



CHANGING
THE FACE OF CHRISTIANITY

www.changingthefaceofchristianity.com

Our Mission: Reversing Christian intolerance, hypocrisy, homophobia, judgmentalism, and other negative Christian stereotypes, by helping Christians to be more like Jesus Christ.

Negative Stereotype: Non-Christians believe we have a **Superficial or Blind Faith**.

This essentially means they believe we don't know what we believe (or don't really believe what we believe because of our actions) and are uncomfortable and unprepared to discuss our beliefs with others who might disagree. They believe our beliefs are "skin deep", and don't go much beyond the Sunday school stories of "Jonah and the whale" or "Daniel and the lion's den". They dispute the Bible's truth; claiming it is full of myth, inaccuracies, and contradictions.

- What's your definition of having a superficial faith?

A Story to Make It Real: (From several sources on thinkatheist.com)

- *"Bible 'study' is an exercise in affirming/reinforcing their beliefs, instead of critical inquiry."*
- *"Blind faith: willful ignorance, maintaining ignorance even when presented with the evidence."*

Examples: (Do you have any stories to share? What's the impact of having a superficial faith?)

1. We have faith, but we don't live as if we truly believe. E.g. it's fake and superficial.
Read Titus 1:16, James 2:14-24
2. Atheist Penn Jillette (Penn & Teller comedy duo) challenges Christians saying "IF you really believe God exists and I'm going to hell, then you SHOULD come talk to me. I admire those that do. If you really believe and DON'T talk to me, then you must really hate me!"

Discussion:

- If we are unwilling to talk to other people about God, what does this say about our faith or what does it say about our love for other people? **Read Philemon 1:6**
- People are rarely "reasoned" into believing. However, I DO believe having a confident and reasoned defense can propel someone into a self-discovery of God through the Holy Spirit. How well could you defend the Bible or God, which is the object of our faith?
- Jesus says that if we truly love Him, we will obey His commands (**John 14:15**). How would you respond if you were challenged about selectively picking and choosing which commands from the Bible to obey, or picking and choosing which practices to follow or ignore?
Read Exodus 20:9-10, Exodus 21:17, Matthew 15:3-9, Galatians 3:25
- Is it appropriate to continue with a Child-Like understanding after accepting Christ with a Child-Like faith? **Read Mark 10:15**

What God Say About It (The Bible):

- **1 Peter 3:15** "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."
- **2 Timothy 3:14-17** "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you

have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

- **Jude 1:3** "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."
- **1 Corinthians 3:1-4** "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?"
- **Hebrews 5:12-14** "In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."
- **Hebrews 4:2** "For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith."

Closing Thoughts on Christian superficial faith: (Being Prepared With An Answer)

- Essential vs non-essential beliefs: review the early church statements of belief (creeds)
 - Nicene Creed, Confession of Chalcedon, Athanasian Creed, Apostles Creed, Westminster Confession and Westminster Catechisms
 - Creeds focus on doctrine of the Trinity (God the father, Son of God-Jesus, Holy Spirit), Jesus being eternal with God, not made or a creation of God, Jesus taking on flesh and becoming human, suffering, dying, and resurrecting after 3 days.
- Understand the history of the church and its splits over theological differences (Eastern Orthodox/Western Orthodox, Protestant Reformation). Some denominations place more emphasis on the Bible, while some emphasizes prophesy or tradition. Is there a perfect denomination or does it really matter, assuming they agree on the essentials?
- Accuracy of the Bible, compilation "canonization" process, and how books were included/excluded over time, rejection of Gnostic gospels, and the translation process
- Defense of the Resurrected Christ – Lee Strobel's "Case for Christ" focuses on this
- Understand why man needs salvation (original sin, nature of man), that salvation is available for everyone, and how Jesus' sacrifice made salvation possible (substitution).
- Understanding the transformed life: before and after acceptance of Jesus Christ

Action:

- Is action more important than understanding? You don't have to become a Bible scholar, theologian, or apologist, but you should understand the essential beliefs, decide whether you believe them, praise and worship God according to those beliefs, and be able to offer a reasonable explanation as to why you believe them to be true.

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Nicene Creed

- Adopted in the city of Nicaea by the first ecumenical council (318 Bishops), which met there in AD 325, and later revised and adopted by the First Council of Constantinople (150 Bishops) in AD 381. The purpose of a creed is to act as a yardstick of correct (normative) belief. (Read more: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_creed)
- **The 1988 Ecumenical version (ELLC):** (See variations at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_versions_of_the_Nicene_Creed_in_current_use)
- We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

Council of Chalcedon

- Produced the **Confession of Chalcedon** in 451 A.D. by 370 Bishops. (Read more: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Chalcedon)
- We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

Athanasian Creed

- Used by Christian churches since the sixth century AD. It is the first creed in which the equality of the three persons of the Trinity is explicitly stated. (Read more: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasian_Creed). Note: the Term Catholic is used several times in this creed. This does not mean the "Catholic" denomination, but rather means the universal church or body of Christian believers.

- Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled; without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son unlimited; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternal; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated; nor three infinites, but one uncreated; and one infinite. So likewise the Father is Almighty; the Son Almighty; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties; but one Almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son Lord; and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords; but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity; to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion; to say, There are three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Essence of the Father; begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Essence of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of Essence; but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell; rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the God the Father Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies; And shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic Faith; which except a man believe truly and firmly, he cannot be saved.

Westminster Confession

- The Westminster Assembly drafted and confirmed The Westminster Confession of Faith in 1646 by 121 puritan clergymen, and represents Reformed or Presbyterian beliefs. The confession was largely the work of the Church of England, and in terms of authority or doctrine is considered subordinate to the Bible. It consists of 33 chapters covering a range of topics (Read more: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/wescontext.html>). They also produced the Westminster Larger Catechism and Shorter Catechism, in Question/Answer format as a means to help lay-Christians learn orthodox beliefs. (Read more and access PDF versions of all these documents: <http://www.opc.org/confessions.html>)

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