

FROM DOUBT TO FAITH

6 Challenges to Your Faith

The Rev. Peter K. Stimpson

1. Does God Exist?

- a. **Why the Search?** - Death/Suffering
- b. **The Proof** - The Circle
- c. **Challenge to the Proof** - Conservation of Energy
- d. **Defense from Scientists** - The Big Bang Theory
- e. **Attributes of God:** Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Eternal

2. Is Jesus Christ the Son of God?

- a. **The Prophecies of the Messiah:**
 - i. Born in the Lineage of King David
 1. Prophet: Nathan/1,000-961 BC
 2. Bible: 2 Sa. 7:11-16; 1 Ch. 17:11-14; Mt. 1:1-16
 - ii. Born in Bethlehem
 1. Prophet: Micah/750-687 BC
 2. Bible: Mic. 5:2; Mt. 2:5-6; Lk. 2:4
 - iii. Born of a Virgin and called Emmanuel
 1. Prophet: Isaiah/742-701 BC
 2. Bible: Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:18; Lk. 1:31-35
 - iv. "A Suffering Servant"
 1. Prophet: Deutero-Isaiah/post 587 BC
 2. Bible: Is. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:1-11; 52:13 - 53:12
- b. **The Miracles:**
 - i. Nature (Walking on Water, Calming a Storm)
 - ii. People being Healed (Blind, Deaf, Lame, Mute, Sick)
 - iii. Raising from the Dead (Lazarus)
- c. **Skepticism:**
 - i. Jesus Walking on Water (Mt. 14:22-23; Mk. 6:45-52)
 - ii. Raising Lazarus from the Dead (John 11:1-45)
- d. **The Resurrection:**
 - i. Manner of Death (Crucifixion)
 - ii. Testimony of the Gospels
 - iii. Appearances (Mary Magdalene, Apostles, Disciples)
- e. **Still Skeptical?**
 - i. Testimony of the Apostles (martyred claiming it was true)
- f. **A Final Point:** Theology, Churches, Family

3. Does God Really Love You?

- a. A Need for Friends
- b. Sweating Blood (Haematidrosis)
- c. Betrayed at Night
- d. Betrayed by a Kiss
- e. Walking All Night
 - i. Annas
 - ii. Caiaphas
 - iii. Jail Cell
 - iv. Pilate
 - v. Herod Antipas
 - vi. Pilate a Second Time
- f. Scourging at the Pillar
- g. Crown of Thorns
- h. The Unwavering Crowd
- i. The Way of the Cross
- j. Golgotha
- k. Nailed to the Cross
- l. Manner of Death
- m. "It is Finished"
- n. Conclusion

4. Why Does God Allow Suffering?

- a. **Because you did something wrong? ---- NO**
- b. **Reasons:**
 - i. To Wake Us Up
 - ii. To Help Us Grow
 - iii. To Achieve Higher Levels of Growth
 - iv. To Develop Hope
 - v. To Develop Feelings of Sympathy and Empathy for Others
 - vi. To Confront Pride
 - vii. To Make Manifest the Evil of Others
 - viii. To Provide an Opportunity to Witness, Give Testimony
- c. **Conclusion:** Be moved by love to love.

5. Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

- a. **The Bible as a Process of Thinking:** Our Understanding of God and Life Evolves
- b. **Five Parts of the Bible:**
 - i. The History Books (Theory of Retribution)
 - ii. Wisdom Literature (Theory does not work)
 - iii. The Prophets (Messiah will make sense of it all)
 - iv. The Gospels (Spiritual vs. Material Rewards/Punishments)
 1. Why Be Good?

- a. Love of Others
- b. Inner Depth and Contentment
2. What Does Growth Look Like?
 - a. Forgiveness
 - b. Humility
 - c. Peace
- v. **The Epistles** (Message further developed/understood)
 1. Ingredients of Love
 - a. Patient
 - b. Kind
 - c. Not Envious, Not Pretentious
 - d. Bears with all things, hopes all things

6. Is There Life After Death?

- a. **Our Resurrection:**
 - i. John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."
 - ii. Romans 8:11: "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."
 - iii. Philippians 3:21: "The Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."
- b. **Argument for Life after Death:**
 - i. Desire to be Perfectly Happy (but no one is)
 - ii. What is Perfect Happiness?
 - iii. What if you Die Young?
 - iv. Theological Basis for Belief in Life after Death
 - v. Near-Death Experiences

Final Thoughts

- I hope my bridge helps you.
- Continue your spiritual growth.
- Put your effort into what lasts - who you choose to be by how you relate to others. After all, you are worth it!

References

- Brown, Raymond E., Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, Eds., The Jerome Biblical Commentary, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968, 1989, 1993.
- Burke, John, Imagine Heaven; Near-Death Experiences, God's Promises, and the Exhilarating Future That Awaits You, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 2015.
- Collins, Francis S., The Language of God; A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief, New York, Free Press, 2006.
- Elliott, Elisabeth, Suffering is Never for Nothing, Nashville, TN, B&H Publishing Group, 2019.
- Grizone, Joseph F., The End of Suffering, New York, Orbis Books, 2013.
- Keller, Timothy, Walking with God through Pain and Suffering, New York, Riverhead Books, 2013.
- Kushner, Harold S., When Bad Things Happen to Good People, New York, Anchor Books, 1981.
- Martin, James, S.J., Jesus; A Pilgrimage, New York, Harper Collins, 2014.
- McKenzie, John L., Dictionary of the Bible, Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965.
- Overberg, Kenneth R., The Mystery of God and Suffering; Lament, Trust and Awe, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2020.
- Pegis, Anton C., Ed., Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 1, New York, Random House, 1945.
- Stimpson, Peter K., A Bridge to God; A Little Book with Big Insights, Meadville, PA, Christian Faith Publishing, 2018.
- _____, Map to Happiness; Straightforward Advice on Everyday Issues, Lincoln, Nebraska, iUniverse, 2008.
- Tripp, Paul David, Suffering; Gospel Hope When Life Doesn't Make Sense, Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 2018.
- Zacharias, Ravi and Vince Vitale, Jesus Among Secular Gods; The Countercultural Claims of Christ, New York, Faith Words, 2017.