

Faith and Reason



This is my Bible Confession

- ▶ This is my Bible (hold up your Bible or device that has the Bible on it).
- ▶ It is the Word of God. It is truth!
- ▶ Its promises are Yes and Amen in Christ!
- ▶ I bring an attitude of expectancy to every reading of God's Word!
- ▶ I ask for understanding of God's *logos* (Word) even as I seek a daily *rhema* (Word) from God.

The Misunderstood Concept of Faith

- ▶ The following are some examples of how faith is misunderstood in Christianity:
 - ❖ Many equate faith with belief and think that belief is irrational.
 - ❖ Some people have said, “Faith takes over where reason leaves off.”
 - ❖ Some people think that Christianity is a faith that cannot be proven.
- ▶ These ideas about faith are *all wrong*.
- ▶ Through this lesson, we will give you an understanding of the interplay between faith and reason, which will allow you to strengthen and defend your faith.

Biblical Faith

- ▶ The Bible defines faith in Hebrews 11:1: “Now **faith** is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
- ▶ The phrase “hoped for” in Greek means a confident expectation: the kind of confidence we have when we have a good reason to believe something.
- ▶ The “good reason to believe something” generally lies in having proof, or evidence.
- ▶ God’s proof lies in His Word: He has given us many precious promises and has proven faithful to His Word. Fulfilled prophecy is an example, and a proof that God is who He says He is.
 - ❖ Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God **must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.**”
- ▶ Romans 10:17 tells us how we obtain faith, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word of Christ.**”
- ▶ Therefore, faith needs a foundation of **knowledge** (of His Word) and **reasoning** (evidence).
- ▶ So, let’s explore the concepts of knowledge and reasoning a little further...

What is Knowledge?

- ▶ In order to understand the interplay of faith and reason, it is necessary to understand the concept of knowledge first.
- ▶ Knowledge includes facts, information, descriptions, or skills that are acquired through experience or education.
- ▶ In philosophy, the study of knowledge is called *epistemology*.
- ▶ The great Greek philosopher Plato famously defined knowledge as “justified true belief.”
 - ❖ Notice that Plato says that knowledge is more than a mere body of facts – it is a justified belief.

Three Types of Knowledge

- ▶ *A Priori Knowledge*
- ▶ *A Posteriori Knowledge*
- ▶ *Revelatory Knowledge*

Human Knowledge – Natural Realm

God's Knowledge – Supernatural Realm

Human Knowledge

A Priori Knowledge

- ▶ *A priori*: knowledge that does not require (sense) experience to be known to be true
- ▶ It is not a claim that no experience was necessary to *arrive* at the claim, but that none is needed to *prove* it.
- ▶ If you can know something just by thinking about it, without consulting how the world appears to you, that is *a priori* knowledge.
- ▶ Examples:
 - ❖ “all bachelors are unmarried”
 - ❖ $2+2=4$
 - ❖ There cannot be a round square
 - ❖ Any logical truth—the connection between premises and conclusion in a valid argument

A Posteriori Knowledge

- ▶ *A posteriori*: knowledge that *does* require (sense) experience or empirical evidence to be known to be true.
- ▶ In order to know something, you must investigate using your senses and experience.
- ▶ Examples:
 - ❖ “Some bachelors are unhappy” – this must be observed or experienced
 - ❖ Using a microscope to examine bacteria; the microscope is really a better set of eyes (sense of sight)
 - ❖ Measuring dimensions to know the size of an object

Revelatory Knowledge

▶ Revelatory knowledge comes from the God the Father

- ❖ In Matthew 16:13-20 – *“Jesus asked His disciples: “But who do you say that I am?” Peter replied: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*
 - ▶ Jesus told Peter he was blessed, for flesh and blood (natural sources) had not revealed it to him, but he had a revelation from the Father in Heaven.

▶ Revelatory knowledge comes from the Holy Spirit

- ❖ When the Holy Spirit comes into our life He brings the revelation knowledge of the Father and the Son (Jesus Christ): *“At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you”* (John 14:20). The context of this statement is Jesus teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit.

▶ Revelatory knowledge comes from the anointed preaching of God’s Word

- ❖ Peter preached to the Jews in Acts 2:14-41 and 3000 were added to the church through his anointed preaching.

▶ The book of James describes two types of wisdom (wisdom is the correct use of knowledge). James says that wisdom is either from above or earthly.

- ❖ James 3:15-17 – *“Such wisdom does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”*

Wisdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom.
And in all your getting, get understanding
- Proverbs 4:7 -

Human vs. Revelatory Knowledge

Human or Natural Knowledge	Revelatory or Supernatural Knowledge
Symbolized by the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil	Symbolized by the Tree of Life
Gained through the mind using logic, reason, and experience	Gained through revelation from God to your spirit
Acquired through study and experience	Acquired through meditation on God's word
Tends to "puff up" and build pride	Produces humility and dependence upon God
Greek concept: Knowledge is independent of character	Hebrew concept: Knowledge is tied to character
Paul calls his initial religious training "dung" (see Philippians 3:8)	Paul's retraining in the wilderness (by the Spirit)
Called Knowledge	Called "true knowledge" or "the spirit of knowledge" (see 2 Peter 1:3; Isaiah 11:2)

The Realm of Knowledge

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All God's Knowledge

All Human Knowledge

All Human Knowledge through the Spirit

Ed's *revelatory* knowledge

All Human Knowledge through the Mind, Reason, or Experience

Ed's *a priori* knowledge

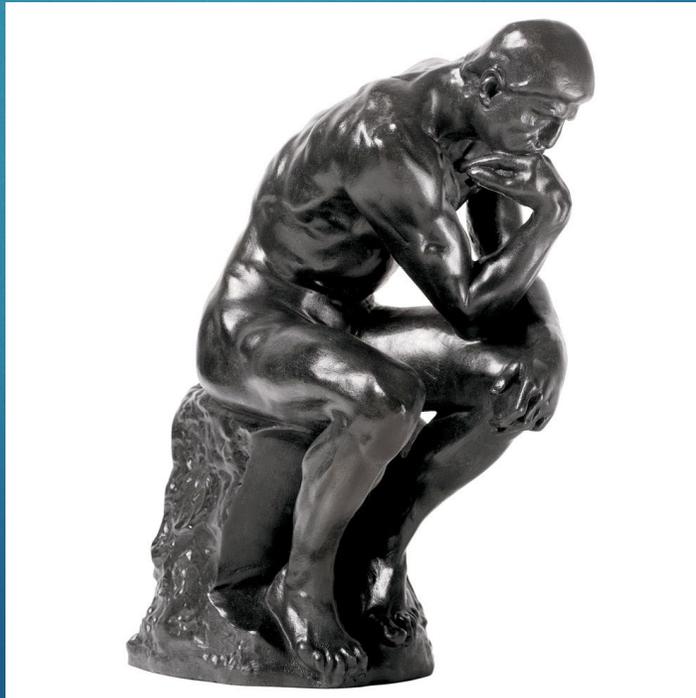
Ed's *a posteriori* knowledge

Faith & Knowledge Recap

- ▶ Faith is not blind; faith is not the opposite of reason.
- ▶ Faith needs a foundation of knowledge (of His Word) and reasoning (evidence).
- ▶ Faith is having a confident expectation.
- ▶ Human Knowledge (a priori and a posteriori) – a priori knowledge does not require experience. Knowledge that requires empirical evidence or experience to know whether it is true is a posteriori.
- ▶ Revelatory Knowledge – given by the Spirit of God to your spirit.

What is Reason?

- ▶ Reasoning is the process of using **existing knowledge** to draw conclusions, make predictions, or construct explanations.
- ▶ Two types of reasoning commonly used are **deductive** and **inductive** reasoning.



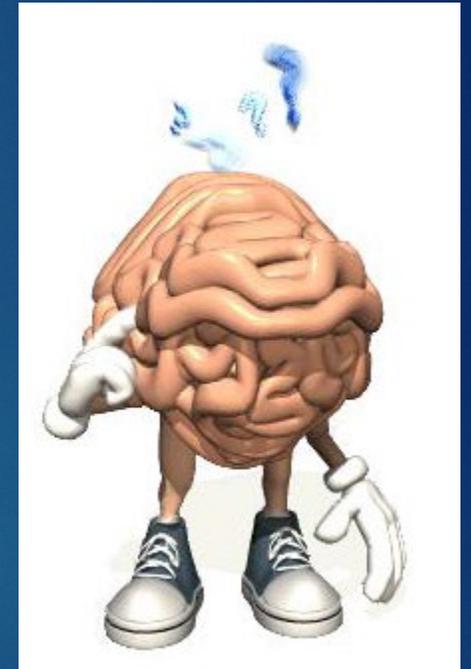
Deductive Reasoning

- ▶ Deductive reasoning moves from the **general** to the **particular**. It takes a general premise and deduces particular conclusions. In deduction the conclusions **are guaranteed to be true**. For example, math is a discipline founded on deductive reasoning:
 - ❖ **Example:** If $x = 4$ AND if $y = 1$ THEN $2x + y = 9$; Deductive reasoning guarantees that the conclusion is absolutely true.
- ▶ Some disciplines which use deductive reasoning: math, computer programming, law, Biblical hermeneutics, Bible history
- ▶ Deductive reasoning = conclusion guaranteed



Inductive Reasoning

- ▶ Inductive reasoning moves from the **particular** to the **general**. It gathers together particular observations in the form of premises, then reasons from these particular premises to a general conclusion. An inductive conclusion is **likely, but not certain**.
 - ❖ **Example:** If I observe 10,000 dogs, and every dog has fleas, I may conclude "All dogs must have fleas." The conclusion is a conjecture or a prediction. Further evidence may support or deny my conclusion. The 10,001st dog may not have fleas, thus refuting my earlier conclusion.
- ▶ Most scientific research is carried out by the inductive method: gathering evidence, seeking patterns, and forming a hypothesis or theory to explain what is seen.
 - ❖ Thus, while the newspapers might report the conclusions of scientific research as absolutes, genuine scientific literature itself uses more cautious language - the language of inductively reached, probable conclusions.
- ▶ Some disciplines which use inductive reasoning: science, medicine, and criminal justice fields
- ▶ Inductive reasoning = conclusion is merely likely



Deductive vs. Inductive Reasoning

	Deductive Reasoning	Inductive Reasoning
Premises	Stated as facts or general principles (“It is warm in the summer in Florida”)	Based on observation of specific cases (“All crows Bill and his wife have seen are black”)
Conclusion	Conclusion is more special than the information the premises provide. It is reached directly by applying logical rules to the premises.	Conclusion is more general than the information the premises provide. It is reached by generalizing the premises information.
Validity	If the premises are true, the conclusion must be true .	If the premises are true, the conclusion is probably true .
Usage	More difficult to use (mainly in logical problems). One needs facts which are definitely true.	Used often in everyday life (fast and easy). Evidence is used instead of proved facts.

Philosophic Views on Knowledge & Reason

	Deductive Reasoning	Inductive Reasoning
Greek Philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, etc.	a priori: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowable “prior to” experience independent of sense experience Kant: “although all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it arises from experience” 	a posteriori: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> empirical: can only be known “after” (on the basis of) experience
Scholastic Philosophers: Aquinas, Abelard, etc.	necessary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> logically impossible that it is false denial of it involves a contradiction true in all possible worlds 	contingent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> not necessary not true in all possible worlds possible: at least in one possible world it is true
Modern Philosophers: Kant, Ayers, etc.	analytic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> true in virtue of meaning alone: <i>It’s validity depends solely on the definitions of the symbols it contains</i> grounded in meaning independently of matters of fact Kant: a proposition whose predicate concept is contained in its subject concept 	synthetic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> not analytic: <i>it’s validity is determined by the facts of experience</i> Kant: a proposition whose predicate concept is <i>not</i> contained in its subject concept

The Connection Between Reason and Faith

- ▶ Both inductive and deductive arguments require faith.
 - ❖ An inductive argument requires faith in its *conclusion*.
 - ❖ A deductive argument requires faith in its *premises*.

	Deductive Reasoning	Inductive Reasoning
Premises	Stated as facts or general principles True Premise: (“All men are mortal. William is a man” True Conclusion: Therefore, William is mortal) False Premise: (“All boys eat apples. Stacy eats apple. False Conclusion: “Stacy is a boy.”)	Based on observation of specific cases (“All swans Bill and his wife have seen are white”) Conclusion: All swans are white. Yet, there are black swans.
Conclusion	Conclusion is more special than the information the premises provide. It is reached directly by applying logical rules to the premises.	Conclusion is more general than the information the premises provide. It is reached by generalizing the premises information.
Validity	If the premises are true, the conclusion must be true .	If the premises are true, the conclusion is probably true .
Usage	More difficult to use (mainly in logical problems). One needs facts which are definitely true.	Used often in everyday life (fast and easy). Evidence is used instead of proved facts.

Faith Moves Beyond Mere Reason

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- ▶ Reasoning requires faith in a premise or conclusion, but reasoning can only take you so far. Faith correctly acknowledges that rational and logical arguments cannot ultimately prove the existence of a transcendent God.
- ▶ Faith also correctly acknowledges neither evidence nor reason is a **sufficient** basis for faith in God. That is because faith is based on who God is and the certainty of His **promises. His promises are what verify His existence.**

Faith and Reason are Complementary

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- ▶ Faith and reason are complementary, not contradictory, and not on opposite sides of the spectrum. Observe that:
 - ❖ **Faith** without **reason** leads to superstition.
 - ❖ **Reason** without **faith** leads to **nihilism** (the belief that life is without objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value) and **relativism** (the belief that points of view have no absolute truth or validity, having only relative, subjective value).
- ▶ Quotes
 - ❖ “Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.” - St. Augustine (5th century theologian)
 - ❖ “Faith certainly tells us what the senses do not, but not the contrary of what they see; it is above, not against them.” - Blaise Pascal (17th century mathematician)
 - ❖ “I suspect that most of the individuals who have religious faith are content with blind faith. They feel no obligation to understand what they believe. They may even wish not to have their beliefs disturbed by thought. But if God in whom they believe created them with intellectual and rational powers, that imposes upon them the duty to try to understand the creed of their religion. Not to do so is to verge on superstition.” - Mortimer J. Adler (20th century American philosopher)

Faith and Reason in the Bible

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- ▶ The Bible encourages us to reason
 - ❖ **Isaiah 1:18** – “Come now, and *let us reason together*,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.”
- ▶ We are to have a good reason for what we believe
 - ❖ **1 Peter 3:15** – “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being ready to make a defense* to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;”
- ▶ The Bible itself encourages the attainment of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding
 - ❖ **Job 28:28** – “And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is *wisdom*; And to depart from evil is understanding.’”
 - ❖ **Proverbs 1:7** – “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge*; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
- ▶ The Bible promotes such intellectual virtues as discernment, testing, and reflection
 - ❖ **Acts 17:11** – “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, *examining the Scriptures daily* to see whether these things were so.”
 - ❖ **Colossians 2:8** – “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”
 - ❖ **1 Thessalonians 5:21** – “But *examine everything carefully*; hold fast to that which is good;”
- ▶ Result: Christians live by both *faith* and *reason*.

Our Spirit Can Reason

- ▶ The conscience concerns one's judgment in the area of morality, of right and wrong. It is the inner voice of our spirits and can reason. It can determine what is right and wrong with regards to knowledge.
- ▶ The Bible teaches that God has placed basic principles of His Law in every person's conscience (Romans 2:14-15). Application of the Law requires both inductive and deductive reasoning. This is further affirmed in 1 Timothy 1:5-7 where it alludes to *letting your conscience be your guide*.
 - ❖ **Morality** and **Ethics** are built on God's *spiritual* laws.
 - ❖ **Science** is built on God's *physical* laws.
 - ❖ **Politics** and **Economics** are built on God's *civil* laws.
- ▶ For the Christian, Paul expresses the importance of maintaining a pure conscience in Acts 24:16: *"So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man"* (NIV). *A clear conscience is better at reasoning than an unclear conscience.*

Faith & Reason Recap

- ▶ An inductive argument requires faith in its **conclusion**.
- ▶ A deductive argument requires faith in its **premises**.
- ▶ **Faith** without **reason** leads to superstition.
- ▶ **Reason** without **faith** leads to **nihilism**
- ▶ *Come now, and **let us reason together**,” says the Lord.*
- ▶ **Morality** and **Ethics** are built on God’s *spiritual* laws.
- ▶ **Science** is built on God’s *physical* laws.
- ▶ **Politics** and **Economics** are built on God’s *civil* laws.

Conclusion: True Faith

- ▶ Christian faith is not a blind faith, but one that is both reasonable and logical, with many outside evidences to support it and strengthen it.
- ▶ Faith is built on the foundation of **knowledge** (of His Word) and **reason** (evidence). That is why God gives us His Word.
- ▶ Understanding the rational and logical foundations of our faith in Christ helps to lay a very solid foundation that will help us to understand the world around us. We certainly have ample evidence of His promises and existence in creation alone (Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:18-32).