

“I Believe the Bible, but . . .”

OUR team of Christian college students was conducting a program for youth in Lincoln, Nebraska, something we did often during those days in the '60s. I preached a sermon that afternoon about the faith Abraham demonstrated by his willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac—the son through whom God had promised to bless the world. I made the points that “true faith goes forth without question” and “true faith is always blessed by God.” I encouraged the young people who were present to place their faith in God.

Seeking Truth

As the service concluded, I stood near the entrance to the church building speaking to the young people and their adult sponsors as they left. I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned to see a clean-cut, well dressed young man whom I thought to be about 19 or 20 years old. Looking intently at me, he asked, “Could I speak to you sometime about what you said today?” It wasn't difficult to detect the importance he placed upon his request.

Somewhat surprised, I answered, “Sure! When would you like to talk?”

“Anytime,” he replied.

“What about right now?” I responded.

We went to a room where we'd have some privacy, and I learned that the young man was an architectural major in his junior year at the University. “Dave,” as we'll call him, had a real problem. He looked at me and said, “I believe the Bible, but I don't believe in Jesus.”

I'd been teaching New Testament Evidences at Ozark Christian College for a number of years. And now sitting across from me was a young man who needed the entire course in a few minutes.

Honest Answers

“Dave,” I said, “that's an interesting remark, since the Bible clearly states that Jesus is God's Son and our

Savior. Of course, I understand how a sermon like I preached today would cause you some alarm, since I presented faith in Jesus as the only way to God.”

“Yes,” he said, “that's right.”

I believed the Bible, and I believed that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God! And now sitting before me was a sincere young man with a question, the answer to which could mean the difference between his being saved or being lost. As I spoke, I prayed, “Father, use me in this young man's life.”

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Dave claimed to believe the Bible, but not the eye-witnesses who wrote about Jesus Christ. So that's where I began. I traced the writings of the New Testament back to the first century through

manuscript evidence. I quoted church leaders and historians from the first century. I talked to Dave about Josephus and his recognition of Jesus as a historical figure. I explained that more evidence exists to substantiate the life of Jesus than exists for many figures from antiquity whose existence few people question—people like Homer, Plato, and Alexander the Great. We talked about the apostolic witnesses who died for their faith. I explained, “A man may die for what he believes to be the truth even if isn't, but seldom will a man die for what he knows to be a lie, even though he has presented it as truth to others.”

A Matter of Faith

We talked nearly two hours. At one point in the conversation I asked Dave, “Why do you believe Abraham Lincoln lived?”

“Well, we have historical evidence,” he replied.

“What historical evidence?”

“Well, we have writers, some of whom may have seen him.”

“Anything else?”

“Yes. We have all of these places named after him, even this city were we are, and we have monuments all over the country to his memory. And we have records of speeches he made.”

“Well, let's stop there,” I said. “You believe Abraham Lincoln lived because we have historical

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records, possibly some eyewitness accounts, we have places named after him, and we have monuments to his memory. Right?”

“Right,” he replied.

“So concerning Jesus, Dave, we have eyewitness accounts, which I’ve traced back to the first century. All over the world we have monuments to Christ. In fact, you are sitting in one right now—this church building. In every city in America there are many such buildings, and around the world we find many more. There are more monuments to Christ in this world than to any other person. Think about it. There may be a few monuments in the United States to Lincoln, or Washington, or Jefferson. But in comparison to the monuments to Christ, there are relatively few. And yet you believe Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln lived. You base your faith upon eyewitness accounts, the fact that places have been named after these men, and that monuments have been built to their memory.

Considering the Evidence

“I see little difference in what you believe about certain historic figures and what I believe about Jesus Christ—except that I have more substantial evidence than you. I’d like to tell you more about how the accounts of Christ’s life were penned by eyewitnesses or by those who were acquainted with eyewitnesses. I’d like to talk with you about archaeological evidence. I’d like to talk with you about the miracles of Christ. But Dave, I know neither of us has the time right now. I urge you to study carefully the things we’ve discussed.”

I left Dave with a list of books to read. I knew from our conversation that his girlfriend was a Christian, so I urged him to study with her. We prayed together. Before Dave left he looked at me intently and said, “Mr. Stacy, I wish I could have faith like yours!” My heart rejoiced that he had seen faith in me, but on the other hand, my heart ached that I might never see Dave again to know whether or not his heart had been changed.

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Accepting the Truth

Two years after my conversation with Dave, I attended the North American Christian Convention. As it happened two years earlier in Lincoln, Nebraska, I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned around. Talk about a pleasant surprise! There stood Dave and his girlfriend. “Mr. Stacy,” he said with a gleam in his eye and excitement in his voice, “I’ve become a Christian since the last time I saw you, and ‘Sheila’ and I are married. Thanks for helping me that day in Lincoln.” I gave Dave and Sheila big hugs and thanked them for looking me up. I looked at those with me and said, “It pays to know something about evidences!” On that occasion the payment was the soul of a young man who placed his faith in the Christ of the Bible. ■

Bob Stacy is a freelance writer in Middletown, Ohio.

Recommended Reading for Those Wanting to Begin a Basic Study Of Christian Evidences

Christianity Stands True by Lynn Gardner
(College Press, 1994)

The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict
by Josh McDowell,
(Thomas Nelson, 1999)

The Case for Faith by Lee Strobel
(Zondervan, 2000)

The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel
(Zondervan, 1998)

Solid by Jack Cottrell,
(College Press, 1991)

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