



## John & The Rabbi From Nazareth

Contrary to what we may have been led to believe, God doesn't ask us to simply accept His claims without evidence. If He did, our trust would be called *hope*, rather than *faith*— and the Christian faith is far greater than mere hope. In fact, the Christian faith is a response to evidence. Jesus came to show humanity a representation of God, and punctuated his message with tangible evidence that he spoke on behalf of the Father. Only after having seen these signs did Jesus' first century followers believe, and begin to document their experiences so that we might also believe.

### Discussion

#### Start Talking

Have you ever found yourself believing something without any evidence? How did you come to realize your faith on this matter was not entirely warranted?

When did you start to see through childhood rituals of imagination like the Tooth Fairy and Santa Claus? What was the catalyst for your new understanding of the situation?

#### What About You?

1. Looking back on your earliest impressions of the Christian faith, how would you say the concept of *faith* was defined? What did it mean to you then? What does it mean to you now?
2. What, in your opinion, is the primary difference between mere *hope* and actual *faith*?
3. When you are evaluating claims from any source, what are the criteria you use to decide whether to believe or not? What do you value as evidence?
4. If asked to give a brief rundown of the evidence which has led to your faith in Jesus, what would you say? How would you describe it?



## Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: John 20: 30-31, John 2: 1-12, John 1:14

1. Based upon his own statements as well as the episodes he portrays in these passages, what do you think John primarily wanted his readers to take away from his account of his time with Jesus?
2. Based upon what you've read here, how do you think John would describe his own reasons for uprooting his life to follow the rabbi named Jesus? How do they compare to your own?
3. One of the first pieces of evidence connecting Jesus to God the Father is portrayed in the passage where Jesus transforms the water from ceremonial washing jars into wine for the wedding guests to enjoy. Jesus' decision to use ceremonial icons in such a seemingly frivolous way might've struck early readers as disrespectful or sacrilegious. Why do you think he nonetheless chose to perform this sign in this way? What's the significance of this event?
4. Andy points out that the word John uses to describe Jesus' action in turning water to wine is probably more accurately interpreted using words like, "sign" and "evidence," rather than the religious word, "miracle." In your understanding, what's the difference between a "sign" and a "miracle?" How does it reshape your understanding of what happens in this passage?

## Putting It All Together

1. What does it mean for our faith to understand Jesus' ministry on Earth not as a series of random acts of magical generosity, but as supernatural signs pointing to the source of his power?
2. How can you prepare to tell the story of your own faith to those around you in a way that emphasizes the role of evidence in the process of your belief? Further, why should we even bother to frame our faith journeys this way?
3. What steps will you take in the days to come to identify specific people in your life who may not have encountered a mature definition of belief (having potentially been misled by our culture's understanding of the Christian faith as unwarranted hope)?
4. Where do you potentially see opportunities to respectfully engage people with your own story of coming to a warranted belief in Jesus based upon the evidence you encountered?

