

‘Why I...Trust’

Today I got up and turned on the lights. Then I made a pot of coffee, took a shower, got dressed, went over the message for today, jumped in my truck, pushed the button and the garage door opened, drove to church, walked up here on this stage answering this question: **Why do I trust? Why do I have faith?**

Today we're wrapping up this series called "Why I." It's about some pretty big questions of life like why do I live, why do I laugh, why do I doubt and today, why do I trust? Why do I have faith? Why do I believe?

Let me let you in on a little secret today. **There's no such thing as a non-believer. That's the simple truth.** All of us are believers. All of us live by faith. **For someone to say, "I don't have any faith" is totally bogus.** We all live by faith.

This morning I had faith that the lights would come on. I had faith that the coffee pot would crank out another cup of caffeine. I had faith that the shower would work. I had faith my truck would start. I had faith the steps would hold up my body weight. I had faith that the law of gravity and laws of physics were still in effect. I had faith in everything that I did today up until this point.

We seem to be hardwired to put our confidence, or trust, in something or someone. We do it all the time. Of course if we get burned a time or two, that faith can fade quickly. But we put our faith into things and people all the time because we're wired to do that.

Whether a person is a believer in Jesus Christ or not, every single human being is a person of faith. We put our faith in **all kinds of things every day and we don't even really think about it, we just trust, we believe.** You had faith that the chair you're sitting in would hold your weight, that the food you ate today wouldn't hurt you, that your car would get you here.

So we live, we operate by faith. Well, why do I trust? Why do I have faith? The first reason is because of the evidence. **Why do I believe? Because of evidence."** The reason I have faith in the stuff I did this morning is because of the evidence. The reason I knew the lights would come on is because the lights have a pretty good track record. My coffee pot has never let me down. I trusted in that. Those steps? **I've been up and down those steps** thousands of times. My truck starts. I live by faith.

I cannot explain to you how my truck operates. I cannot give you the intricacies of electricity, but I trust. **I can't really tell you that I understand fully how my coffee maker works, but I live by faith.** The evidence is there that I can trust these things. **I'm made for faith.** We live by faith. Why do I trust? I trust because of the evidence.

I don't have time to share all the evidence that I've encountered over the years, but one key piece of evidence to me is the response of Jesus' disciples after his death and after his resurrection. Jesus' followers abandoned him, left him, took off, bolted as Jesus was captured, tried and convicted. They were cowards and later they locked themselves in a house because they were afraid that the Romans and Jewish leaders would come for them next and nail them each to a cross. That was the reality.

But then they saw Jesus alive. Not as a ghost, not as a collective imagining. They saw him. Only seeing him alive would have made such a radical change in them. They move from being cowards, to being heroes. They go from being afraid of everything, to not being afraid of anything. Nothing could stop them from telling the world about Jesus. **Not ridicule, not persecution, not imprisonment, not torture, not even death. Why? They'd seen Jesus die, and come back to life and so they had no fear.** All but one of them was tortured and killed for his faith in Jesus. In my faith journey, why I believe, that was the piece of evidence that took me right up to the line so that I could cross over.

Here's the second reason why I trust. I trust because I'm not looking for absolute proof. I'm not looking for absolute proof. **What does it mean when I say the word "proof"?** Proof is the way of showing the truth or the falsehood of something beyond a shadow of a doubt. **That's what proof means.** Evidence is different. Evidence is whatever points to the truth or falsehood of something.

So proof shows me beyond question, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the truth or falsehood of something. But evidence gives me a sign; it shows me that something is true. The Bible gives us this definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1, **"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"**. In faith, there is an element of assurance, but there is also **an element of the unseen.** If we see it, then we have proof and we don't need faith. **God has created the universe in such a way that we have to have faith, not just proof.**

Here's a working definition of faith: Faith is belief without conclusive proof but with convincing evidence. It's huge that we distinguish between those three terms—proof and evidence and faith. We live by faith.

Some people try to prove everything. But the reality is that **you're not going to prove anything, because there's always the point of faith in every belief system—no matter if you are an atheist or you're an agnostic; if you're into Taoism, Buddhism, Islam or Christianity—there's always a point where you have to take step of faith, a step of trust.** There's always that point.

A couple of years ago I made an amazing purchase. A gas powered weed eater. I'd had an electric thing for years. The hassle of working around the cord and dragging all that through the yard. I finally got a gas powered baby. It's awesome. Here's a good game to play. Just grab your weed eater, crank it up, close your eyes and walk into a weed-infested field. It'll just make a nice path for you, won't it?

That's what evidence does. Evidence does not prove beyond the shadow of a doubt the truth or falsehood of something. It does, however, lead us to a point right up to the edge of making a faith or trust decision.

I could spend all day and night talking to you about the historicity of the Bible and why the Bible is the most reliable piece of ancient literature in the world. I could stack piles and piles of books about the existence of God. I could give you all the evidence I've got about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and who God is and on and on and on. But the evidence alone is not going to kick you over into making a faith decision. We've got to know the evidence, it clears the way. The evidence creates a path. And the evidence is very compelling and very, very convincing; but still, we've got to take that step of faith and trust.

I turned those lights on. I made the coffee. I took a shower. I started my truck. I walked up the steps. Everything was about faith. I don't have conclusive proof, but I have convincing evidence. Why do I trust? I'm made for it and I'm not looking for absolute proof.

Here's another reason why I trust. The third reason. I trust Because of what faith is not. Faith is not a doubt-free commodity. Some believers say to themselves, "Whoa, I doubt, so that means I don't believe, because the opposite of belief is doubt." Wrong! We hit on this last week. The opposite of faith is not doubt. The opposite of faith is unbelief. You can have doubt and faith at the very same time. "I believe, help my unbelief."

Doubt is an opportunity to step up and have a deeper faith walk. God wants to use your doubt and mine to launch us in a greater trajectory with greater depth than we ever thought imaginable. So welcome doubts! Faith is not doubt-free.

Faith is also not a feelings-based commodity. A lot of people jump on the feelings train. Oh, I've got to feel it. If I feel it, man, that means it's real. And then we say, "If I can have this experience or this vibe or this encounter with God, then my feelings can take me above the clouds and I can be riding on the soooooooul train!

And then here's what happens on the soul train. We're so in touch with our feelings, but one day the train begins to slow down. It breaks through the clouds and comes to a screeching halt and we don't feel it any more. And then we say, "Where's God?"

And we search for another feelings-based deal, another feelings-based situation. That's not faith. Yeah, feelings sometimes accompany faith. But faith is not about the quiver in the liver, or the spring in your step, or the twinkle in your eye, or the tear dripping down your cheek. Yes, our feelings are good things. But don't confuse faith and feelings. Faith is not doubt-free. It's not feelings-based.

Faith is also not a currency. Some people believe that God is a candy man and we're living in Candyland, and if we have enough faith, God will just rain candy in our lives. "God give me some candy. I want some more candy. I like Twizzlers®, God. Raisinettes®, God. And, man, those Kit Kats®, I love those. God just rain candy! I want some more candy."

What is that all about? Is that about God or about our self-centeredness? It's about our self-centeredness. God's not our errand boy. He's not our messenger boy. We can't make God do something because we exemplify faith. God is sovereign. God is sovereign. So that is not, I repeat, that is not what faith is all about. Faith is belief without conclusive proof, but with convincing evidence.

Here's the fourth reason why I trust, why I believe. It's the reasonable thing to do. It's a highly intelligent thing to do. It is reasonable to believe that God is.

This has been a big part of my journey of belief. To ask myself which is more reasonable that life just randomly appeared on earth, or that it was designed and created by an intelligent being. What is more reasonable to believe, that billions of years ago lightning struck a pool of primordial soup and amino acids were formed. And then somehow those amino acids, all by themselves assembled and made the jump from inanimate compounds to living creatures that can move, and metabolize energy, and reproduce. If life began without any help in a system with zero knowledge, then wouldn't it make sense that that it would be possible, actually easy, to create life in a laboratory? You would think. But our best attempts, our best scientists, can't even come close.

What is more reasonable to believe, that life happened randomly, unassisted, outside the realm of mathematical possibility. Or that an intelligent being, God, worked over time to design, build, and develop the varieties of life we see today?

I believe the evidence is definitely compelling. Some of the most intelligent people in the world are believers. Some brilliant PhDs, and mathematicians, and physicists and other scientists are believers. And yes, there are some brilliant people who are not believers. We all have our choice, but everybody lives by faith.

I am convinced that believing God exists is truly the most reasonable thing to do. And it happens with a faith decision. Listen, God does not want us to park our brains at the door before we become believers. He doesn't want us to dumb down before we make and take the faith step. I believe that God gave us these amazing brains in order that we might discover him. That's right. I truly believe that God gave us these amazing brains so that we might find him, and know him, and trust him.

Another reason I trust, I believe, is because It opens up so many doors. When I trust God's agenda over my own, then I find myself living life as an adventure, rather than a drudgery. That's the truth. When I trust God with my money and I tithe, I give 10% of my income, I find that I can live better on 90% than on %100 of my income. It doesn't make sense mathematically, but I lived both ways. Tithing is the better way. And when I trust God with that part of my life, life makes more sense. That's the truth. When I trust God with my abilities, doors open for me to put those abilities into action. My abilities to speak, to teach, to lead, these are not extraordinary things. I'm so ordinary it's pitiful. But when I trust God with those abilities I've seen him use them over and over and over and over again to make a difference in the lives of people, and churches, and organizations. I believe, I trust, because of the doors it opens.

I've tried to tell you why I believe that God is real. But that leaves a big question hanging out there: OK if God is real, then why is Christianity the way to experience him? Why, of all the religions and spiritual expressions in the world, is Jesus the way to God? Maybe Buddhism is the best way to experience the God of the universe. Or maybe it's Islam, or Mysticism, or Judaism or Paganism.

Why I believe in Christianity. I had a calling to ministry early in my life, but I tried to shake it off. In college I figured that my early calling to ministry, that early experience of Christianity, was based on emotion, and ignorance, and it was based on the fact that I was born into a Christian family, in a predominantly Christian country. I began to wonder, "If I had been born in another country, in another family, in another faith, would I be another religion?" So I tried to reset my faith clock to zero and choose for myself.

In college I spent a year in Japan. That was my break away. I went to test my faith as much as anything. Japan is one of the most non-Christian countries in the world without being anti-Christian. I left the U.S. saying, "Jesus, if you are real, and if you want me, then come and get me." I lived with a family that was predominantly Buddhist, I took classes about Buddhism, I even spent time in a Buddhist monastery. And in that process I rediscovered Jesus Christ for myself. And I chose Jesus, not just because of my background, not because of the family I was raised in, or the country I was born in.

Why Christianity over the other faiths of the world? Imagine with me that proverbial elephant and the 5 blind men. They are standing around the elephant, all trying to describe what they are feeling. They've never seen or heard of an elephant before. They have no idea what an elephant looks like. All they have are their other 4 senses that they can use to try and experience the elephant.

For instance they can smell the elephant. And the one at the mouth is smelling one thing, and the one at the tail is smelling something entirely different. The one who is holding on to an ear is feeling one thing. The one who is holding onto the tail is feeling something different, as is the one at the leg.

Each of these blind men is experiencing something different of the very same creature. And they are all shouting out what they're experiencing. The one holding on to the ear says that it must be like a sea ray. The one at the leg says that it's kind of like a tree. The one at the elephant's trunk says that it's like a big snake. The one at the tail says that it's a small creature because it has a very small tail. The one who can feel the elephant's side says that it feels like a big wall! They are all trying to describe the same creature, but all of them are experiencing it from their small corner of reality with their own perceptions and their own experiences.

This is the way it is with our world religions. All the religions of the world are groping after God. All of us are saying that there is something more. We can feel it, we can experience it, and we know it, yet what is it like? And so we've wrestled with this through the ages. From the cave men on to our day. And God has been listening and watching through the ages. And God has longed for his people to know who he is and what he is about. He sent prophets and spoke to individual people. All along the way there have been those who have been groping and longing to know him.

The founders of the great world religions were people, human beings who were looking for answers. But Christianity asserts something different. In essence, Christianity is saying that while the elephant was standing there one day listening to all

these blind men trying to describe what they were feeling and touching and smelling . . . the elephant spoke. And the elephant himself said, "This is what I am. I'm an elephant. Listen to me. This is what I'm like. This is how I act. These are the things I do. This is what I like to eat. This is who I am. Listen to me!" The elephant spoke!

The central assertion of the Christian faith is that Jesus was not a mere mortal like any other human being. He was God who came in the flesh to live among us to say, "I've heard you crying out for me. I've heard you groping after me, trying to understand me. Look at me and listen and you'll understand what I am like." He was born like we are; he lived like we do. He did remarkable things to show who he was.

This is the essence of the Christian faith. These are the assertions we make. That God was in Jesus bringing the world back to himself. That God came and walked among us and was just like we are, just so that we could know him and not grope in the dark in our blindness. That is why I believe, not just in God the creator, but I also believe in Jesus. God in human form telling us what he is like, and what he expects, and how much he loves us, and much more there is in store for us after this life.

So where are you? Are you weedeating your way through the evidence? Are you looking for absolute proof, which will never come, are you at a place where you believe in God because it's reasonable but haven't yet chosen to believe in Jesus Christ? Are you right there at the line, ready to cross over? Maybe today is the day to say yes. Or maybe today is the day to reaffirm and say, "I've forgotten some of why I believe, but I remember, I recommit." Crossing over the line is simply getting honest with God. There's not formula for that, but around here we use three simple words, sorry, thank you and please. It's a prayer that goes something like this, you might want to pray it with me. Lord Jesus, I believe, help my unbelief. I am truly sorry for the wrong that I have done in my life and turn from all that I know is wrong. Thank you for dying on the cross to bridge the gap between my unholiness and your holiness. Please, come and fill my life, lead my life, show me the way. I believe.

If you pray a prayer like that you have the seeds of faith, you are a follower of Jesus, now feed your faith. Don't miss worship, read and study the Bible, spend time talking to and listening to God, get connected in a small group, live out a life of servant ministry. That's how you feed your faith and watch it grow. That's why I believe. And for today that is the Good News. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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