

# ISN'T IT BETTER TO BE SCEPTICAL?

Some people suggest it's naive and simplistic to put our faith in Jesus and the Bible. The underlying assumption behind this view is that there aren't good grounds for believing what Jesus and the Bible say are true, the way reality really is. If Jesus and the Bible don't describe reality as it actually is, then we'd be fools to trust them. One of the New Testament authors observes that if the Bible isn't true then followers of Jesus are the saddest people alive. Faith that attempts to believe what it knows to be false is no faith at all. Faith that doesn't deal rigorously with doubts and questions has little integrity.

In light of this, carefully examining what we believe and asking questions is healthy and vital. However, you cannot base your life on scepticism. Healthy scepticism asks questions to explore ideas and find answers. Scepticism and doubt as a way of life results in not getting anywhere at all.

Ian Garrett observes that: Most things we know, we know by trust (i.e. faith). *The man who says he knows the train is going to London means he trusts the platform announcement. The scientist who says we know the molecular structure of a certain protein means he trusts the work published by fellow-scientists in a journal. When we say we know about events in the news, we mean we trust the reporter.*

*One of the great lies of today is that 'religion' is in the realm of 'faith' whereas everything else is 'hard fact'. The truth is that most of the time we're exercising trust because we cannot know something with absolute certainty. However, we don't stand on railway platforms all day saying 'But you can't actually prove it.' We trust and get on. Yet when it comes to Christianity people often say, 'You can't actually prove it', and they're willing to spend a lifetime on the platform of being agnostic.*

Dallas Willard unpacks how skepticism has become so powerful in our culture:

*We live in a culture which has, for centuries now, cultivated the idea that the sceptical person is always smarter than the one who believes. You can be almost as stupid as a cabbage, as long as you doubt. The fashion of the age has identified mental sharpness with a pose, not with genuine intellectual method and character. Today it is the sceptics who are the social conformists, though because of powerful intellectual propaganda they continue to enjoy thinking of themselves as wildly individualistic and unbearably bright. (Dallas Willard, Hearing God)*

Asking hard questions and carefully investigating Jesus and the Bible is important if it's ever to result in a durable faith. However, adopting scepticism as a value to be upheld above trust is to resign ourselves to never finding answers to the questions that lie at the foundation of our lives. Questions are servants to help us decide what it's wise to put our faith in. Scepticism is a valid means of examining which beliefs to adopt, but it's not a substitute for choosing the beliefs that we need to navigate our lives by. As CS Lewis once said, to see through everything is to see nothing.

