

Know Why You Believe PDF

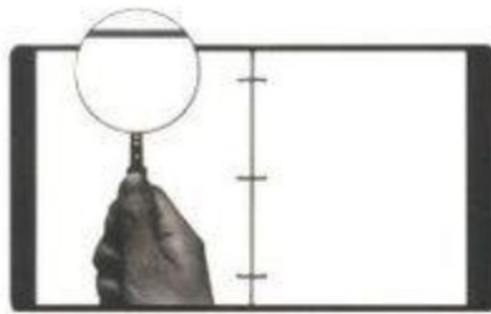
Paul E. Little

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Paul E. Little

Author of *How to Give Away Your Faith*

Know { NEW EDITION REVISOR'S UPDATE } Why *You Believe*



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About the book

Book Review: "Know Why You Believe" by Paul E. Little

In today's complex world filled with uncertainties, Paul E. Little's insightful work, "Know Why You Believe," stands out as a significant resource for those exploring the foundations of Christian faith. This book tackles essential questions about belief and faith with clarity and conviction. Little seamlessly combines rigorous intellectual analysis with accessible insights, making the core principles of Christianity understandable and relatable.

Who Should Read This Book?

Whether you are a committed Christian wishing to strengthen your faith, a skeptic wrestling with doubts, or simply someone intrigued by the reasoning behind Christianity, this book serves as a comprehensive guide. It presents logical, compelling arguments that encourage readers to reflect on their beliefs deeply.

What to Expect?

Prepare for an engaging journey through the essential teachings of Christianity. Little's work not only seeks to affirm the faith of believers but also invites skeptics to reconsider their viewpoints in light of thoughtful discourse.

Why It Matters?

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By exploring the profound answers within the pages of "Know Why You Believe," you will gain the knowledge and assurance needed to navigate your spiritual journey more confidently and purposefully.

Conclusion

Overall, this vital book is a remarkable asset for anyone eager to understand the significance of faith and its implications for personal belief systems.

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About the author

Profile Overview: Paul E. Little

Background:

Paul E. Little was a prominent figure in Christian literature and theology, celebrated for his engaging and straightforward approach to Christian apologetics.

Career Contributions:

A devoted evangelist and educator, Little integrated his deep theological knowledge with rich ministry experience throughout his career. He actively contributed to campus ministry as an associate staff member of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, where his influence spread across numerous colleges and universities through lectures and discussions.

Writing and Impact:

With a talent for demystifying complex theological ideas, Little was able to reach and resonate with a wide audience. His notable works, including "Know Why You Believe" and "Know What You Believe," serve as influential texts for individuals working to understand or reinforce their Christian faith.

Legacy:

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Paul E. Little's impact remains significant, as his writings and speaking engagements continue to inspire and guide countless people in their spiritual journeys.

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Know Why You Believe Summary

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Know Why You Believe Summary Chapter List

1. Exploring the Importance of Knowing Your Beliefs in Christianity
2. Investigating the Historical Evidences for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ
3. Delving into the Uniqueness of the Christian Faith Compared to Other Religions
4. Addressing Common Objections and Questions About Christianity
5. Reflecting on the Personal Impact of Firmly Understanding Your Beliefs

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1. Exploring the Importance of Knowing Your Beliefs in Christianity

In a world filled with diverse perspectives and conflicting worldviews, the importance of understanding one's beliefs in Christianity cannot be overstated. This foundational knowledge is not merely an intellectual exercise, but a vital aspect of a believer's daily life, spiritual maturity, and effectiveness in engaging with others. Knowing what one believes fosters a deep sense of security and conviction, which is particularly essential in a time when belief systems are challenged by secular ideologies.

At its core, Christianity posits certain tenets about the nature of God, humanity, and salvation that necessitate thoughtful examination. When individuals invest time in understanding the basis of their faith—rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—they cultivate a personal relationship with God that is nurtured by informed belief rather than blind acceptance. For instance, consider the difference between a casual churchgoer who attends services out of tradition and a believer who studies Scripture and engages in theological discussions. The latter experience often leads to a richer, more fulfilling spiritual life.

Understanding one's beliefs also equips Christians to articulate their faith to others effectively. In a culture that increasingly questions the relevance of Christianity, being able to discuss the reasons for one's hope—even amidst

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doubt and uncertainty—serves as a powerful witness. For example, a young person dealing with the prevailing skepticism about religion in their university setting may find themselves challenged to defend their beliefs. Those who have taken the time to understand their faith will likely respond confidently to questions regarding the moral and existential relevance of Christianity, while those who have not may stumble or feel diminished.

Moreover, knowledge of beliefs plays a crucial role in spiritual resilience. The New Testament is replete with examples of early Christians facing persecution and suffering. Their steadfastness was often rooted in a profound understanding of their faith and a conviction that transcended circumstances. The apostle Paul provides a poignant illustration of this as he writes in 2 Timothy 1:12, expressing that he is convinced of what he believes and that he is not ashamed. Such assurance can serve as an anchor during times of personal crisis, where understanding the character of God, the promise of eternal life, and the assurance of His presence can bring peace amidst turmoil.

On a communal level, knowing one's beliefs facilitates stronger relationships and unity within the church. When congregants share a common understanding of core doctrines, their fellowship can be grounded in a shared faith. This unity fosters a welcoming environment for others exploring Christianity, as it signals a community that values doctrinal



integrity and is prepared to support one another in their faith journeys. It creates a culture where discussions about beliefs can occur openly, allowing for both encouragement and growth.

Furthermore, understanding the Christian faith also allows believers to navigate societal and moral issues with wisdom and compassion. In today's world, where ethical dilemmas abound and views on morality are highly polarized, being well-versed in biblical principles empowers Christians to respond thoughtfully to pressing social issues. For example, discussions around topics like euthanasia, marriage, and human rights can be approached with a foundation of established beliefs, guiding individual behavior and offering a clear stance that resonates with their faith grounding.

In conclusion, knowing one's beliefs in Christianity is essential for personal growth, effective witness, community strength, and ethical living. It transcends mere acquisition of knowledge; it is about forging a deep, rooted conviction that influences every aspect of a believer's life. As Paul E. Little urges in his work, exploring the nuances of faith not only enhances individual spirituality but also serves as a beacon of hope and truth in a world yearning for genuine meaning. This exploration is not just beneficial, it is crucial for every believer seeking to navigate the complexities of modern life while firmly anchored in their faith.

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2. Investigating the Historical Evidences for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

One of the most central and defining claims of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the very beginnings of the faith, the resurrection has served as the foundation of Christian belief, supporting the notion of Jesus as the Son of God and the promise of eternal life for believers. As Paul E. Little discusses in "Know Why You Believe," it is crucial for Christians to understand the historical evidences that substantiate this pivotal event, as faith is not just a matter of personal conviction but also grounded in historical reality.

To investigate the resurrection, we must first consider the historical context. Jesus was crucified under the Roman governor Pontius Pilate around 30 AD. Crucifixion was a brutal and public method of execution, intended to serve as a deterrent and punishment for what was deemed treasonous behavior. The death of Jesus is well documented not only in the New Testament but also in external sources, including the works of historians such as Josephus and Tacitus. This cross-cultural acknowledgment of the event establishes a historical backdrop, corroborating that Jesus was indeed killed.

Following the crucifixion, the idea that Jesus rose from the dead emerged rapidly among his followers. The New Testament documents, particularly the Gospels, detail many encounters that the disciples claimed to have with



the risen Christ. These accounts include specific instances where Jesus appears to individuals and groups, such as Mary Magdalene, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and the eleven disciples. Each of these encounters is characterized by different contexts and responses, suggesting a multifaceted and rich experience that cannot simply be dismissed as a single hallucination or collective delusion.

One critical aspect of the resurrection narrative is the transformation of the apostles. Prior to the resurrection, the disciples were marked by fear and confusion; they fled and hid after Jesus' arrest. However, after claiming to have witnessed the resurrected Christ, they boldly preached his message throughout Jerusalem and beyond, often at the cost of their own lives. The radical change in their behavior is cited as a strong argument for the historical validity of the resurrection. It is unlikely that such a profound transformation could occur in the absence of a significant, life-altering event. Furthermore, the willingness of the apostles to suffer persecution and martyrdom rather than deny their belief in the resurrection presents a compelling testament to their conviction in its truth.

Moreover, the circumstantial evidence surrounding the empty tomb cannot be overlooked. All four Gospels record that Jesus' tomb was found empty, and the earliest accounts suggest that the empty tomb was a matter of public knowledge. The Jewish leadership attempted to deny the resurrection by



claiming that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body; however, this argument itself acknowledges that the tomb was indeed empty. The idea that the disciples could have concocted such a scheme seems improbable, given the historical and cultural context of their immediate post-resurrection beliefs and the level of persecution they faced.

In addition to the testimonies of the apostles and the empty tomb, the existence of post-resurrection appearances—over five hundred witnesses at one time, as noted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:6—provides a wealth of testimony that strengthens the case for the resurrection. It is here that the evidence shifts from anecdotal to overwhelming; the sheer number of witnesses offers a robust structure for historical validation. It is essential to recognize that in the context of first-century Greco-Roman society, such testimony would have been subject to scrutiny and would have easily dissipated had the claims been false or misrepresented.

In the scholarly realm, numerous historians and theologians, both secular and religious, have examined the resurrection and its implications. People like William Lane Craig and Gary Habermas have presented compelling arguments that the resurrection should be examined with the same critical historiographical methods applied to any significant historical claim. By scrutinizing the data, evaluating biases, and considering the sociopolitical effects of these early claims about Jesus' resurrection, we gain insight into a



monumental event that has shaped not only individual lives but entire civilizations.

In conclusion, the historical evidences for the resurrection of Jesus Christ serve as a powerful affirmation of Christian belief. Understanding these evidentiary foundations is crucial, as they affirm the authenticity of faith in a resurrected Savior. Little emphasizes that a well-rounded, informed belief is not only more resilient in the face of doubt but also arms believers with knowledge that can engage others in meaningful conversations about faith.

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3. Delving into the Uniqueness of the Christian Faith Compared to Other Religions

One of the fundamental aspects of Christianity that sets it apart from other religious traditions is its conception of God and humanity's relationship with Him. Unlike many religions that present a deity who is distant or demands strict adherence to rituals for appeasement, Christianity reveals a God who is intimately involved in the lives of His creation. This relationship is exemplified in the figure of Jesus Christ, who is not only understood as the Son of God but also as God incarnate. In Christian doctrine, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are central to the faith, emphasizing a personal relationship with God that is accessible to all individuals regardless of their background or status.

In contrast, other religious traditions often portray the divine in ways that suggest a more transactional relationship. For example, in some interpretations of Hinduism, the divine is approached through a multitude of deities, each requiring specific offerings and sacrifices. The relationship can feel impersonal as practitioners may focus more on ritualistic practices rather than an individual connection with a singular, personal God. Similarly, in Islam, submission to Allah's will is paramount, and while the concept of a personal relationship exists, it is often rooted more in obedience and fear of divine judgement rather than love and grace, which are foundational to Christian faith.



Another distinctive feature of Christianity is the doctrine of grace. Christianity teaches that salvation is a gift from God, offered freely through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). This contrasts sharply with the belief systems that emphasize human merit or enlightenment as the pathway to salvation. For instance, in Buddhism, individuals strive for enlightenment through personal effort and moral living, with salvation in the form of escaping the cycle of rebirth being achieved by one's own actions rather than through divine intervention. The notion that one can do nothing to earn God's love is revolutionary, promoting an understanding of humankind that reflects both the dignity of being created by God and the humbling reality of human inability to attain righteousness on our own.

The Christian narrative of redemption through Christ is uniquely transformative. It tells the story of a God who actively seeks reconciliation with humanity, as illustrated in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), where the father represents God, who eagerly awaits the return of His wayward child. This contrast with the often stern and demanding gods of other faiths demonstrates Christianity's unique appeal – it describes a love that forgives and restores rather than merely punishing or condemning.

Additionally, Christianity offers a historical basis for its claims, particularly regarding the resurrection of Jesus. Many religions rely on philosophical or

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mystical truths rather than historical events. The resurrection of Jesus stands as a pivotal event that is documented and is central to Christian belief, providing a basis for hope and assurance of eternal life. It lends credibility to the teachings of Jesus and confirms His identity as the Son of God. This historical grounding makes the Christian faith distinct; it is not merely a set of ethical teachings but is intertwined with real events that shaped the world.

Finally, the global and inclusive nature of Christianity is another defining characteristic. Early in its history, Christianity transcended ethnic and cultural boundaries, emphasizing that anyone, regardless of nationality, race, or social status, could be accepted into the family of God (Galatians 3:28).

This universal approach has influenced social structures and attitudes, leading to movements for equality and justice throughout history.

Conversely, many religions tend to be more culturally confined, with teachings and practices that may not easily be adapted or accepted in diverse societies.

In conclusion, the uniqueness of the Christian faith is multifaceted, expressing a personal and relational God, the revolutionary concept of grace, a strong historical foundation, and an inclusive message that invites all.

These elements not only contribute to an understanding of Christianity's singularity in the religious landscape but also have profound implications for how individuals perceive their relationship with the divine and their place in

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4. Addressing Common Objections and Questions About Christianity

In "Know Why You Believe," Paul E. Little provides readers with a compelling framework to address some of the most prevalent objections and questions concerning the Christian faith. This section is critical as it not only highlights the barriers that skeptics may encounter but also offers thoughtful, reasoned responses to these inquiries, empowering believers to engage in meaningful discussions about their faith.

One of the foremost questions raised about Christianity is the issue of suffering and evil. Critics often point to the existence of pain, suffering, and injustice in the world as evidence against a loving and omnipotent God. Little addresses this concern by explaining the concept of free will—an essential component of human existence. He argues that God gifted humanity free will so that love could be genuine. Without it, our choices would be meaningless. The presence of suffering is often a result of humanity's misuse of that free will. For instance, issues like war, poverty, and crime arise not from God's desire but from humanity's rebellion against His moral order. By understanding that suffering is a consequence of human sinfulness rather than a reflection of God's character, one can reconcile the reality of evil with the belief in a good and sovereign God.

Another common objection pertains to the reliability of the Bible. Critics

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often question whether the Bible can be considered the inspired word of God, given its ancient origins and the numerous translations it has undergone. Little invites readers to investigate the historical reliability of the biblical texts. He points out various archaeological findings that support biblical narratives, as well as the consistency of the manuscript evidence that has been preserved over centuries. For example, the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the mid-20th century, contain some of the earliest known copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, showing remarkable continuity with later texts—many of which were written thousands of years ago. This suggests that the Bible has been preserved with a high degree of fidelity, thus enhancing its credibility as a divine revelation.

Furthermore, skeptics often raise the question of whether Christianity is just one of many paths to God. Here, Little emphasizes the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of the Christian faith. He points out that while many religions advocate various moral and philosophical teachings, they often lack a personal savior who offers forgiveness for sins and a relationship with God. The claims of Jesus—His self-identification as the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6)—are unique to Christianity. He was not merely a teacher or prophet, but God incarnate who presented Himself as the solution to humanity's deepest problem—separation from God due to sin. By examining Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, one can see how Christianity transcends other belief systems, which often lack the historical

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foundation and divine authority present in Christ's claims.

Additionally, some may question the moral teachings of Christianity, arguing that they are outdated or overly restrictive. Little addresses the idea that biblical morality is not simply a set of prohibitions but rather a guide to living a full and flourishing life. He argues that God's laws are designed for our good, helping to promote societal harmony and individual well-being. For example, teachings on love, honesty, and forgiveness foster trust and community, while others—addressing issues like adultery and greed—are safeguards that protect relationships and personal integrity. When individuals commit to living according to these principles, they often find greater peace and fulfillment than when operating outside of them.

By providing thoughtful responses to these objections, Paul E. Little equips readers with the tools necessary to articulate their faith and engage in constructive dialogue. It becomes clear that knowing the answers to such questions not only strengthens individual belief but also serves to dismantle confusion and skepticism in a world full of differing perspectives. As believers grapple with these challenges and prepare to discuss their faith, they are better positioned to demonstrate how Christianity offers answers to profound life questions—answers rooted in historical truth, personal experience, and the transformative power of the Gospel.

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5. Reflecting on the Personal Impact of Firmly Understanding Your Beliefs

Having a firm understanding of one's beliefs is intrinsically tied to the quality and depth of a person's faith experience in Christianity. When individuals take the time to explore and solidify their belief system, significant personal transformation can occur, shaping not only how they view themselves but also how they interact with the world around them.

To begin with, firmly understanding beliefs leads to a more profound sense of identity. In a world filled with conflicting ideologies and values, knowing what you believe and why you believe it can provide a strong sense of belonging and purpose. For Christians, understanding the foundation of their faith—such as the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus—can transform self-perception from that of uncertainty to one of conviction. This can lead to a sense of liberation from societal pressures and expectations, allowing individuals to embrace their identity as children of God.

Moreover, this depth of understanding cultivates resilience. When faced with doubts or challenges, having a solid grounding in one's beliefs can invoke strength and perseverance. For instance, many believers report that during crises—whether personal, relational, or spiritual—their faith offers them comfort and guidance. This was notably captured in the aftermath of tragic events, where individuals who understood the concept of hope in the

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resurrection found solace in the promise of eternal life and the assurance that God is present even in suffering. Their beliefs became a source of strength, enabling them to navigate days that could feel overwhelmingly dark.

Additionally, understanding one's beliefs fosters an adaptable framework for dealing with moral dilemmas. When faced with ethical choices, a believer who understands the principles of Christianity can better discern right from wrong based on their faith. This moral compass not only aids personal decision-making but also impacts how they engage with others. For example, a Christian who understands the call to love one's neighbor will likely demonstrate compassion and empathy in their dealings with others, potentially leading to transformative interactions that can influence societal norms.

On a communal level, an individual's firm grasp of their beliefs enhances their ability to share their faith authentically. Engaging in discussions about Christianity requires a knowledgeable background in theological concepts as well as an understanding of the cultural landscape surrounding religion. This proficiency allows for genuine and meaningful conversations that can encourage exploration among peers. It's a core component of evangelism; when believers are confident in their understanding, they can convey their message effectively and sympathetically, addressing questions and objections with clarity rather than hesitation.

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The personal journey of understanding also develops a deeper relationship with God. This reflects in prayer life and personal study, where individuals who are aware of their theological standing tend to engage more earnestly in spiritual disciplines. They can grasp the significance of scripture in a way that reads beyond mere words, tapping into the transformative power of biblical truths. For instance, when reflecting on verses that speak of God's faithfulness, one can connect this truth with personal experiences, fostering a relationship built on trust and gratitude.

In conclusion, reflecting on the personal impact of firmly understanding one's beliefs reveals a tapestry of growth, resilience, and a profound connection to both God and community. The journey toward understanding one's Christian faith is not a solitary one; rather, it branches out to touch all aspects of life. Individuals are empowered to live boldly, love deeply, and engage meaningfully with those around them, making their beliefs not only a source of personal strength but also a catalyst for positive change in the world.

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