

# EASTER MAGAZINE

## *A Leap of Faith.*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

[Page 1 & 2  
Leap of Faith](#)

[Page 2&3  
Trusting in  
God's  
Faithfulness.](#)

[Page 4 & 5  
What We  
Believe.](#)

[Page 6  
Spiritual  
Fitness](#)

[Page 7  
Spring has  
Sprung](#)

[Page 8  
Proverbial  
Wisdom](#)

Have you ever done a bungee jump? I haven't, but I can just imagine what it would be like when your feet leave the platform and you fall into "thin air".



You would be realizing how fast you were falling, and wondering if you were going to hit the ground, if the rope was going to break, or if you were going to be sick as you bounced up and down.

It must feel something the same when jumping from a plane thousands of feet up to do a parachute jump. When you get the signal you have to leave the safety of the aircraft and leap off into space, where the air and wind are rushing past you. You have to open the chute at just the right time, but you would be wondering, "what happens if it doesn't open when I pull the cord?" or, "where is the

string for the emergency chute?"



No matter how exhilarating these sports are, you will be relieved to be back, safe and sound on solid ground. If you are like me you would be more than happy, to watch other people take part.

However, we can't escape, for all of us are going to leave earth one day, and our souls will meet God. What equipment will you need for that day? If you are depending on being a good person, being an attendee at church, giving to charity or being a good neighbour; these things will be like a frayed and breaking bungee rope, or a parachute that won't open. They are good things, but by themselves will bring tragedy. The worst tragedy of all is being in eternity, far removed from God's presence.

How can you be sure of Heaven? Jesus said in John Chapter 3, to a

## *A Leap of Faith continued...*

very religious man, “you must be born again.” Then in verse 16 He tells us more. He is the precious Son of God, whom God gave to save us from the consequences of sin, and to give us eternal life.

How does it work?

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one can come to the Father [God] except through Me.” We have to recognise how sinful we are, we have to be truly sorry for what we have done, we have to believe that Jesus was punished for our sins, we have to ask for forgiveness, and hand our lives over to Him, in prayer.

When we do this something wonderful happens. He forgives us and gives us His Holy Spirit to live in us and change us. The Holy Spirit is our guarantee of our place in heaven. (Ephesians Chapter 1).

Our leap is a leap of faith and is based on Jesus’ promise in Matthew’s gospel- “Come unto Me...you will find rest for your soul.”



## *Trusting in God's Faithfulness.*

Our lives are full of decision-making every day, yet how often do we look to God to guide us in these decisions?

Christians need to trust in God. The bible says this in Proverbs 3: 5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.” Yet for many, trusting in God is easier said than done; how do we trust God? How do we know we can trust him?

The Old Testament book of Isaiah was written over 700 years before the birth of Christ yet it talks of His birth, His life and His death. Isaiah 53: 2 says of Jesus, “He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, no beauty that we should desire Him.” Jesus’ early life was nothing out of the ordinary, He came from humble beginnings. Verse 3 continues, “He was despised and rejected by men”; we know many accounts in the bible where He was rejected by teachers, the Pharisees and even those in His home town of Nazareth. Then in verses 4 & 5 we read how He has, “borne our grief’s and carried our sorrows” and that He was “pierced for our transgressions” although “He had done no violence.”

The truth of how Jesus’ perfect life and His death on the cross was necessary to pay for our sins and which “brought us peace” with God is truly wonderful. We can read on and on in Isaiah and find numerous parallels with Jesus’ life, but what is so amazing is this was promised to the Israelites so many years before Christ even entered the world.

# Trusting in God's Faithfulness continued...

But is God really faithful to us? These verses have already shown God's faithfulness to the Israelites thousands of years ago, but is He faithful to us today? 2 Thessalonians 3: 3 tells us: "The Lord is faithful, He will establish you and guard you against the evil one." Well, incredible as it may seem, God fully commits His faithfulness towards man when we are so often occupied by the distractions of life; we should be praising and thanking God for His unnumbered blessings to us.

The foundation to our understanding of God's faithfulness is in these simple words, which you've probably heard as a child: "God is great, God is good." God's greatness and his goodness work together with His all loving, mighty, compassionate and all-powerful characteristics in order for us to witness His faithfulness daily.

God's faithfulness is further demonstrated through His love for man. The psalmist tells us that, "His love endures forever," telling us that He will never stop loving us and we should acknowledge that God is always listening to us in our cries for help and mercy because His love endures forever!

Although our lives are surrounded by evil and all of us have sin in our lives, God still loves us! He did after all send his Son to die for us, that we may be free from our sin. We should show love to God in return through: trusting Him; praying to Him; asking daily for forgiveness; reading His word; and seeking His guidance in every aspect of our lives. We all have an unclean and sinful nature, but through God's love and faithfulness, we know if we trust Him, He will wipe the slate clean.

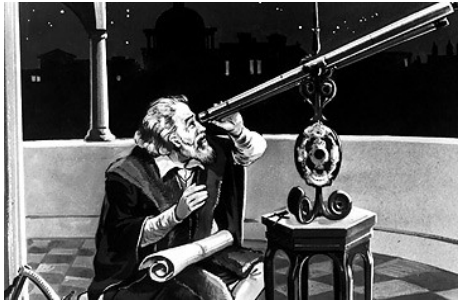
Through God's loving faithfulness we know we can trust him. So, in all things, Christians need to trust in God. Let's go back to those verses in Proverbs: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and he will make your paths straight." These verses condense into a few lines what we must do with our lives in order for God's plans to start working in us. We shouldn't take into account what others think when God is in control of our lives. Romans 8:31 tell us: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Take time to reflect on this verse. If we trust in God He is *always* faithful.

From this we can therefore have assurance of God's, everlasting faithfulness. We can trust in him for promised salvation. In Titus 1:2 it says that, "we have a hope of eternal life which God promised before the ages began"; we know if we confess our sin and give our lives to God he has promised us eternal life.

So let nothing stop you placing your trust in God's loving faithfulness, whether it's small day-to-day decisions or for the most important thing in life—your promised salvation; as Christians we know we can trust Him who is always faithful and always keeps His promises.

# What We Believe.

Have you ever heard it said that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere? It seems quite a lot of people subscribe to this notion these days. It's one of those statements that appears to include everyone and for this reason is "politically correct." But is it really correct? Should we, in the sophisticated twenty-first century, give it any credence? Let's leaf over the pages of history and see what evidence is available to us. For centuries people sincerely believed that the sun went around the earth. When Galileo, and before him Copernicus, demonstrated that this was not the case, he was forbidden to "hold, teach or defend" such a view and was handed over to the Inquisition. Similarly, for generations people sincerely believed that thunder was the "angry voice of God." We now know that both these sincerely held beliefs were superstitious rubbish.



Of course sincerity is vitally important and we all dislike hypocrites. But clearly sincerity is not enough. Some children may sincerely believe that lots of sweets and chocolate are the best foods to eat but they would be wrong. If the notion that sincerity is all you need is ridiculous why do people say it so often when the subject of religion is raised? Perhaps, for some, it is the fact that they do not want to get drawn into a religious argument that could be embarrassing. But there is a deeper reason. Religion is about the fundamental issues of life and death and there is something in us that does not want to look at them. They make us feel uncomfortable. We would rather live for the here and now and shut our eyes to matters associated with life and death, heaven and hell. It's much easier to depend on sincerity and living a reasonably decent life in the hope that this will carry us through.

But where does such a belief leave us? Well, the teaching of other religions and the teaching of Jesus point in very different directions. You may sincerely believe that Jesus was just a good man and His teaching no different from other religious leaders but what if you are sincerely wrong? What if God should meet you at the end of your life and ask, "Why did you not bother about My Son Jesus who gave His own life to put you right with Me?" Will you reply, "I thought it did not matter as long as I was sincere." Sincerity in belief is absolutely essential, but by itself, insufficient. We would never apply that argument to any other area of life. It is nonsense to apply it to religion.

An increasing number of people these days are also suggesting that all religions are the same anyway. They state that most of the great religions have a lot in common. They are peace-loving and kind and none of them advocate murder or theft. Mahatma Gandhi seemed to indicate this when he said, "The soul of religion is one, but it is encased in a multiple of forms." However, even a cursory examination of the world's religions will show that there is no way they can be seen as the same. For one thing they hold diametrically opposing views of what God is like. The Muslim Allah is personal and absolutely prohibits idols or any other way of representing God. Hinduism, on the other hand, is impersonal but approachable through countless deities and statues. Buddhism is religion without God and without a final existence. In Buddhism and Hinduism there is no forgiveness only 'karma'. Christianity, on the other hand teaches that God is personal and forgives. And what, according to the different religions, is the goal of our lives? Where are we heading after this life on earth? The goal of all existence in Buddhism is 'nirvana,' extinction – attained by the Buddha after no less than 547 births. Muslims look forward to a sensual paradise of wine, women and song. The goal of all existence in Christianity is to know God and enjoy Him forever in the company of His redeemed people. So, what the religions teach actually differs enormously.

Perhaps the greatest difference of all lies in the Christian assertion that none of us can save ourselves and make ourselves acceptable to God. Most other faiths assert that by keeping their teachings a



# What We Believe.

person will be saved. Christianity alone teaches salvation is by grace alone (free forgiveness when you don't deserve it). Christianity therefore stands out from all other faiths. It maintains that the living God, in the person of Jesus, has come to share our human situation, die an agonising death, take responsibility for human wickedness and break the barrier of death on that first Easter day. No other faith claims anything like that. Whether we like it or not the evidence clearly points to the fact that all religions are not the same.

Flowing from this we must also understand that if all religions are not the same then all religions cannot lead us to God as some today would have us believe. How could they when Buddhism does not believe there is a God at all, Islam makes Him far removed, Hinduism offers extinction after many incarnations and Christianity points to the fact that no religion can lead to God? He is too great and holy. The creature cannot discover the Creator unless the Creator chooses to reveal Himself. Thus the Bible does not record the story of human beings in search for God, but of God in search of human beings. Indeed the Bible gives a very unflattering picture of humanity. It tells us, for instance, that we do not have hearts of gold as we fondly suppose; rather the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. It tells us that murders, adulteries and lies do not proceed from our circumstances but from our hearts. It tells us that there is no difference between us for all have sinned and fallen short of God's glorious standard. What's more we love darkness rather than light because our deeds are evil. As a result we do not want God 'interfering' in our lives. We want to paddle our own canoes. How could all religions lead to God when they have such different images of God and of humans?

Many who urge that all religions lead to God offer us the image of a mountain with a number of routes all going up to the top. It does not matter which route you take. Such a belief is untenable. Let me offer you a different analogy. What if the real situation is like people trying to find their way through a maze? There are lots of routes that bring us to a dead end but just one way through. This is the Christian claim. So what makes Jesus so special?



You will note that I did not ask what makes Christianity so special. In many ways it is not special at all. It shares all the frailties and failures of the other religions and its history has been marred by war, lies and greed. Christians are, and have been, as fallible as anyone else. It is Jesus who is so special. Never has there been a person like Jesus. Nobody has been able to hold a candle to His matchless life, and nobody has been able to trash it either. In all the world He has no equal. His conduct exactly matched His teachings. Even His enemies could not make any mud stick to Him. Three times Pontius Pilate, who executed Jesus, declared Him innocent. Even the traitor Judas had to admit he had betrayed innocent blood. The thieves crucified with Jesus agreed that He had done nothing wrong, while the centurion in charge of His execution marvelled and declared He was an innocent man. Remarkable though this is, there is something far more incredible about the person of Jesus. Only Jesus has conquered death. His tomb is an empty one. He rose from the dead. This is where His message is so different from all the other religious teachers. Jesus Christ offers eternal life to those who love and trust Him. In strong contrast to the teachings of any other faith, membership of heaven is not earned by our good deeds. It is the gift of the sovereign God to those who entrust their lives to Jesus Christ and seek to obey Him. Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? .... I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also." (John 14:2-3)

Jesus Christ is truly the eternal Son of God who died and rose again to save us from our sins. Is it not time you trusted in His finished work on Calvary? Only He can, in the words of Cecil Francis Alexander, "unlock the gates of heaven and let us in."

# ***SPIRITUAL FITNESS.***



Exercise: no matter where we turn we never stop hearing about how important it is to be active for an hour a day, every day. It's on TV, it's in the newspaper and you can't go far online without being reminded of this either. It seems that if we do exercise the recommended amount we'll be more attractive, healthy and live longer. Even in the Bible there is a sense of the importance of maintaining physical health, as the human body often is compared to a temple of God.

It's tough to enforce daily habits, especially one which requires you to torture yourself for an hour a day, but once we are in the rhythm of doing the same thing every day, it seems hard to imagine *not* going a day without it. In fact, this line of argument is used in most fitness advertising – the importance of exercise being so ingrained into us that we begin to enjoy it and couldn't go without it.

However, is exercise the most important daily habit we need? In 1 Timothy 4:7-10 we read: "Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way,

as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe."

In contrast to exercise, "godliness" is a habit we never see promoted on Facebook or in the paper; however these verses from 1 Timothy demonstrate that it's more important than exercise or any other practice because its goal is an everlasting one, not one that will fade away in time. This "training for godliness" has benefits both now and forever.

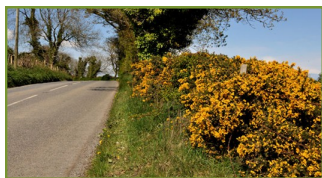
But how can we train for godliness? It's very different to, say, exercise because "godliness" is not an industry in the same way the fitness industry is. There are no programs that will "make you 10 times more godly in just 30 days!" and there are definitely no fancy watches to track how godly you were today (although admittedly, these would be a welcome invention). It may seem that we are all alone in our pursuit of godliness, but the truth is, there are others with this same goal in mind. Instead of floundering by ourselves, we should seek to "train" with God's people in fellowship with them, and ultimately treat our faith like it is a muscle that needs daily challenge and growth, and never lose sight of our eternal prize.



# Spring Has Sprung



As we drive the rural roads around our village we see early signs of fields and gardens coming to life again after a long, wet and cold winter. The grass will begin to grow, crops will be planted, animals will be returned to the fields to graze and rear their progeny. The flowers will begin to appear, birds will sing and built their nests and those people involved with leisure activities will reappear to enjoy the open countryside.



It is easy to walk into a supermarket with rows of shelves well stocked with produce and products and forget the hardships of those who grow, process and transport these items. Often we only think of these things when there is a scarcity. We somehow have forgotten the phrase, 'Give us our daily bread.' This is the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to remind them it is God who controls and provides our food. In the words of the hymn writer:

"We plough the fields, and scatter the good seed on the land, But it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand." God's goodness to us is seen most clearly at Easter in the death and resurrection of Jesus His Son, and the gift of new life He

offers us.

We too need to be reminded, much like the disciples, that it is God's goodness to all mankind which provides not only 'our daily bread' but which causes all nature to spring into new life again.

After the crucifixion and death of Jesus the disciples lost hope, their leader was dead what would they do? Can you imagine their relief when he appeared in bodily form and spoke to them in a closed room? (John 20:19). Eight days later he would appear again to them and invite doubting Thomas to put his fingers in the wounds on his hands and side imploring him, 'not to be faithless, but believing' (John 20:27).

What hope! What joy! When Jesus arose from the grave he was victorious over sin and death and hell, thereby assuring the disciples and us that sin would be dealt with if we trust in Him. As the hymn writer testifies:

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand: All other ground is sinking sand."

My hope is that you would trust Jesus to be your Lord and Saviour, not to be in the same situation as the Israelites were when God spoke to them through the prophet Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 8:20)

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

What is your hope for this year?

# Proverbial Wisdom.

Everyone enjoys a good proverb or a turn of phrase – Those witty little sayings of old wisdom that often allow us to give an opinion on a matter while helping us avoid opening ourselves up to criticism for the remark. These sayings can go way back in history, and for many phrases the original meaning is lost altogether, or have become a hotly contested topics as various interests wish to claim the prestige of being the first to use it; The saying 'Rule of thumb', for example has many hobbies and crafts that claim to be the first to use it, from carpentry to sword fencing, alcohol brewing to tailors.

You may be surprised to discover a large number of popular proverbs have their origin in the Bible. "A leopard cannot change his spots" is from the book of Jeremiah 13:25, for example, and the phrase, "By the skin of your teeth" is from the book of Job 19:20. "Pride comes before a fall" is found in Proverbs 16:18 and a "Wolf in sheep's clothing" was said by Jesus in Matthew 7:15.

Other bible lines that have become common phrases in our language include the term "forbidden fruit", from Genesis 3:3. This phrase is often used to describe a pleasing temptation that entices us to indulge in it even if we know it is bad for us. It comes from the fruit in the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat, but they disobeyed God's order, and committed the first sin by eating the forbidden fruit. Through this act

all pain and misery was brought into the world, and we have all suffered because of it. We have all copied the folly of Adam and Eve by eating our own forbidden fruit, perhaps not literally, but through all the other ways we have disobeyed God's commands. Commonly, by telling lies, acting in anger, cheating, being envious, proud, or selfish. Even though these individual acts seem as insignificant as biting into a piece of fruit we have been ordered not to eat, they are a disobedience of God's law, and they have the same consequence as the forbidden fruit: A separation from God. To fix this problem we cannot rely on our own good deeds, as we have already failed to please God, so we require someone else to save us.

Leviticus 16:10 is the origin of another now common phrase that explains how this happens. It is the term "Scapegoat". This was a goat that the Israelites would once a year symbolically sacrifice to God by sending it out into the wilderness. The idea being that all the sins of the Israelites were being taken away from them by the goat, so they were no longer guilty of them in the eyes of God. This was symbolic of the eventual sacrifice of Jesus, who died on the cross, acting as the scapegoat for all humanity. While the goat itself did not have the power to forgive sins, Jesus having lived a perfect life, did.

Who are you trusting to take your sins away?

## CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Sunday	Morning Worship. ( Lord's Supper )	11:00 a.m.-12:00. 12:00-12:30 p.m.
Sunday	Evening Service.	6:30-7:30 p.m.
Tuesday	Bible Study & Prayer Meeting.	8:00-9:30 p.m.
Saturday	Youth Fellowship. (see website)	7:30-9:00 p.m.
3rd Thursday of the month,	Ladies' Bible study.	8:00-9:30 p.m.

[www.dunamanaghbaptist.org](http://www.dunamanaghbaptist.org)