



3. Choosing to believe the truth

HOMEBASE

One of the things that I find are sometimes more a curse than a blessing are superstores. You know, the ones that have literally everything under one roof. You go in just for one thing and then you have to look for half an hour to find it and when you do, there are 20 versions of the product you could buy and you have to weigh up what is what. Of course, you ask a member of staff about it and you find he or she is a youth just out of school who doesn't know one end of the shop from the other. Oh dear. Life is a bit like that – it's full of choice and we have to make up our minds. When we buy stuff, we make a faith judgement – what are we putting our faith in to decide to get whatever we are buying – advertising, our past experience, someone's recommendation.

JESUS – Of course, we already know that when it comes to the things of God, everyone has a choice. We can do things God's way - or ours. When we choose to follow Jesus we choose life, choose hope, choose forgiveness, choose God's way. And that choice is by taking a step of faith. For some of us it was a step – for others a giant leap but as the people of God here this morning, we made it and landed in God's arms!

A QUESTION OF FAITH

Faith is at the heart of our response to God. By faith we have become the people of God. In the last two weeks we thought of the way in which a loving God held out His arms to us, desiring to make us His people – loved, special – accepted, secure and significant. Now we look at our response to that – we became God's people when we accepted that. We made a step of faith and now we find that we need to live by faith too. But how do we do that? Faith is so central to what we are as Christians. God does not want us to be just sure of what we believe in, but to realise that what we believe in makes a massive difference to our lives and the lives of people we touch.

Look at this verse.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him"

Hebrews 11:6

What does it take to please God? Many people, including Christians strive to do certain things in the hope that it might make Him feel happy enough to accept them. That's the "grumpy" lie that satan wants us to believe. That's not the case – to please God all we have to do is believe He's there and seek Him. That's it. Just that. Why? Because when we do that, He responds. And it's at that point we find out in practice He exists! It starts with that belief and it ends up with acceptance, significance and security. If you're not a Christian this morning, yet you know God exists, then make that step – seek Him – He'll find you.

It leads us to our first statement of the morning:

FAITH IS BELIVING WHAT IS ALREADY TRUE

If you buy a product in the supermarket, you don't buy it if you don't think it will serve your needs, or if you think the advertisement is untrue or whatever. Faith is not some wishy-washy idea of believing something that's nonsense or a fairy tale. Christianity is about truth – it's about something that's real. It's just that God does things the other way round. The way of science or any form of scholarship is to look at the evidence and weigh things up and act on the evidence. That's one way. But God asks you to do it the other. We can do the study ourselves or we can take someone's word for it and trust them. Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the live, no-one comes to the Father except through me." We have a God what says – trust me I know what I'm doing. The biggest difference is made to any Christian at any time when we trust what God is saying is truth – He is truth.

Faith Is Believing What Is Already True

God's role is to be truth

**Our responsibility is to believe truth
whether it feels true or not**

So God is truth and what He wants us to do is believe truth – whether it feels true or not. In a world of science and evidence, that seems difficult. It can be because trusting people can be – and we put the same criteria on trusting God as we do on trusting people – that's a bad comparison!

But before you think this way of thinking is intellectual suicide, then you'll find that you do it every day of the week on a regular basis. For example we are all told to eat our five a day because it's good for us. And so we do. It's an act of faith. Are you a nutritionist? Do you know all about your fats, carbohydrates, proteins vitamins. Of course not. You trust the Government scientists who make up the leaflets. We accept the word of those that do and it we base life decisions on their word. God asks us to make life decisions on the basis of what He says.

The whole of our lives are in fact lived by faith. We spend our lives trusting others without analysing what we are doing too hard. IN fact whether faith is effective or not depends on whom we put our faith in.

FAITH IS EFFECTIVE 1

PROCEED IF CLEAR So last time you drove down the road and saw a green light, what did you do – you proceeded. Why? How did you know someone wasn't going to come the other way. Because the law said they couldn't and their light is a red. You took a step of faith that the lights meant it was clear for you. How did you know the lights would be working properly or someone wouldn't jump red. You put your trust in the engineers who maintain the lights and in the obedience of other motorists to obey red and keep to the law. If you were less trusting, you may be more wary and we all come across other drivers who are and wonder why they are so cautious. They are because they are less trusting of others or their own ability!

FAITH IS EFFECTIVE 2

The bottom line is that faith is something we naturally do. The question then is whether we are wise about who we put our trust in! Muslims are fervent believers in their faith. Some will kill for it as we know. But their fervent belief doesn't make them right and their security before God secure. Faith by itself isn't good – it's who we put our trust in that's critical.

HEB 11:1

Christian faith isn't about the sort of hope that we have if we do the lottery. What makes the difference is that when we trust God, we find that it has been well placed. So when we trust we find out it's all true. If you try to analyse whether there is a God or not, you'll get the same scientific conclusion that thousands of years has produced – maybe there is and maybe there isn't. But when you do as Hebrews 11:6 suggested earlier, that you just believe and seek Him, then there He is. You trust and find it's true. It's not the way of the world, but it's God's way and it works because God

isn't an object to be studied, but a person to speak and be spoken to. So speak to Him.

So we find as we trust more and more of what God says about Himself and live more of our lives in His presence, then the more we find out about Him and how what He says is true. I'm not a Christian this morning just because the Bible tells me so and other people say it is. I'm a Christian because I've taken God at His word and found what He says was true so far in my life works. Therefore I can trust Him for the things I don't see. Faith starts with believing but it is only effective when it actually works! The Christian faith works – it changes lives and as a result I'm happy to go with what God promises to deliver on eternal security.

FAITH IS EFFECTIVE 3

Jesus is the ultimate faith object.

HEB 13:7 *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.* We know God is trustworthy because Jesus doesn't change. That's important, because Jesus is the ultimate faith object. He can be relied on anywhere, any time.

Sadly, so many Christians miss the point. Jesus isn't a double glazing salesman or used car dealer. In the end He wants us to trust Him. We so often want to wait for the blinding light, the not-picking evidence – Jesus just wants us to trust Him and you'll get all the blinding light and evidence that you need.

EVERYONE CAN GROW IN FAITH

God wants the faith we've got, whether it's just a little seed, or whether we feel strong in our faith – and He wants us to grow in that faith. We trust, He delivers so we trust more, He delivers more etc. It starts with trust because it's a trust relationship.

Everyone Can Grow In Faith

How much faith we have is determined by how well we know the one we put our faith in

Faith is making a choice to believe what God says is true and living accordingly

Faith grows as we decide to believe the truth and act on it

So, our faith grows in three ways

1. By getting to know God well
2. By making "God choices"
3. By living on the basis of that truth

How well do we know God? The better we know Him the stronger our faith is. Dwight L. Moody on Faith: "I prayed for faith and thought it would strike me like lightning. But faith did not come. One day I read, 'Now faith come by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' I had closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now began to study my Bible and faith has been growing ever since."

Spend time with God, spend time with His word and your faith will be transformed.

Faith is making a choice to believe what God says is true and living accordingly. Someone once said "Faith is not like petrol that runs out as you use it, but is like a muscle which grows stronger as you exercise it."

CHILD HOLDING HANDS WITH PARENT

So in other words, faith grows as we decide to believe the truth and act on it. It's like being a small child, holding our parent's hand. IN our independent modern adult life, we don't like that idea of dependence do we? But when we were small children we needed it because to run without supervision near roads was dangerous. We were not familiar with crossing the road – it was a mystery to us. Life is a bit like that and eternity definitely is – but it's not a mystery to God. So our

faith grows as we realise we need to put our hands in to His hands, listen to His voice, do as He says – then our faith will grow.

SKIP then FAITH GROWS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Many people say to me “that’s all very well. But God hasn’t been much help to me recently. I’ve got this illness or that illness. I’m struggling with my money, I’m struggling with my family. Work is terrible. I haven’t got enough faith to see me through. I think I’m losing my faith. Where’s God when you need Him anyway?” I’ll give you the answer. Right here. Right there in you. His Holy Spirit is in you. Put your hand in His hand.

I know that for people who have had difficult experiences that trusting God can be a difficult, but what I find most amazing about difficult times in my life is that when I’ve trusted God, He always comes through for me. Personal Testimony. Why did God let me go through all that. To show that He can do better than my wildest dreams. God puts us through tough times not to be vindictive, but to make us strong in our faith – not to sink. And we become tough by just trusting Him; holding His hand. Some of the greatest warriors of faith I’ve ever met aren’t people who’ve had smooth Christian lives, but have proved God in tough situations and they are content to trust Him whatever. *Phil 4:12 I know what it is to be in need and what it is to have more than enough. I have learnt this secret, so that anywhere, at any time, I am content, whether I am full or hungry, whether I have too much or too little. 13 I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.*

I said last time that many Christians struggle in their faith. Sometimes it is because they have forgotten just how amazing God has been in what He has given us. Sometimes it’s because we forget who we are because satan has fooled us into thinking that God is less than a good Father. Today we have found that God wants us to prove just how true every thing He has promised us is – by trusting Him.

How much do we trust God this morning? Is it a little or is it a lot. The measure of our faith is determined by our actions. **LAST OF SET OF THREE** No-one needs to say what their faith is like this morning – it shows in their actions. Yet we have a God that wants our faith to not be just words .

When I was a boy, I found some things in school difficult. I couldn’t do bills. I would say to my mother “I can’t do these”. She would say “There’s no such word as can’t”. This morning I want us to reverse our perception of God if this has been the case. Our faith grows through trusting. So here are a few things that God does for us by trusting His word.

TIN CANS

God is a God of “cans”. People think He’s a God of “Thou shalt nots”. No He’s a God who wants to show us that there’s no such word as can’t. God wants to transform not just what we believe, but how that makes us live and here are 20 cans to help us.

20 CANS

Prayer

*Preached by Mark Reid 23/5/09
MRBC Felixstowe
Based on The Freedom in Christ Discipleship Course
By Neil Anderson and Steve Goss*

Twenty Cans

By: Neil Anderson

1. **Why should I say I can't when the Bible says I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13)?**
2. **Why should I lack when I know that God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19)?**
3. **Why should I fear when the Bible says God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7)?**
4. **Why should I lack faith to fulfil my calling knowing that God as allotted to me a measure of faith (Romans 12:3)?**
5. **Why should I be weak when the Bible says that the Lord is the strength of my life and that I will display strength and take action because I know God (Psalm 27:1; Daniel 11:32)?**
6. **Why should I allow Satan supremacy over my life when He that is in me is greater than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4)?**
7. **Why should I accept defeat when the Bible says that God always leads me in triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14)?**
8. **Why should I lack wisdom when Christ became wisdom to me from God and God gives wisdom to me generously when I ask Him for it (1 Corinthians 1:30; James 1:5)?**
9. **Why should I be depressed when I can recall to mind God's lovingkindness, compassion, and faithfulness and have hope (Lamentations 3:21-23)?**
10. **Why should I worry and fret when I can cast all my anxiety on Christ who cares for me (1 Peter 5:7)?**
11. **Why should I ever be in bondage knowing that there is liberty where the Spirit of the Lord is (2 Corinthians 3:17)?**
12. **Why should I feel condemned when the Bible says I am not condemned because I am in Christ (Romans 8:1)?**
13. **Why should I feel alone when Jesus said He is with me always and He will never leave me nor forsake me (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5)?**
14. **Why should I feel accursed or that I am the victim of bad luck when the Bible says that Christ redeemed me from the curse of the law that I might receive His Spirit (Galatians 3:13-14)?**
15. **Why should I be discontented when I, like Paul, can learn to be content in all my circumstances (Philippians 4:11)?**
16. **Why should I feel worthless when Christ became sin on my behalf that I might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21)?**
17. **Why should I have a persecution complex knowing that nobody can be against me when God is for me (Romans 8:31)?**
18. **Why should I be confused when God is the author of peace and He gives me knowledge through His indwelling Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:33; 2:12)?**
19. **Why should I feel like a failure when I am a conqueror in all things through Christ (Romans 8:37)?**
20. **Why should I let the pressures of life bother me when I can take courage knowing that Jesus has overcome the world and its tribulations (John 16:33)?**