

The Journey of Faith: Investigating Barriers to Belief

Guided Growth with Pastor Keith @ CBC Easter Sunday, April 1

In the early 80's atheist Lee Strobel was the legal editor for the Chicago Tribune. When his wife Leslie became a Christian, he began to "research" Christianity in an attempt to prove to his wife that it was either based on religious imagination or manipulation. What began as a serious and sincere "case against Christ" led Lee down the pathway of objective "facts" that confronted him with some very "Inconvenient Truths". Though we may start from different points in our personal "faith journeys", we all must wrestle with the "inconvenient" truths about ourselves and God; as well as our own perspectives and prejudices about the Claims of Jesus Christ. Most people will face some spiritual "sticking points" or barriers on their journey of Faith. The Ethiopian Eunuch gives us an example of one type of spiritual barrier. God sent the Deacon Stephen to him.

Acts 8:26-40 *"Understandest thou what thou readest? How can I, except some man should guide me?"*

One big "Barrier" on many faith journeys is:

1. I Can't Believe! (or understand) *"How can I?"*

A. This is usually an "intellectual" obstacle.

- 1) Conflicts with our education, logic, reason, or experience become "barriers to belief".
- 2) These can be **corrupted!** Col 2:8-10 *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ...in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. And ye are complete in him"* (plēroō: completed, fulfilled)
- 3) Each of these can also be **"programed"**! 1 Tim 6:20-21 *"avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science (gnosis) falsely so called: Which some professing (embracing) have erred concerning the faith."*

Remember Nazi Germany? *"Propaganda works best when those being manipulated are confident that they are acting on their own free will."* Joseph Goebbels

B. Solution for skepticism. Is 55:6,7 *"Seek the LORD while he may be found..."*

"Seek (objectively, honestly) and see for yourself!" Jn 8:32 *"ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

Lee Strobel discovered that he wasn't the first "skeptic" trying to debunk Christianity.

- 1) Dr. Viggo and Joan Olsen wrote about their journey in: *"The agnostic who dared search"*
After discovering the truth, they became Missionaries to Bangladesh, starting hospitals and 120 churches! They shared with Lee: *"We wouldn't have missed it for the world! Finding the purpose for which God made you and then fully pursuing it is simply the very best way to live!"*
- 2) Dr. James Tour (Head of Nanoscience Center, Rice University) told Lee: *"I build molecules for a living, I can't begin to tell you how difficult that job is! I stand in awe of God because of what he has done through his creation. Only a rookie who knows nothing about science would say science takes away from faith. If you really (objectively) study science, it will bring you closer to God!"*
- 3) Lionel Luckhoo: *World's Greatest Attorney. Guinness book of World Records for Winning (defending) most murder cases in history! He wrote: "The evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt."*

Conclusion:

Lee Strobel realized that he was one of many “skeptics” who, when they honestly began seeking for the truth, discovered that “the Truth” (John 14:6) was actually seeking them!

God is seeking you! John 4:23 *“true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth:”*

What’s the solution to the “I can’t believe (understand) barrier?

“Seek for yourself”

1) The Ethiopian had been seeking truth!

a) He Traveled 2000 miles from Ethiopia to Jerusalem “to worship” Acts 8:27

b) Bought and Read scripture. Acts 8:28

He discovered that the “Truth” (Jesus) was also actively at work “Seeking” him!

God was “seeking” the Ethiopian!

➤ He Redirected Philip. (Acts 8:26)

➤ He “coincidentally” led the Ethiopian to be reading Isaiah 53!

➤ He gave him an inquiring mind? Vs. 34

Acts 8:35 *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”*

2) The women at the Grave Easter Morning.

The Angels were waiting for them! Mt 28:1-7

“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

3) “Doubting” Thomas. John 20:25 *“Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe!”*

Jesus went to him. Jn. 20:27 *“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”*

Thomas responded: John 20:28-29 *“My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”*

Application: Perhaps you, like the Ethiopian, are honestly “seeking” the truth about a relationship with God, but have been stuck at the barrier of belief.

“How can I, except some man should guide me?” Acts 8:31 If so, please know that:

1) God desires a relationship with you! Jn 4:23 *“The Father seeketh such...”*

2) He has wonderful plans to bless you! Jer. 29:11 *“to give you and expected end”*

3) God is seeking You! Gen. 16:13 *“Thou God, seest me!”*

Will you honestly seek God? Gen. 16:13 *“Thou God seest me!”*

“Have I also here looked after him that seeth (and seeketh) me?”

Jer. 29:13 *“ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you!”*

Mal. 3:10 *“Prove me now saith the Lord”*

If you are seeking God, then know that God is seeking you! Luke 19:10

“The son of man is come to seek and to save, that which was lost.”

And Satan is seeking to sidetrack you! Isaiah 55:6

“Seek the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near!”

Genesis 6:3 *“My Spirit will not always strive with man.”*

Will you join me on the journey of Faith?