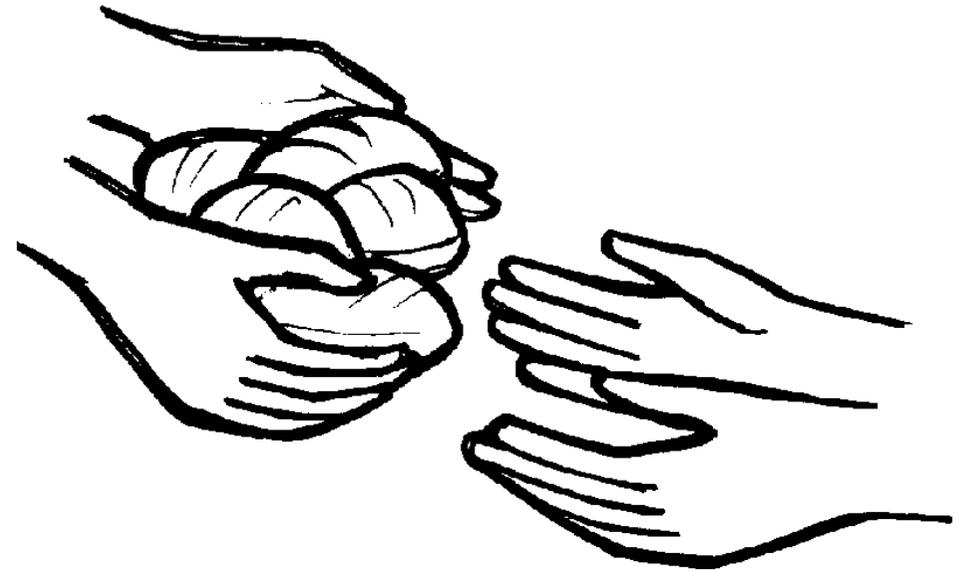


Finding Faith



Rev. Michael Burley

*Bible verses from "The Message" translation by Eugene Peterson
and the New International Version*

**Dear Jesus.
You love me.
I love you.**

**Forgive me for the sins which you bore on the cross and
help me to become the person you want me to be.**

**I offer myself to become your follower
Pour your Spirit upon me.**

**Help me to live in fellowship with your people.
Take me on the journey of faith
Into a future with you
Precious Lord I am yours forever. Amen.**



By this act of faith you have “crossed the Rubicon” you have entered into the unconditional love of Jesus.

Might I finally suggest you let someone know you have made this prayer and ask them to help you. Your local church minister may be a good starting point.

Someone said :-

*“There is nothing you can do to make God love you more than he does now
There is nothing you can do to make him love you less than he does now”*

You have found Faith. You are loved.

May God bless you greatly in full life in this world and the next.

Faith:-

In 49B.C. Julius Caesar returned from France with his legions and passed over the Rubicon river, thereby declaring his intention to invade Rome. The phrase “crossing the Rubicon” has survived to refer to any person committing themselves to crossing a point of no return.

Jesus invites us to share our lives with Him.

He looks at us and says, I love you, I went to hell and back for you.

He invites us to follow Him, to be a Christian, to join his people in fellowship.

He offers you his full forgiveness.

He offers you purpose and adventure for your life.

The decision to Find Faith and a life better than before is yours. Remember the “mission statement”? Jesus says

“ I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of”

John 10 v10

Read through the prayer on the next page and decide if it is what you would like to pray for your life. If it is and you wish to share the adventure of life with Jesus the life-giver then I recommend saying the words out loud:-

That is why whoever accepts and trusts the Son gets in on everything, life complete and forever! And that is also why the person who avoids and distrusts the Son is in the dark and doesn't see life. All he experiences of God is darkness, and an angry darkness at that.” John 3 v36

Someone once calculated how a typical lifespan of 70 years is spent. Here is their estimate:-

Sleep	23 years
Work	16 years
Television	8 years
Eating	6 years
Travel	6 years
Leisure	5 years
Illness	4 years
Dressing	2 years
TOTAL	70 years

Are you experiencing your life in all its fullness and making the very most of this precious gift?

If Jesus had a mission statement it might be His words :-

“ I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of”

John 10 v10

For 2000 years countless people have asked

- Who is Jesus?
- What do we believe about him?
- Why do I need him?
- How can I find a realistic faith that copes with life's difficulties?
- How can I have a life that is real, full, complete and eternal?

I asked these questions, considered the answers and I am now one of his followers. I offer you these thoughts so you too may find faith and receive the real life now and the eternal life which Jesus offers.

Our starting point must be to consider Jesus, the founder of our faith.

Founder:-

Over 2000 years ago a baby was born in Bethlehem. The main evidence for Jesus is to be found in the 4 accounts written by his followers, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They tell the incredible story of the one who:-

- Healed the sick
- Taught
- Raised the dead to life
- Performed miracles
- Allowed people to worship him as God
- Mixed with all people regardless of their status and appearance

Remarkably the Gospel stories all lead up to the death of Jesus, a death He went to willingly. Jesus was crucified on a cross of wood. After three hours of suffering He bowed His head and died. Three days later His followers met Him again
– full of life– Risen from the dead!



It is an incredible story–

- If half of it is true then it must challenge us
- If it is fully true then we must confront what it means.

Fellowship:-

One of the great joys of Christianity is that we share our journey to heaven with so many other people.

After Jesus returned to heaven something incredible happened to his followers. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell upon them and a bunch of bedraggled and confused disciples formed themselves into a unit which changed the world.

They became a fellowship who shared life together, living together, praying together and acting together with Jesus' power and love in their lives.

The early Christians used this blessing:-

“May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

2 Corinthians 13 v14

God the Father's heart is love

Jesus the Son is love in put into practice.

The Holy Spirit empowers us and draws us into a community of love.



Part of being in a love relationship with Jesus is that you share that relationship with other people in a life of fellowship.

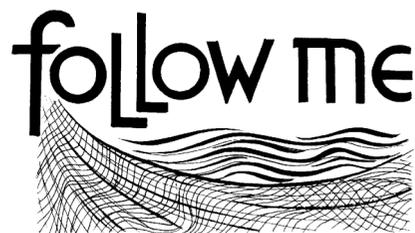
The fellowship locally meets together in churches to pray, to share bread and wine, and to study their faith. This fellowship of believers give to each other and share a life together. What is more that fellowship is world wide.

Together this fellowship celebrates the forgiveness which Jesus offers us.

They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. Everyone around was in awe--all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmo-

Follow:-

At the start of his ministry Jesus invited people to follow him. The invitation Jesus makes to every single one of us is still the same.



The people Jesus first called left their work and the places where they lived and travelled with Him throughout His ministry in Israel.

To follow also means to imitate or to copy someone else's example. In the Gospels we read of Jesus loving the poor, touching a leper and sharing food with some very difficult people.

Often, following Jesus will mean very dramatic changes to our lifestyles and how we treat ourselves and other people.

A Christian is a person who is a follower of Jesus Christ.

I heard a lovely prayer

"Lord, let it not be that I follow you merely for following a leader, but let me accept You as Lord and master in every step I take."

Following Jesus means letting Him take us into an adventurous future with Him in charge.

Strolling along, Jesus saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, at his work collecting taxes. Jesus said, "follow me." He followed. Later Jesus and his disciples were at home having supper with a collection of disreputable guests. Unlikely as it seems, more than a few of them had become followers. The religion scholars and Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company and lit into his disciples: "What kind of example is this, acting cozy with the riff-raff?" Mark 2 v14-15

Christians make many claims about Jesus, two of which are vitally important.

Firstly, the founder of the faith is no less than God with us. Jesus became flesh and blood and dwelt amongst us.

This means God knows:-

He knows what it is to be bereaved, to be alone and deserted.

He knows what it is to experience pain.

He knows what it means to hunger, to thirst, and to suffer.

He knows what it means to go through all the trials and tribulations and sufferings that are a part of our human life.

He knows and understands our temptations and the things about ourselves that we fear anyone else knowing.

He knows what it is to die.

He knows because He experienced our humanity from the inside.

Secondly, we believe that the death of the founder of our faith was for a purpose.

A sin often starts off as a small thing, something which seemingly doesn't matter but it escalates and has a ripple effect. One sin may create a lot of agony in our individual lives but it also spreads and affects other people, it leads to more sins, lies, deceit, break down, and tears. Sin persecutes, tortures, and perverts justice.

Sin is the great life spoiler.

The sins of the whole world killed 6 million Jews in Nazi gas chambers, created Hiroshima, allowed millions of Africans to starve.

On the Cross Jesus personally experienced your sins and mine.

He went through the horror of the gas chamber, the torture of slow death from radiation burns, the thirst and hunger of a famine, the hurts of the break down of a marriage.

All sin and suffering were placed on him.

On the cross he had your name and my name on his lips. Absolutely alone, Jesus experienced hell because he loves us so.

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish. John 1 v14

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree 1 Peter 2 v24

Before you get any further with this pamphlet it is worth pausing to read a Gospel story, perhaps Luke's Gospel, to remind yourself of the story of the founder of our faith.

Forgiveness:-

At the heart of Christianity is forgiveness. This forgiveness is offered to you through the death of Jesus on the Cross and there is nothing you can do to earn it or pay for it. Forgiveness is freely offered to you now.

Imagine that you are invited to a cinema , with all your family and your friends and the film to be shown is called

“This is Your Life”.

The film is your life story but contains only the bits you will not be so proud of. It will contain all the shocking words you have ever spoken and every one of the horrible things you have ever done.

A highlight will be that all your most awful thoughts about other people will be included – **ALL** will be revealed to the audience.

The film will end with a grand finale– You will see the consequences of your actions on other people.

What certificate will the film have?

Will you let the start button be played?

Will you be happy for the film to be shown?

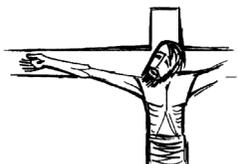
The only person whose film could have been shown unedited to any audience was crucified. As Jesus died on the cross he continuously cried out the words “Father forgive.”

In a way we can never understand or explain sufficiently, He washed our horrible, ugly sin clean.

A Christian can have the button pressed on the film and let it be played. Because of Jesus

those sins are forgiven and forgotten.

This is GOD's Message: "If your sins are blood-red, they'll be snow-white.
Isaiah 1 v18



All the bad bits are wiped from the film!

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.
John 3 v16-17

Future:-

But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3 v13-14

It is worth thinking about what that future may involve.

Someone who becomes a Christian receives all God's gifts and promises in this life. This is not to say that life is now going to be perfect and nothing will ever go wrong. Problems do not go away when you follow Jesus. The earliest followers of Jesus must have enjoyed the first years, witnessing the miracles, enjoying the teaching. Eventually, after His death and the formation of the Church, they were persecuted for being Christians and many died horrible deaths as martyrs.

At one time Jesus said to them.

“If anyone wishes to follow me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Mark 8 v34

The reason they kept faith is that the moment we become a Christian Jesus promises to come and live with us and be with us.

He said to his disciples

“And surely I am with you always until the very end of the age.” Matthew 28 v20.

This was sufficient for the earliest followers to face whatever the future their life on earth held. This was life full and rich - a life with the risen Jesus

However, being a Christian is not just being a follower of Jesus in this life. It is also about looking forward to an eternal future with Him.

The path of this life leads to one great inevitability, death.

I can promise everyone reading this leaflet one thing– you will one day die! We hate to talk of it, it is ignored in our society, but it is an ever present reality.

Sadly, we ignore the fact that death means that we will have meet Jesus face to face as our judge.

Will that meeting be a day to dread or a day when we will see Jesus our beloved friend and Lord and speak to Him face to face?

Jesus' mission statement is to bring you eternal life– he wants to be with you forever as a beloved friend