

Is Your "Faith" Actually Presumption?

Description



A SABBATH SCHOOL STUDY ON FAITH, SCIENCE, MEDICINE, AND ELLEN WHITE'S TESTIMONY "EXPERIENCE NOT RELIABLE"

Is Your "Faith" Actually Presumption?

Ellen White's testimony
against unevidenced beliefs
and in favor of science!



A study related to the SDA
Sabbath School Lesson for 2021, 3rd Quarter
Rest In Christ
Week 2
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This week's lesson is entitled, "Restless and Rebellious." Thursday's lesson is entitled "Faith Verses Presumption," and asks,

"Think about a time you acted on faith and a time you acted on presumption. What was the crucial difference?" Sabbath School Quarterly Lesson, Thursday, July 9, 2021

Well, this is a great question. Ironically, many Christians define faith as presumption without realizing it.

Presumption is believing something to be true without evidence. Most dictionaries actually define faith, at least religious faith, in a similar way, again, that to have faith is to believe something without sufficient evidence.

Take for example the sort of statement some Christians make to atheists in regard to cosmogony, or the origins of the universe. They say something like, "It takes more faith to believe in the big bang than it takes to believe in the creation story."

Of course, they are saying this from the perspective that the big bang theory is more unbelievable and has less evidence for it than the creation story. The irony here is that the Christian making this kind of statement is actually saying that the less evidence you have, the more faith you need to believe it.

This is not what Ellen White promoted in regard to faith. She said,

"God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith." Ellen White, 21LtMs, Lt 234, 1906, par. 3

Ellen White is saying that faith is to be ****based on**** evidence – that God isn't at all asking us to believe something without sufficient evidence of its truthfulness!

This is the main difference between legitimate faith and presumption. Legitimate faith is based on evidence, presumption is not.

But this leads to the next question...what qualifies as sufficient evidence? Well, Ellen White answered this as well.

Many think that their experiences qualify as sufficient evidence for belief in something. And while this may be true if the experience is gained correctly, most of the time it is not the case.

As an example, Ellen White wrote a [testimony](#) to a woman named Sister N. who was ill and was doing this or that of her own devising in order to get better, but God showed Ellen that this was not the right method of making decisions for her health – or for anything for that matter. Ellen wanted her to go to the health institute for more professional, experienced help and treatment. Ellen said to her,

“You are guided by your feelings and are governed by your experience. You have tried this and that plan to your entire satisfaction, and have decided that your judgment was the best to follow in your own case. But what has been your standard? Answer: *Your feelings*. Now, my sister, what have your feelings to do with the real facts in the case? But very little. Feelings are a poor criterion, especially when under the control of a strong imagination and firm will. You have a very determined mind, and your course is mapped out before you; but you do not view your case from a correct standpoint. Your judgment is not safe to be relied upon when it relates to your own case.” Ellen White, 3T 68.1

So, here, Sister N. was basically treating herself without professional medical advice. And, she was completely satisfied and convinced everything was going well – that in her experience her self-diagnosis and treatment was working just fine. Sister N. was being governed by her personal experience! But Ellen saw otherwise. She continues,

“I was shown that you had made some improvement, but not as much, as fast, or as thorough, as you might, because you take your case into your own hands. For this reason, and that you might feel it your duty to be guided by the judgment of the more experienced, I wished you to come to the Health Institute. The physicians of the Health Institute understand disease, its causes and proper treatment, better than you can; and if you will yield your set ideas willingly, and abide by their judgment, there is hope of your recovery. But if you refuse to do this, I see no hope of your becoming what you might be with proper treatment.” Ellen White, 3T 68.2

“As I have before stated, you, my sister, rely upon experience. Your experience decides you to pursue a certain course. But that which many term experience is not experience at all; it is simply habit, or mere indulgence, blindly and frequently ignorantly followed, with a firm, set determination, and without intelligent thought or inquiry relative to the laws at work in the accomplishment of the result.” Ellen White, 3T 68.3

Let's stop there for a minute. I know this may be controversial, but let's apply these principles to the present-day situation of vaccination. Ellen here tells Sister N. that she is relying upon her own experience in regard to the course she is taking with her health. But Ellen tells her that this is not experience at all, but habit ignorantly followed. Yes, Sister N. is told that she was not operating with intelligent thought or inquiry relative to the laws at work in the accomplishment of the result. So, the first question we need to ask ourselves when considering vaccines, or any medical treatment, but let's stick to vaccines for now, no pun intended, is, do I have an intelligent understanding of virology and how vaccines work to be able to determine for myself the best course to take? For most of us, probably not! So just keep that thought on the back burner. Let's continue with the testimony to Sister N. Ellen goes on,

“Real experience is a variety of careful experiments made with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits. The results are marked with careful solicitude and an anxious desire to learn, to improve, and to reform on every habit that is not in harmony with physical and moral laws. The idea of others’ gainsaying what you have learned by experience seems to you to be folly and even cruelty itself. But there are more errors received and firmly retained from false ideas of experience than from any other cause, for the reason that what is generally termed experience is not experience at all; because there has never been a fair trial by actual experiment and thorough investigation, with a knowledge of the principle involved in the action.” Ellen White, 3T 69.1

Wow, so here Ellen is breaking the news to Sister N. that she has not conducted a variety of careful experiments in regard to her health. These experiments will give Sister N. “real experience,” instead of what she has, which Ellen says is not experience at all. Ellen highlights the fact that many are offended when someone gainsays what they have learned through their own “so-called” experience. Yes, this can be very upsetting, and even seem cruel. But, Sister N. was basically presuming that her course of action was working, when in fact it wasn’t the best course to take. She was acting without sufficient evidence. She was presuming her home treatment was working fine. Basically, the only way to gain real experience is by careful experiment. This will give us the proper evidence we need to base our faith on, even faith in a medical treatment.

Ellen told Sister N. that “there has never been a fair trial by actual experiment and thorough investigation, with a knowledge of the principle involved in the action.” We must again ask ourselves, do we have a knowledge of the principles involved in the action of vaccines for instance? Or viruses?

God, through Ellen White, is recommending here that we should not have faith in our own ideas of health treatments if we have not conducted proper experiments with a knowledge of the principles involved in the action, be it vaccines or anything else. But, what if we don’t have a knowledge of how vaccines work? What then? We will get to that.

Ellen goes on,

“There are many invalids today who will ever remain so because they cannot be convinced that their experience is not reliable. ...

“Experience is said to be the best teacher. Genuine experience is indeed superior to book knowledge. But habits and customs gird men and women as with iron bands, and they are generally justified by experience, according to the common understanding of the term. Very many have abused precious experience. They have clung to their injurious habits, which are decidedly enfeebling to physical, mental, and moral health; and when you seek to instruct them, they sanction their course by referring to their experience. But true experience is in harmony with natural law and science.” Ellen White, 3T 69.3 – 71.1

Ah, science. That’s the ticket! Science is all about careful experiments. Again, Ellen parallels science with true experience which is gained by conducting “a variety of careful experiments made with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits. The results are marked with careful solicitude and an anxious desire to learn, to improve, and to reform on every habit that is not in harmony with physical and moral laws.”

Again, true experience is in harmony with science, and this is gained by “a fair trial by actual experiment and thorough investigation, with a knowledge of the principle involved in the action.” It is REALLY important to get what God is saying through this testimony by Ellen White: If your experiences are against science, they aren’t genuine, reliable experiences. Why? Because true experience is in harmony with science.

So, what if we are not scientists? Well, we then need to do a more indirect experiment, as Ellen advised Sister N. to do. She was to go to get the advice of a medical specialist who does have a knowledge of the principles involved in her health condition. Here heaven gives us the principle of appealing to the top experts in the field into which we are inquiring. In *Counsels on Health*, she said,

“Our workers should use their knowledge of the laws of life and health. They should study from cause to effect. Read the best authors on these subjects, and obey religiously that which your reason tells you is truth.” Ellen White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 566

Here Ellen gives us inspired counsel that constitutes one of the core principles of the health message – “Read the best authors on these subjects...” So again, for example, when it comes to vaccines, we should read the works or watch and listen to the advice from the top specialists in the fields of virology and vaccination – those who have a knowledge of the principles involved in vaccination – TODAY. We are not to get our health advice from the health experts of 100 years ago, nor, as in the case of vaccination decisions for today, are we to get our vaccination advice from any health expert who is not an expert specifically in vaccines. These other experts in other fields would not qualify as the “best authors” on the subject of vaccination.

Science – the principled experimental testing of ideas – this is how heaven directs us to gain evidence and knowledge on any subject. And it is upon this knowledge that we can base our faith and determine our course of action accordingly.

And if that wasn’t profound enough, she goes on to apply these same principles of experiment to religious matters. She said,

“Here is where we have met the greatest difficulties in religious matters. The plainest facts may be presented, the clearest truths, sustained by the word of God, may be brought before the mind; but the ear and heart are closed, and the all-convincing argument is: ‘my experience.’ Some will say: ‘The Lord has blessed me in believing and doing as I have; therefore I cannot be in error.’ ‘My experience’ is clung to, and the most elevating, sanctifying truths of the Bible are rejected for what they are pleased to style experience. Many of the grossest habits are cherished under the plea of experience. Many fail to reach that physical, intellectual, and moral improvement which it is their privilege and duty to attain, because they will contend for the reliability and safety of their experience, although that misjudged experience is opposed to the plainest revealed facts. Men and women whose wrong habits have destroyed their constitution and health will be found recommending their experience as safe for others to follow, when it is this very experience that has robbed them of vitality and health. Many examples might be given to show how men and women have been deceived by relying upon their experience.” Ellen White, 3T 71.2

So, even in religious matters, we are to rely on hard evidence rather than on our false ideas of experience. Legitimate evidence comes from careful experiment, whether in the science lab or when reading the scriptures. Again, Ellen said that even in the realm of religious matters, we are to perform “a variety of careful experiments made with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions.” We are to de-bias ourselves when coming to the scriptures. This will lead to true faith – faith based on true experience: science, and legitimate evidence. Everything else is presumption.