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Is Greg Placing His Faith in the Wrong Thing?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about Greg placing his faith in his personal assessment of which truth claims best match reality rather than in the revelation of God in Jesus and a personal encounter with the Spirit, and how to fight thoughts that God isn't real when you know he is real.

* Please respond to this critique of Greg Koukl: "Those who place their faith in their personal assessment of which truth claims best correspond to reality are placing their faith in something other than the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit."

* I struggle with thoughts that God isn't real even though I know he's real. How do I fight this?

Transcript

Alright, Greg, let's get right to it with a question from Lorena. Alright. Could you please respond to this critique of Greg Koukl? Let's get right to it.

Let's get right to it. Let's get right to it. Okay.

Those who place their faith in their personal assessment of which truth claims best correspond to reality are placing their faith in something other than the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. I'm a bet speechless. Okay, and apart from the fact this is a critique of me, it is a critique of an approach.

Alright, I am speechless because when you go to the text, you see over and over and over and over and over again constant appeal to God. ideals to evidence and reason, as a basis for genuine, true faith in Christ and probably the most famous one, the easiest one to access and remember is the end of the Gospel of John. In chapter 20, it's easy to find because it's right after doubting Thomas, which many people misunderstand, especially given what the very next verse says.

And I think it's 2021, but John gives the reason he wrote the Gospel. And he says, now of course, there's Jesus, the resurrected Christ. And then he says, many other signs and wonders

Jesus performed.

Now, I'm not sure, like my Greek goes back about 40 years, but maybe longer. I think it's a man or something like that, but it means a testing miracle. And if you look in your margin here at my numerator standard of margins says size, wonders says a testing miracle.

In other words, the miracle is meant to attest to some other thing that it is validating. And so John says, many other signs and wonders Jesus performed that have not been written in this book. And to the Gospel, he says, Jesus did so many things that it would take all the books in the world to explain what he did.

John's speaking hyperbolically there. But his point is I have selected seven miracles, count them. But these have been included, he says, so that you would believe that Jesus is one the Christ to the Son of God and in believing have life in his name.

Now, how could John make such a statement if giving evidences is an act of redirecting faith to the evidence instead of the object that the evidence supports? That is silly. Okay, so I got a new truck. I got another F150.

I sold the the one I had to my daughter, she paid market for it. And but now I got this new truck. And I want to know if I can get to the office.

Okay, how am I going to get to the office? I got I have to put my faith in the vehicle, right? I have to get into the vehicle with the confidence that it will take me all the way to the office, unless it's out of gas. So what do I have to do? I have to look at the gas gauge to see if this vehicle is capable of getting me 45 miles to the office to LA traffic in the morning. But I'm still trusting in the vehicle to get me there.

There is just a piece of information I need to make sure that the vehicle can accomplish the task I have in mind for it. When I look at the gauge, it is the evidence that the tank is full enough to get me there, I get into the vehicle and I drive my F150 Lariat 2023 with 27,000 miles on it to the office. Okay, so what am I trusting in? I was trusting in the vehicle, but I had to make sure that the vehicle I was going to trust in to do the job was capable of doing the job in that circumstance by looking at something else that gave me the confidence that the vehicle was up to the task.

I was actually, I'll give another analogy. It's just like yours, but I'll just add another one in. Because did you just buy a truck? No, in the last episode, we were giving, yes, we were giving medical analogies.

So in the same way, you've got four doctors, you have a serious condition, and each of the four doctors suggests a different cure. So you do all this research to figure out which one you think is correct. And then you go ahead and you take the medicine.

Now, the question is, when you take the medicine, are you trusting in your ability to reach your

ability, your personal assessment? This is what the wording is here. Or are you trusting in the medicine? And this is exactly the way you're making. You're not trusting in yourself, you're trusting in the medicine, which you can't do, by the way, unless you believe it's actually, you can't trust in it unless you think it's true.

And if you were just to go by your feeling, which one of these do I like the best, or which one gives me a subjective experience, you would be in very shaky territory. So one thing that's important to remember is that one aspect of the gospel is the fact that it's true. That's not a separate aspect from the, that's not a separate category from the gospel.

Paul makes this very clear in 1 Corinthians 15. And he says, if it's not true, then we are the most to be petty. Your faith is worthless.

You should not be a Christian if it's not true. So when we are either considering the gospel or we're telling someone the gospel, if they do not understand that your claim is that it's true, and they believe it, but they don't actually think it's true, they're not believing the gospel. You have to believe it's true because that's the nature of the gospel.

It would make no sense. Otherwise, again, Paul's very clear. So if you're not, if you're not convinced, we can't just suddenly decide something's true.

That's not how our minds work. That's not how we work. Exactly.

We go ahead. Well, I'm just saying, again, in the last episode, we were talking about this, people think of religion in completely different categories. And suddenly, everything they know about how we operate goes out the window.

Yeah, right, right, right. So this may be think of, so just to underscore the main point here that I was making, and that is if this person's complaint is valid against any Christian. I'm not taking it personally.

It doesn't matter who you say, then John was out of line. That would be the author of the gospel of John John, the beloved disciple, because he says just the opposite. Look, too.

And when you see over and over again, this concept played out in all the gospels in the book of Acts, and look at Romans one declared with power to be the son of God through the resurrection. That's the fourth verse. I mean, hi, I'm Paul.

I'm right in you guys. Boom, right out of the gate. Jesus declared with power to be the son of God through the resurrection.

So the resurrection is evidence that Jesus is the son of God. And you ought to believe that because of the evidence. Okay, we're not putting our trust in the evidence.

We're putting the evidence is a pathway to the act of trust that we put in Jesus. I feel, I guess I get a little animated here, I get a little bugged because I think this is so foundational and this,

not to be uncharitable, but this is a silly pushback. And it's, it's, it's pietistic.

It sounds spiritual, but it is on a sound in its biblical content. And everybody who speaks, every gospel writer displays just the opposite. And John actually says it explicitly.

So here, and here's the thing, you, of course, want to become a Christian. There are all sorts of subjective experiences at that point that, that you do, you do discover, you do discover what it means to be in the presence of God or to experience his comfort, or whatever, whatever it is, that does happen. But in order to get to that point, you have to believe it's true.

And through, you know, God throughout the Bible is constantly saying, I'm doing this so that you won't know. Yeah, that's right. That's right.

You know, this reminds me of conversations we had in the early 2000s when the postmodern movement had really influenced what became, we called the emergent church or the emergent village, which is a group and having conversations with some of these. And I wrote quite, quite directly, if you are postmodern in your view, you cannot be a Christian. And this made, oh, who Tony Jones, he just went into orbit on this one.

But the point I was making is very simple. It isn't like you don't believe like I am. So you can't be part of our club.

The nature of Christianity is to hold that the claim that Jesus is the Messiah is an accurate claim. And you must believe that it is accurate, which is another way to say it is true, not just true for you, but actually true to reality. And if you don't think it's true to reality, because you can't know any truth about reality or whatever, then you're not exercising the kind of conviction that is required to be a Christian is required for salvation.

That's all I was saying. It's the way Christianity is structured that you have to acknowledge as true particular things. And this is where belief trusts.

You just don't just acknowledge their truth. You are trusting in those things that you at least think are true. Even if you don't know them, at least you think they're true.

But if your underlying philosophy says you can't know any truth at all and anything you think is true is not true, well, then Christianity isn't not going to be useful to you. It doesn't work that way. That was kind of my point.

But anyway, so I got 20 Jones angry. But he survived all these years. And now I think he's part of the progressive movement in any of them.

Okay, here's a question from Shane. I struggle with thoughts that God isn't real. I know he's real.

How do I fight this? Okay, I'm just trying to think through this a little bit. I struggle with thoughts that God isn't real. I know he's real.

Though I know he's real. In a certain sense, it doesn't sound too odd to me. A lot of people, everybody has doubts sooner or later.

And especially when one is younger in the Lord and maybe less schooled, the doubts have more capability of upending us. In my situation, I cannot, excuse me, I cannot will myself into atheism. God doesn't exist.

And the reason is I know too much. It is way too counterintuitive. Because then I have to say that everything came from nothing.

The consciousness came from matter. That objective morality doesn't exist at all. There is no problem of evil in the world.

And on and on and on. And these are just too big of a leap against reality, a contradiction reality. Now, when I say that I know there is a God, that's what I mean because of that.

And it doesn't mean there aren't outliers and other times where I struggle with particular things. But I have this knowledge base. Who is our Shane? Oh, Shane, that's right.

Okay. So Shane is saying, I know that there's a God. I'm not entirely sure what he means by that.

Unless he's saying, this is what I'm supposed to believe that I'm pretty confident of it, but then I still have the doubts. If you know something to be the case, that means you believe it and you have good reason to believe it. That's basically the classic approach or definition of knowledge justified true belief.

All right. And so if Shane is having moments of uncertainty, even though he has for the most part on balance confidence that God exists, I would suggest you just revisit the reasons for God. And now we're not zeroing in on Christianity now.

He mentioned God. So we just talk about God. And there's a whole range of arguments.

You know, one of the best books that I think covers all these range of arguments, very accessible and fun to read is Jay Warner Wallace's God's crime scene, because he looks at about 10 different items like the origin of the universe and the apparent design of the universe, the fine tune constants, whatever. And then all the way around the problem of evil, consciousness, acts of personal will and blah, blah, blah. And then, and then he says, these are none of these things that are things we see as evidence as can be explained the way he puts it in the room.

If you've got a person who's dead and from a cop perspective, and all of the details can be explained from things inside the room, there's no, it's not it's not a murder investigation. But if there are things that can't be explained inside the room, in other words, there's a knife in the person's back and bloody footsteps going to the window and out the lawn and gone. Well, that's outside of the room.

Okay, that's a murder scene. And he uses that motif to look at the evidence or God. And what's very interesting is he said, you know, atheists can have answers for every single one of these things.

Well, here's the way that here's the way to explain away that. But all of the answers they give are different. In Christianity, we can look at all of these features and the answer we give to all of them is exactly the same.

There is a unification of all of our answers under the under God. It this looks, looks like somebody's been here, you know, and left fingerprints. Just to clarify, because at first when you said all of their answers are different, it sounded like you were saying all the atheist answers are different.

But what you mean is all of their answers to each of these questions bring them to a different conclusion. Yeah, they have a different way of explaining it, you know, and and there's no unified understanding of how all of this works together. You know, they have to have these anyway, in our case, there's a unified answer.

And this is this is one of the strengths of the Christian worldview. My point in general for Shane is that just when you're having adults about God, you go back to the basic reasons. What's the best explanation for the way things are as a general principle, a material example is that the universe is here.

Why is something here rather than nothing here? Why is the universe look designed? Even Richard Dawkins says with regard to the biological realm that is a complex realm that gives the appearance of having that design for a purpose. So he'll acknowledge that. But evolution explains the appearance of design.

But now we have another one. Now we have what about the problem of evil? What about consciousness down the line? And it turns out that our worldview, the existence of God makes sense of all of these realities that we encounter that can't be explained inside the room to use Jim's characterization. And therefore, there are evidences for the God that's outside of the universe to follow the parallel.

And that's what I would suggest to Shane. And this is why, since I know a lot of this stuff, I can't will myself to be an atheist. I just know too much.

Well, I think that's a good first part. And I'm going to give a second part to this because I suspect that what's going on here, based on the question, is that Shane, you are convinced intellectually that God exists. So you've heard these arguments, you're convinced by them.

And yet, you keep thinking, but what if I'm wrong, but what if I'm wrong, but what if I'm wrong, not because of evidence that's presenting itself to you, but it's purely an emotional reaction. But what if I'm wrong? And actually, Gary Habermas has a lot to say about this. And I think it is very helpful.

And there's a book called the Thomas Factor. I think you can still get it on Amazon, but it's also available for free online. So if you look up the Thomas Factor, it's on his website, or you could just put the Thomas Factor Gary Habermas into H-B-E-R-M-A-S.

Yes. So he divides doubts up into different categories. So there's intellectual doubts, there are volitional doubts, and there are emotional doubts.

So this would be categorized as an emotional doubt. And what I'm about to say is not to convince someone that it's true, this isn't what you do to figure out if it's true. This is for somebody who has been convinced it's true, but you keep saying, but what if, but what if, but what if.

So for those people, what he says is you think about Philippians 4, 4 through 8. And what you do is, what that passage says is be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise dwell on these things.

So here's what he says, you just follow this outline. You thank God, you make your requests in whatever you're questioning here. And then you tell yourself what is true, you think about what's true and you replace your false thinking with true thinking.

So what's happening is that you have to fight these false ideas. Again, I just want to reiterate, this is not a situation where, oh, here's some more evidence and now I have to think about this evidence. That's not what I'm talking about.

We're talking about thoughts that maybe I'm wrong. You have to remind yourself of all the things that you said, Greg, go back to these things and replace your thoughts of what if with the truth. And he says it way better than I do.

And it was very helpful to me when I had a lot of anxiety, just it doesn't have to be about what if questions about doubts, it's anything where the reason you're distressed because you are telling yourself false things. For example, let's say you're suffering and you think, well, maybe God doesn't love me. I know he loves me, but maybe God doesn't love me.

The same thing, you say, okay, I know that what I'm saying right now is not true. And this is good. He's recognizing that.

And then you replace that thought with the truth. God sent his son. He did not spare his own son, but delivered him over for us all, elderly, not also with him, freely give us all things.

He does. He's proved he loves us. So then you don't allow yourself to dwell on these ideas you know to be false, but you replace them with true ideas.

So I, but I recommend you read his explanation. I think it, I think his whole thing on the emotional doubts is very, very helpful. So hopefully that will help you, Shane.

And thank you also, Lorena. We really appreciate hearing from you. Send us your question on X with the hashtag SDRask.

We really do look forward to hearing from you. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cocle for Stand to Reason.