

# Introduction

A large crowd had gathered to hear me speak at Texas A&M University. One student in particular, an atheist, couldn't accept anything I had to say about Christianity. I've forgotten her name, but I'll never forget her story. Since I'm always curious how people arrive at their beliefs, I asked her how she had become an atheist.

"I was raised to believe in God," she began, "but when I got to middle school, I began to have questions about what I was being taught in church. When I asked my priest about them, he couldn't answer me. Instead, he just told me to have faith, that it was wrong and sinful of me to doubt and ask questions. I suppressed my questions for many years, but when I came to college, I discovered other people had the same questions. After talking with them, I found that they were all either atheists or agnostics. And

so I became one, too.”

No one could fault her for concluding that Christianity didn't have the answers to her tough questions. However, the truth is that Christianity *does* have answers to her tough questions – it's just that many well-meaning people (including many theologians and church leaders) have never taken the time to find the answers!

Unfortunately, I'm afraid this young woman's experience might be all too common. There is a general perception that while Christians are apparently nice people who seem to have found something that gives them inner peace, security and happiness, their beliefs simply can't stand up to intellectual scrutiny.

Nothing could be further from the truth! If you stick with me through this short book, I will address crucial questions that people ask about Christianity and provide you with *reasons* to believe in Christ – reasons that you may have never thought about.

## **Incompatible?**

“Wait a minute,” you may say. “What's all this talk about reason? I thought Christianity was based on faith. Aren't reason and faith incompatible?”

Actually, they're not. It's true that a person needs faith to be a Christian. The Bible says that “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for everyone who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is to believe –

or trust – in someone or something you have never seen. But that doesn't mean that faith is contrary to reason, logic and evidence.

In fact, true faith is often very reasonable and based on sound evidence. Christianity is a thinking person's religion. It does not call us to be naïve or gullible, but instead it appeals to our minds as well as our hearts. After all, God gave each of us a brain and He intends for us to use it!

Perhaps an illustration will help show the correlation between faith (trust) and evidence. Picture yourself living on the tenth floor of an apartment building when the fire alarm sounds. You hurry to the stairwell only to find it full of smoke. You rush back to your room, put a wet towel under the crack in the door and try to figure out how to escape.

As your room begins to fill with smoke, you open the window, stand on the ledge and remember what your Sunday School teacher taught you as a little kid: "If you believe strongly enough, you can do anything." So, as you stand on the window ledge and look down ten stories, you try to convince yourself that if you flap your arms hard enough and believe that you can fly, then you can.

"I believe I can fly, I believe I can fly," you tell yourself. But we all know that no matter how hard you flap your arms and no matter how strongly you believe, if you jump from that ledge you are jumping to your death. All the *faith* in the world won't enable you to fly. I contend that this isn't the kind of faith that God wants you to have. This

kind of “faith” really is stupid – and might be hazardous to your health as well!

Now let’s consider a slightly different scenario. Your apartment building is on fire and you discover there is no way to safety except through the window. Only this time you go to the ledge and – lo and behold! – down on the ground below you the fire department has set up a huge net. A burly fireman yells up to you through his bullhorn, “Jump and we’ll catch you!”

You are now faced with a decision that will test your faith – not your faith in God, but your faith in the firefighters. You have to decide whether or not you trust these people. Will they be able to catch you? Will their equipment work? You’re putting your life in their hands, and you wouldn’t do that without faith (trust) in them. You’ve never jumped from a ten-story building before, but if you decide that these firefighters are trustworthy, you’ll take a “leap of faith” – literally!

## Everyday faith

By viewing faith in this context, you’ll see that much of what we do every day depends on faith, or trust, in others. Every time you drink a can of pop, you exercise faith in the bottling company. Every time you drive your car down the road, you exercise faith in the company that made your car and in the other drivers you share the road with – generally drivers you’ve never even met before.

You exercise faith in your professor and the textbooks

you use in class. You exercise faith in your bank when you deposit your hard-earned money. You have faith (trust) in your relationships with others, and you feel offended if others don't have faith in you.

Almost every human interaction involves faith. Is it really that unusual that God would expect us to have faith (trust) in Him as well?

Yes, you must have faith, but there is nothing more reasonable than to have faith in God. That is the thesis of this little book. Since faith is essential, I would like to ask you to talk to God in faith for just a moment. Just take a minute right now and ask God to help you get the answers you need in your life as you read this book. You might want to say something like this:

*Dear God, I want to know the truth about you. I ask you to reveal your truth and yourself to me. As I read, help me to understand what you have to say to me. Help me to have faith and trust in you and come to know your love and forgiveness in a personal way. Thank you for hearing my prayer. Amen.*

Now let's start looking at those crucial questions!