

FROM DOUBT TO FAITH

6 Challenges to Your Faith

The Rev. Peter K. Stimpson

1. Does God Exist?

- a. **Why the Search?** – Suffering and Death
- 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 regarding The Messiah:**
 - i. Born in the Lineage of King David
 1. Prophet: Nathan/1000-961 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 (Healing the 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. Pushed and Shoved that Night/next Morning
 - 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:** Seeing Suffering as Having Meaning
 - i. To Wake Us Up – Give us a Warning – Reorient Us to God
 - ii. To Help Us Grow – God's Purpose is:
 1. To Help Us; Never to Hurt Us; God is not Vengeful
 2. To Achieve Higher Levels of Growth
 3. To Perfect Us; to protect us from Harm through Prudence
 - iii. To Develop Hope
 1. Suffering produces endurance; endurance produces character; character produces hope; and hope never disappoints (Romans 5:3-5)
 - iv. To Develop Compassion, Sympathy, and Empathy for Others
 1. Unites Us
 2. Shows Us how much we Need Each Other
 - v. To Confront Pride
 - vi. To Make Manifest the Evil of Others
 - vii. To Evangelize:
 1. To Provide an Opportunity to Witness, Give Testimony
 2. To Complete what is lacking in Christ's sacrifice

3. Power made Perfect through Weakness
 - a. Thorn of the Flesh
 - b. Serious Illness
 - c. Terminal Illness
- 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 Evolve
- 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 and disseminated)
 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 if 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 your lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."
- b. **Arguments 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 in what lasts – **who** you choose to be by **how** you relate to others. After all, you are worth it!

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