

**Day 2**

**5. What is Faith?**

It is not a “leap of ignorance into the dark”; it is an application of trust and understanding.

**a. Great Faith**

Matthew 8:5-13 – Centurian with sick servant.

The centurion understood authority and knew the soldiers under his command would obey his every word. Likewise, he recognized Jesus’s own words were like his soldiers. This very much impressed Jesus, and He equated this understanding with great faith. Jesus also noted that a foreigner had greater faith than the people of God, the ones to whom faith was entrusted. God often finds impressive faith in unlikely places. See also Isaiah 55:10-11

Matthew 15:21-28 – Woman with demon possessed daughter.

The children’s bread is deliverance. The Canaanite woman, in responding to Jesus, recognized that the crumb from the Master was all her daughter needed, not something large or flashy. Again, this very much impressed Jesus, and He equated this understanding with great faith. This also illustrates that genuine faith is rooted in something deeper than mere belief; it is rooted in understanding (Prov 4:7). By the way, real faith doesn’t take “No” for an answer, it persists until it receives (Heb 6:12). She was, in effect, told “No” three times.

**b. The Dignity of Faith**

Matthew 11:2-6

Jesus could have simply answered yes to their question. But He didn’t. Jesus wanted John to trust in what he knew. He had heard from God that the Holy Spirit would visibly rest on the Messiah. He saw it happen. He heard God say, “This is My beloved Son,” John had both heard and seen the fulfillment of the Word of God. Then there were all the signs the Messiah would perform. Jesus offered evidence in verse 5. The messengers also saw and heard. Our faith belongs in the real. How many secretly want someone to believe in them? Faith offers a hidden strength.

A simple yes was grossly insufficient to strengthen the prophet about to lose his head. Now John would face his executioner with the dignity and certainty of faith that he had not missed God and fulfilled his mission in life.

**6. Circular Reasoning = Begging the Question**

Circularity has two basic forms: virtuous and vicious. Also, a tautology.

All forms of human reasoning reduce to some final, ultimate, supreme, or absolute authority. This is where faith comes in. When it comes to an ultimate standard some circularity is built in. If you follow a chain of reasoning back to the ultimate source, that final authority becomes “self-referential” or “self-attesting” or “self-interpreting”. This is a virtuous circle. Note that this circle appears at only at the very beginning: that of the supreme authority and must be very tight.

“Begging the question” is an example of a vicious circle where the conclusion is assumed as part of the argument, like “The Bible claims to be true therefore the Bible is true.” It is easy to think that a self-attesting authority is begging the question. Sometimes the difference is subtle. There is always evidence for a self-attesting presupposition. But remember that evidence is not proof.

Consider the statement, “The use of logic or reason is the only valid way to examine the truth or falsity of the statement which claims to be factual.” Given by Dr. Gordon Stein, *An Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism*.

Greg Bahnsen asks “How does Dr. Stein prove this statement? If he says by logic and reason, he is begging the question. If he uses some other standard, he invalidates the statement itself by appealing to an even higher standard.” From the Bahnsen/Stein Debate.

But there is a third possibility: that “logic and reason” are presuppositional. Logic and reason truly is his ultimate standard and therefore the statement becomes “self-attesting”. However, this is a faith position and is not provable. When asked about why logic and reason is right, what will he do? Give logical reasons why logic and reason is right. All proofs for the existence of God or non-existence of God presuppose their respective claims. Both are self-attesting, but both cannot be true. Recognizing this contradiction sets the stage for the debate. Examining truth claims

at the presuppositional level is the most potent way to get at the truth of the claims. Is there something on which logic and reason rests that is hidden from Dr. Stein's eyes? Yes!

When reason is the ultimate arbiter of truth it is known as "rationalism." For some it is science or natural senses, also called "empiricism." But what is the foundation for logic or science? Where do the senses come from and how are they made intelligible? The materialist has no answer. For them it is simply their presupposition. They are stuck in an 'impersonal' universe in which physics and chemistry is all there is, so the ultimate sources are DNA and/or experience.

But the Christian has an answer.

While materialists cannot account for any immaterial objects such as logic, reason, morality, or induction it doesn't stop them from employing them. The Christian, on the other hand, can demonstrate that logic and science, for that matter, math, ethics, meaning and laws in general, have a deeper foundation, and that foundation is Personal rather than impersonal. More far reaching is the idea that the personal precedes the impersonal; the Eternal precedes the temporal; Spirit precedes matter just as Mind precedes brain. This is part of the Christian worldview and not provable by natural science. Question: Can science be employed to prove science? What do you think? First, science must be explained.

An example of a tautology is "survival of the fittest." How do you know a particular creature is the most fit? Because it survived. Why did it survive? Because it was the most fit. Round and round it goes. No independent verification is possible.

Index fossils used for dating rock layers are another example. Can you see how, why?

For the Christian the Bible is such a presupposition, a self-attesting, absolute authority. It is held as the final authority, under God, the Author. Yes, God Himself is presupposed. The Bible is our ultimate standard, even when defending the Bible. It is also self-referential and self-interpreting. We can offer evidence why this is so. It would be foolish to believe the Bible but deny its Source. BTW, God Himself is self-attesting in Gen 22:16, Heb 6:13.

"Biblical understanding must stand on its own two feet without regard to any other system of thought. We can't assume (absorb) a worldview that comes from unbelievers. The Bible has its own worldview. The Bible has its own way of understanding the relationships of things in the world, to the human mind, to God. The Bible has its own way of gaining knowledge." John Frame, Apol315, 7:00.

If we assume anything less than these as true, how can we make any progress in apologetics? If we don't, then some other system becomes a higher authority. So, we will 'presuppose' the Biblical understanding of the world, knowledge and morality. What if someone doesn't want this presupposition? Then all is reduced to relative preference or opinion.

## 7. Myth Of Neutrality.

Neutrality says that no structure, order, truth or system will be assumed in advance. We will start as a 'blank slate' and 'see where the evidence leads us.' Neutrality is a non-neutral position. As will be shown, this ideal of neutrality, when it comes to root belief issues, is a myth. There is no such thing as real neutrality. It is impossible to start nowhere. Everybody starts somewhere and those that profess they are starting nowhere are simply ignorant of their own presuppositions and assumptions, i.e., their own bias. Those that most loudly demand that we must meet 'on neutral ground' have already determined where the interaction will lead. They are begging the question.

Imagine getting into an airplane called Neutrality. No matter how engaging or fruitful the discussion you are still going to the airplane's destination. Don't get on that plane! The difference is that the Christian apologist readily admits the both the starting point and destination. It is more honest to admit your bias than pretend you don't have one.

Related to neutrality is 'open-mindedness'. If a person says that they are open-minded on some particular topic they are saying they have no prior commitment or position on that topic. Is it possible to be open-minded on  $2+2=4$ ? I should hope not! To say that a person is open-minded on  $2+2=4$  is to say  $2+2$  might be something other than 4. The same could be said for neutrality. "An open mind, like an open mouth, is meant to close on something." Douglas Wilson.

Is it possible for a Christian to be neutral or open-minded on the Lordship of Jesus Christ, His resurrection or even the very existence of God? It might be possible but to do so would be to deny Christ's absolute lordship at the outset of the argument. The Christian must give up the belief that Jesus is Lord to become neutral. Neutrality is a passive denial of a positive affirmation that Jesus IS Lord, or anything else.

How then could arguments be made to come back around to say that Jesus is, in fact, Lord when we deny the very foundation, or Rock, of the position we are trying to prove? This must never be allowed to happen. I would suspect that the many Christians that argue for the existence of God from a 'neutral position' or even a probabilistic position have not given this much thought. After all it sounds so reasonable, so fair, so right. I hope to change this. Our starting place is the Throne Room not the twilight zone.

Even a 99.99% probability that Jesus rose from the dead means there is a 0.01% possibility that He did not. That is not Christian, not Biblical. Also, that 0.01% is just the excuse unbelievers need to justify their unbelief. Evolutionists will use a  $1/10^{40k}$  chance for evolution without blinking. There are about  $10^{80}$  number of atoms in the known universe. But they say, "After all, we are here aren't we?" No neutrality is necessary.

As a Christian, I have knowledge that God is real and true, that Jesus is both alive and Lord. So, by definition, I cannot be neutral. To do so would deny what I know to be true, making myself not only inconsistent but a false witness. Again, because I have knowledge, I cannot be neutral.

Conversely, the professing atheist, or believer of any other religion, is in the same situation. To say that a person has knowledge that there is no Biblical God means they cannot be neutral. The "Pretended Neutrality Fallacy" says that people pretend to be neutral, but their argumentation betrays their presuppositions, and their true starting point is shown to be anything but neutral. They are not open-minded, only pretending to be so. A skill to develop is listening to the opponent to gain insight as to their presuppositions and thus demonstrate "where they are coming from."

It should be noted that there are lesser issues in which it might be necessary to be impartial (like jury duty or what's for lunch) but, again, when it comes to root belief issues it is not possible to be neutral. Everybody starts somewhere.

Then there are some basic tools to get at what we want to know.

## **8. Four Basic Rules of Reason**

These four basic rules, which allow for the growth of human knowledge, are regularly attacked. If any of these are compromised, any kind of irrationality is possible. It is often a violation of these rules that are used to justify the necessary "miracles" of existence required by the atheistic/secular/evolutionary crowd.

### **From R. C. Sproul, "Classical Apologetics"**

#### **a) Law of Non-Contradiction**

The law of non-contradiction is the most basic building block of logic and therefore rational thought. Everything else flows from this. It says that a thing cannot be its opposite in the same way at the same time.  $A = \sim A$  ( $A = \text{not } A$ ) is a rational impossibility. "My car is in the garage and my car is not in the garage" is a physical impossibility. This law is at the heart of all truthful, rational thinking.

Its attempted usage in life can be construed as lying, deceit or fraud in saying that something is so when it is not, or something is not so when it is.

Aristotle put it this way:

"To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false,  
while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true."

"Thou shalt not bare false witness..." Exodus 20:16

#### **b) Law of Causality**

The law of causality is an extension of the law of non-contradiction and has been used as an argument for the existence of God going back millennia. God is the First Cause or Prime Mover. Bertrand Russell "believed in God" until he read John Stuart Mill who said, "Everything must have a cause." So, God must have a cause. Russell died believing this common but false definition of the law of causality.

The true definition is that "every effect must have a sufficient, antecedent cause." A related definition says that "everything that comes into existence must have a cause." If a new disease manifests or a building collapses, a

“cause” is sought to explain the event. Causal thinking is at the heart of all-natural science and the scientific method, at least the “observable, testable, repeatable” kind of “how things work” science.

It is humorous that atheists will bring up primitive superstitions like some god being the cause of lightening or the sacrifice of a virgin to appease the volcano god and invoke the “god of the gaps” idea. “But now we can explain all natural phenomena without God.” They can’t, by the way. Therefore, science has disproven God, as though God’s only reason for being is to explain stuff. I say that without the Creator God, they can’t explain **anything!**

David Hume (1711-1776) argued that an actual cause cannot be known, and the best that can be shown are “customary” or “contiguous” relationships. His main example comes from a pool table. One pool ball hits another pool ball and sets it in motion. It is “customary” to think one ball makes the other ball move based on the assumption that when one thing follows another, there is a “causal” relationship. But, according to Hume, this can’t be known for sure, and he is correct. There might be some other unknown, invisible forces also at work, waiting to be discovered. But we continue to play pool anyway with the full expectation that we will sink the 8 ball in the corner pocket and win the game.

These ideas caused (pardon the pun) quite a reaction. Hume also implied, then denied, that there could be an effect with no cause or an “uncaused effect” thus nullifying the law of causality. This has never been demonstrated. However, nothing is believed to have caused the Big Bang. The keyword is “believed.” This irrational belief dominates cosmology.

### **c) Basic Reliability of Sense Perception & Language**

In the wake of Hume’s skepticism, renewed efforts were asserted to establish the notion that human sense perception is basically reliable. It is true that “our senses do not have perfect perceptions of reality. That is why we have machines to heighten and extend our senses.” Hume drew attention to those limits, showing there may be unknown, invisible forces at work. Yes, he was absolutely correct, because one of those possible, causal forces is the power of God. Hume’s work, as an enlightened atheist, was the removal of God.

There persists, in this day, an idea that if something is not 100% it should be discarded. If you can be deceived by your senses (like an optical illusion), then your senses can’t be trusted to any degree. It is a radical “all or nothing” position. You could imagine the chaos if people actually lived like that. But they can’t, at least not for very long.

It is true that language changes with time. When you read the King James Bible, or Shakespeare, you are reading the English language of 400 years ago. It has changed, but it is still, with a little help, intelligible. Over the last 150 years, as organized philosophical atheism became more internally consistent, even language has come under scrutiny.

By the way, apart from God there is no basic reliability to anything, it is simply taken for granted. It is the God of order that provides the necessary foundation for reality to be orderly and reliable.

### **d) Analogical Use of Language**

As each of the above laws was philosophically broken down, language became the next victim. They would say that like our senses, language, because it changes, is unreliable. As a means to express human thoughts it is useless. If this were actually true, the United Nations would have collapsed decades ago. I always find it amusing to hear someone, that believes this, using language to say that language is meaningless, and then expect you to know what they mean by what they say. University professors are especially good at pushing nonsense into young, impressionable minds.

This is a particularly diabolical attack. If language can be destroyed in the minds of people, then the Gospel breaks down because the words are meaningless. Within a couple of weeks of this writing, someone actually told me that.

As I mentioned above, this is materialism becoming consistent with itself. There is no communication of any kind in the material world of physics and chemistry. Chemicals don’t communicate with one another. And no, deaf and blind fields do not constitute communication. The very foundation of materialism is chaotic change, so any notion of “language” is meaningless since there is no “mind” to perceive such things. The very language of science and mathematics, or philosophy, requires conscious mental states, or a mind.

Thomas Aquinas divided up language like this:

- a. Univocal – a single meaning: “The door is locked.”
- b. Equivocal – multiple meanings: “That is really cool!”
- c. Analogical – scaled or proportional meanings: good dog, good man, good God

Note that language is being used in this book and your eyes are perceiving the text on the page and you are basically, but maybe not perfectly, understanding what you read. Communication is basically reliable.

Our job is to show the absurdity, even insanity, of the unbeliever’s position as respectfully as possible, given the absurdity of some of their ideas.

Similar to the evidential method, the deepest root level (i.e., the faith level) is not yet exposed. We may show the utter irrationality of any non-Christian position and the person may still say, “I would rather be irrational, even insane, than bow to Jesus.” To such, we say, “Speak into the microphone!”

## 9. A Standard for Standards, The AICP Test

### A. Arbitrary:

- a. Mere Opinion
- b. Relativism – True for you but not for me, no absolutes.
- c. Prejudicial Conjecture – We can’t know what was originally written.
- d. Unargued Philosophical Bias – Miracles are impossible.

How do you know miracles are impossible?

What kind of mental resources are necessary to make such claims?

What is the foundation of such claims? See Prisoners in Nature’s Box

Prejudicial Conjecture: “How do we know some monk in the Middle Ages didn’t write the Bible?”

First off, the person throwing this out has obviously done NO homework on the subject. By the time the Middle Ages rolled around there were already many complete manuscripts buried in the desert sands and libraries.

Second, if there was no Bible, why would there be monks? Which came first, the Bible or the monk.

### B. Inconsistent:

- a. Logical Fallacies
- b. Behavioral Inconsistency
- c. Presuppositional Tension

A man thinks child abusers should be punished and helps his girlfriend get an abortion.

### C. Consequences:

- a. If I believe this, and therefore act on it, where will I end up?
- b. A tree is known by its fruit.
- c. Reductio ad Absurdum - reduced to absurdity, slippery slope, logical conclusion.

### D. Preconditions for Intelligibility: How can we account for these?

- a. Laws of Logic, Language, Rational Debate
- b. Absolute Morality – Ontology vs Epistemology
- c. Uniformity of Nature, Causality, Induction
- d. Basic Reliability of Senses and Memory
- e. Personal Dignity and Freedom
- f. Transcendentals

## **10. Defeaters – Jesus’ Ossuary, materialism**

Teachers regularly deal with the thoughts in people’s heads that stand against what they are saying. Some of those thoughts are conscious. Some are not. Bad theology and false beliefs drive bad interpretations and even inhibits correct understanding. These are called ‘Defeaters.’ If I believe ‘A’ then belief ‘B’ is impossible.

For instance:

1. If a Christian believes in millions of years, it is impossible to see that the Bible plainly teaches thousands of years. By the way, as noted below, many other Scriptures must be massaged into agreement with that exterior belief or are simply ignored.
2. If a person denies the existence of the supernatural, a miracle could happen right in front of their eyes and will say there is some naturalistic cause, that we just don’t understand yet. “Did you contact Ripley’s Believe It or Not?” Since the Bible talks about supernatural events, (floating axe head, walking on water, resurrection of the dead) the Bible can’t be trusted.
3. John 14:12 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

If a person doesn’t believe we can do what Jesus did, then the greater works aren’t even a consideration. I ask about this verse when someone claims to believe the Bible. Too many don’t.

Of course, these work the other way also and become a protection from error. We are here to stand for the truth of things and show how and why they are true. We are not here to offer options. Jesus came to speak the truth with authority.