so you should not be helped. Your bad karma from a previous life requires you to suffer in this life. By contrast, Christianity says there was no previous life and calls us to help the poor and the needy. For centuries India (where Hinduism has been most powerful) has had a caste system that segregates people according to their ancestry and social status. The very lowest people in society are untouchable; no one will associate with them. Christianity insists on loving your neighbor as yourself, breaking down barriers, and befriending people of every kind. All religions are *not* the same. The Christian way is better, and it is not hateful to say so.

Is it hateful to say, "Jesus is the only way of salvation?" No. It's hateful to say, "We don't need Jesus for salvation." Consider these words from the Bible:

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... 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 1:7-10; 5:9-12)

If you say, "I don't need Jesus," you are saying, "God, you're a liar. You say I'm a sinner. You lie. You say you've sent your Son into the world to die for my sin. You lie. You say anyone who does not have the Son of God does not have life. You lie." It's hateful to call God a liar.

It's hateful to call Jesus a liar. Jesus said, "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. Jesus says he is the only way.

Is it hateful to know Jesus is the only way? No, it is loving toward God to believe what he says. It is loving toward Jesus to believe what he says. And it is loving toward other people to let them know what you know: that Jesus is the way to eternal life, the only way. It's not hateful to say Jesus is the only way. Since he is in fact the only way, what's really hateful is to block others from Jesus. What's really hateful is to pretend there are other ways for them to be made right with God when there aren't.

It's not a loving thing to say that all ways lead to God, or that nobody knows, or that it doesn't matter what you know. People need to know the way of salvation. They are lost without knowledge of God. Here are some statements from the Bible that show this:

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 (Proverbs 1:29-32)

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

Since they did not think it was 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)

We need to know the way of salvation in Jesus. Without such knowledge, we are lost forever.

When I say this, I'm not being hateful; I'm being truthful, and I am saying it from love. I want people without Jesus to come to know him and to enjoy eternal life. The most loving thing I can do for others is to share with them the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.

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

Many people think that being judgmental is a terrible thing, and they think it's judgmental for Christians to say we are right to believe the Bible and others are wrong to reject it. But is it always judgmental for a person to know he is right and someone else is wrong?

Is it judgmental for a mother to say she is right that $8 \times 7 = 56$ and that her child is wrong to say that $8 \times 7 = 54$? The mother is not being cruel, mean, harsh, or judgmental. She is simply showing the child's error and teaching the truth.

Is it judgmental for a scientist to say that the earth orbits the sun and to say earlier scientists were wrong to say the sun orbited the earth? In one sense, of course, it's a judgment, but not a nasty, mean judgment. It's simply recognizing that one view is right and the other is wrong.

Is it judgmental for a doctor to say that penicillin will cure an infection and that a patient is wrong to believe snake oil will help? It's not wrongly judgmental to say that. It is exercising a correct and wise form of judgment, not a cruel and misguided form of judgment. We all have to make judgments. We need to make right judgments. Penicillin can cure infections; snake oil won't help. A good doctor will say so, not to be judgmental, but to help a patient.

There is a widespread notion that we shouldn't believe in anything very firmly when it comes to the things of God. "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). What is often called tolerance is simply indifference or despair, not caring. It’s a lot easier to say, “I don’t know” than to really commit yourself to something and stick your neck out for the living God and to take the risks that go with following the Lord Jesus.

As a believer in Jesus and the Bible, you can know unbelievers are wrong and you are right without being wrong judgmental. You can make a right judgment about truth without having an eager-to-condemn, judgmental attitude toward other people and wanting the worst for them.

Can you really know you have eternal life?

Knowing by faith that you are saved is considered rare or even bad by some church traditions. 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. But according to the Bible, 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). God wants you to know not just eternal truths about him and historical facts about Jesus, but he also wants you to know that you belong to him, that you have been forgiven, and that your future glory is secure and certain. The Heidelberg Catechism says,

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)

When you know the gospel and trust Jesus, you can know that you have eternal life.

Is faith ever unclear or unsure?

We can know divine truths by faith and know our own salvation by faith. Does this mean real faith is always absolutely clear and certain? Does this mean that if we don’t understand doctrinal details clearly and precisely, or if we’re not 100 percent sure about something, then we don’t have real faith? No, it’s possible to have some confusion and uncertainty but still have real faith and real knowledge. Jesus often said to his disciples, “You of little faith” (Matthew 6:30, 8:26, 14:31, 16:8, 17:20), but little faith is different from no faith. Most of us in some situations are people of little faith. Our knowledge is not very large. There is much more that we still need to learn. Our knowledge is sometimes vague; there are many things we need to understand in more detail. Some of the things we know by faith are held weakly or with a lot of doubt and struggle. Your faith can be real faith and yet sometimes be unclear or unsure in your mind. Little faith might not see clearly or know surely, but 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.

Little faith can seek increasing clarity and certainty. The range and precision of our knowledge should continue to grow so that we have not just small, vague knowledge but vast, clear knowledge. The certainty of our knowledge should grow so that we have not just weak, trembling assurance but strong, bold assurance.

Meanwhile, do not become discouraged if your knowledge is still small and your assurance is still weak. If you know that Jesus saves and you go to Jesus—even with hesitations, even with uncertainties, he will surely save you. If you sometimes have questions or difficulties

understanding the Bible but you keep going to God's Word, then you have a genuine faith in God's truth and his promises. As you keep searching, he will give you more and more understanding and more and more assurance and certainty.

Why do we need faith if we have knowledge?

Some people say, "If you know it, you don't need faith." But knowledge is not just a thing you store in your mind like a bike in a garage. Knowledge can decay or be lost. In previous articles, we've seen things that shape your mind and influence knowledge. Your social setting, actions, and heart can reshape your mind and change what you previously thought you knew. Knowledge of God requires ongoing faith because sometimes you get into a negative social setting, or slip into bad behavior, or have heart struggles, and your knowledge of God will collapse without faith.

Your social setting shapes your knowledge. Instead of being among Christians, you may be among people who don't believe what you believe. What you knew as long as you were in a godly social setting will fade unless you have the commitment and the knowledge that comes through faith. Faith will keep you believing the things you know to be true even in a hostile setting, and faith will draw you to the church community that supports your knowledge of God.

Your actions shape your knowledge. Sinful actions make it harder to believe; good actions make it easier to believe. If faith motivates you to keep acting as God directs, you will continue to see clearly instead of constantly splattering mud on your windshield and making it harder to see and to know the things of God. When you sin, faith will send you to Christ for cleansing, and this will enable you to see truth rather than being blinded by your sin.

Your heart shapes your knowledge. If your heart is divided or corrupted, any knowledge of God that you had will fragment or fail—unless faith gets the heart back on track. By faith the heart trusts and longs for God and gets back in tune with God, and the mind is then able to hold on to what it knows about God.

We often tend to view knowledge as firmer than faith, and faith as weaker than knowledge, but it turns out to be the opposite: knowledge depends on faith. We gain knowledge by faith and maintain it by faith. Without faith knowledge tends to slip away from us. If you lack faith in God, Satan can overthrow your knowledge at any time.

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)

Some famous scientists say that God did not create the heavens and the earth, yet they see so much evidence of design that they don't believe life could have evolved totally by accident. They say extraterrestrial aliens must have put life on earth. How can someone as brilliant as Francis Crick, the discoverer of DNA, believe in aliens putting life on earth but say it's ridiculous to believe in God the Creator? Satan can make you believe or disbelieve just about anything. How can a man who is totally male in his anatomy and chromosomes and has fathered several children declare, "I am really a woman?" How can other people consider such a man to be a woman? It turns out people can be made to believe just about anything, even when it totally contradicts biology and all observable facts. Apart from faith in the true and living God, knowledge is not so firm and solid as we might think. Strong faith in God's truth makes knowledge strong; otherwise,

all knowledge is weak and vulnerable. Faith is not the enemy of reason; faith is the friend that keeps reason strong and clear so that we can hold onto knowledge when all sorts of irrational forces attack what we know. In our most rational moments, we can see that God is real, the Bible is true, and Jesus is Lord. When we think about the claims of Christianity clearly and logically, we find them solid and well substantiated. But when our desires or fears or boredom kick in, Christianity seems unreal to us. When Satan turns up his attacks, what seemed obvious and certain can suddenly seem ridiculous and impossible.

Why do we need faith if we have knowledge? Because faith is the key to knowing many things in the first place, and faith is what gives knowledge its strength and staying power when irrational urges and demonic deceptions attack our knowledge.

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

Sometimes people bring up evidence that seems to contradict Christianity. If you continue to believe anyway, are you being irrational? One common argument says is that if God is perfectly good, he would not want any evil or suffering in the world, and if God is all-powerful, he would be able to prevent all evil and suffering. But evil and suffering obviously exist, so that would seem to prove that there is no all-powerful, perfectly good God. Or you may come across evidence that seems to suggest that the Bible is unreliable or that Jesus didn't rise from the dead. Should you continue to believe even in the face of contrary evidence? Or should you follow the latest evidence wherever it seems to lead? In that case, if the evidence supports Christianity, it's rational for you to believe it; if there seems to be strong evidence against it, it's rational to reject it; and if there seems to be about equal evidence for and against, it's rational to say, "I don't know" and wait for more evidence one way or the other. With that approach, it might seem irrational to believe in the face of contrary evidence. However, if you're a Christian and you believe strongly even when people bring evidence against God or the Bible or the gospel, it doesn't mean you're irrational.

Would it be irrational to believe you did not commit a crime even if lots of evidence seemed to point to your guilt? If you knew you didn't commit a murder and somebody was trying to frame you with a lot of evidence indicating that you did it, would it be rational for you to say, "I have to go with the evidence. I did it." No! Evidence cannot change your mind about something you know for yourself. You didn't do it. You know you didn't do it. It would not be rational to go against what you know just because some evidence seemed to point in the other direction.

The same is true once you've come to know God. Once God has revealed himself to you and showed you your sin and your need of a Savior, once God has implanted his life in you and given you personal trust in the living Lord Jesus, it is not irrational to continue believing strongly in your Lord even if various things arise that seem contrary to your faith. You know what you know, and no amount of additional evidence can change what you know to be true.

Would it be irrational to believe in a dear, wise, capable friend even if things happened that you couldn't understand or explain? You know your friend has excellent character and always wants what is best for you. He does some things you can't understand, but you know that he's smart and that he loves you, so you continue trusting. It is rational to say, "I can't figure out why he's doing things this way, but I trust him." So it is with God. Once you come to know him as Father, to know that he loves you, that he has your best interest in mind, that his wisdom and his ways are too great and mysterious for you always to understand, then you trust him even when evidence seems to point in a different direction. Believing "evidence" rather than believing God might show disloyalty, not rationality. God might say to you, "You should have known me

better.” If some stranger were to accuse my wife of something horrible, should I just believe that stranger the moment they present a bit of evidence? That would not be fair to my wife. I know her. She’s loved me for decades. It would take a lot more than a few shreds of evidence from a stranger to overturn everything I know of my wife and destroy our entire relationship.

It is sometimes wise and rational to strongly believe in a person despite some evidence to the contrary. Knowledge by material analysis is not always better than knowledge by personal acquaintance. In material analysis, you examine a thing that you can measure, control, and dissect. In personal acquaintance, you understand through interaction what a person is thinking and feeling, and how that person regards you. This kind of knowledge depends on the other person’s revelation to you and on your receptivity to what he is revealing of himself. You can’t know much about me by just killing me, dissecting me, and cutting my brain up. You would learn a few things about my anatomy, but you would learn very little about what makes me the person I am. You’d learn a lot more by spending time with me and interacting with me than by trying to analyze me. You could know very little about me if I refused to reveal anything about myself or if you refused to pay attention to anything I said. That is certainly the case with God. We know nothing of God unless he shows himself to us and unless we’re receptive to what he shows us. But if God does communicate his reality to us and we come to know him through personal acquaintance, then “evidence” gained from analysis won’t count against him.

It makes sense to believe strongly in the Lord despite evidence. Our minds are too small to figure God out. The Lord says, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:0). If God could fit between your two ears in that small space inside your skull, if your little brain could figure out the infinite God, then he wouldn’t be God. God’s ways are far beyond ours. Faith is very rational when it says, “Lord, I am like a little child. I’m not going to concern myself with things too great for me. I’m going to trust that you know what you’re doing because you’ve shown yourself to be a loving and faithful Father to me.” That’s not irrational; it’s not turning your brain off. It’s realism about who God is in comparison to us.

Here’s another reason it makes sense to believe despite contrary evidence: Our minds are too fickle to hold out against Satan without God’s help. We need to believe in the face of contrary evidence because Satan will surely bring contrary evidence. “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) God’s elect, God’s chosen, cannot be deceived and lose their salvation, but if it were possible and if it depended strictly on strong evidence, the evidence from Satan would be more than enough to make everyone stop believing. Of course there will be evidence and arguments against the truth of the Christian faith! Of course that evidence will seem strong! Satan is constantly manufacturing and presenting such evidence. It is not rational to change your mind every time the enemy of your soul sends new “evidence” to deceive you.

Faith involves knowledge by acquaintance. It makes sense to believe in God, to know his reality and trust his goodness despite contrary “evidence,” because personal encounter outweighs impersonal analysis. When you become personally acquainted with God, you’re not just analyzing evidence or propositions or things; you are in relationship with the living Lord. You also know that a different sort of personality is out to ruin that relationship, so you remain alert to Satan and his schemes to lead you away from Christ. You do not allow Satan to manipulate “evidence” in a way that undermines your knowledge of God and your confidence in him.

Summary

Is it arrogant to be confident in knowing God? Not necessarily. God wants us to be clear and sure in our knowledge of him.

Is it hateful to know that Jesus is the only way? No. It's hateful toward God to say Jesus is not the only way; that is calling God a liar. It's also hateful toward people not to help them find the one way to eternal life.

Is it judgmental to say we are right and others are wrong? Not necessarily. We may simply be stating the facts, and we may be stating those facts in order to help others discover more truth.

Can you really know you have eternal life? Yes. God wants you to know.

Is faith ever unclear or unsure? Yes. We may have faith that is real but little, faith that is genuine but not perfectly clear or fully certain. Sometimes we have to pray like a man who said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

Why do we need faith if we have knowledge? Because knowledge can be easily twisted or lost. Satan can get us to believe just about anything if we don't have faith and firm commitment. Our minds could change very easily without faith to receive God's ongoing help.

Is it irrational to believe strongly in the face of contrary evidence? It is rational to continue believing if we know God by personal acquaintance and find him trustworthy. God's ways are not our ways. Besides, Satan is eager to feed us misleading evidence. It is rational to trust God and to refuse Satan's ploys.

Having faced these questions about knowing by faith, we can say, "We know!" We can echo the apostle John:

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).