

The Exclusivity of Faith

Because of humanity's defective spiritual and moral condition, a *faith approach* to God is much more suitable than a *proof formula*. In fact, if we want to connect with God, the only workable option he has given us, for our times, is "*by faith*." There are no valid, acceptable alternatives. The path of proof is nonexistent. Insisting on proof is like beating a dead horse: it wastes your time and energy and gets you nowhere. If you choose not to *believe* in God you will never get to know him, because belief is the only door there is to discovering him. Plus, *your disbelief will blind you from seeing the evidence of God's existence within you and around you*.

Proof may belong in the laboratory, but that's not true of spiritual things. Why? Because God is not amoral; he cannot be scrutinized simply scientifically. And, anyway, if proof were a viable way of discovering God, it would create a whole new set of complications and difficulties. In most cases it would be unbearably confrontational and predictably counterproductive. It would back us into a corner, force us into an inflexible situation, make us feel awkward and uncomfortable. It would put us on the defensive, make us think, say and do unpredictable, irrational things. We don't know what we are asking for because, in reality, most of us would resent the very proof we say we want. And, God knows all this only too well. That's why, in our era, he doesn't base his relationship with us on problematic proof. If you think the faith requirement is unacceptable, the demand for proof is far more insupportable.

There would be something potentially stifling and terminal about clinical proof. The discovery process, the anticipation, the surprise element and the adventure would be short-lived. From indeterminable START to nonexistent FINISH, *there is something incomparable, unsurpassable and interminable about getting to know God*. Our delightful, thrilling association with him will continue to develop into and throughout eternity. He will never cease to fascinate us. He will always fill our hearts with wonder. He is the living and life-giving sovereign of the universe – not some kind of humanly contrived and controlled phenomenon, which we would soon take for granted, get tired of and begin to look for something else.

God made us free moral agents. He gives us a choice, a way out – if that's what we want. (And, sadly, many do.) He proposes, not imposes. He doesn't want to overwhelm or frighten us with his awesomeness; instead, he prefers to draw us to himself with his astonishing love, with his wonderful grace and his marvelous mercy.

God is a romantic; he is an old-fashioned suitor. He courts us. He wishes to woo and to win us. He compares himself to a bridegroom. He wants to groom us - his bride. He does this individually, personally and creatively. He wants an ongoing love relationship with us, not just an ineffectual one-time or intermittent intellectual encounter.

For some reason, God is reticent to reveal himself visually to us. Is it something about him or something about us? Maybe both? His holiness and our sinfulness? In any case, don't expect even a disguised physical sighting of God, unless, in his opinion, there's a justifiable need or reason for it. He has chosen other ways of proving himself to you.

A vibrant faith involves our hearts, not just our heads. Heartless, faithless, rigid proof tends to evoke and promote a misguided, inappropriate and even negative response toward God. But, as *living faith* proceeds on its ever-widening, ever-deepening course, it does the opposite. *The process of faith prepares us properly for finally finding God*. Only faith is capable of nurturing what God wants most from us: trust, obedience and devotion – *not compulsory, but voluntary*. He loves us with a love that is out of this world, and he anticipates an absolute commitment from us. He trusts us and he dares us to trust him. He takes risks with us and he expects us to take risks with him. He encourages us to have a childlike attitude toward him – our loving Father in heaven. Typically, a young child is innocent, open-minded, non-judgmental, honest, frank, trusting. In other words, we can only "see" God with the eyes of a child; we can only appreciate God with the mind and heart of a child. "*I [Jesus] tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 18:3). ◇◇