

LETTER OF FAITH

By Fiona Fitzgerald

My dear friends and family. We share the triumphs and tragedies of our lives all the time, so why have we become a people who do not discuss our faith (or lack of it) in God? Some of you may have perhaps been put off by the apparent hypocrisy of people claiming to be Christians, and yet doing or saying things that are in complete opposition to God's word, the Bible.

Do you believe in God? I believe in God, but according to James 2:19 "you believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder". So, obviously, it not enough to just believe in God - the demons do that too! Why then, should we exercise this belief? What has God done for us, that we should love and honour Him?

First he created a world for us to live on. He made it with everything we could possibly need to thrive, then put us in charge of it as caretakers (Gen 2:15).

Then he created us, male and female. He made us perfect; only Adam and Eve's subsequent disobedience resulted in eventual death for all mankind.

Instead of just wiping us all out, right then, He made provision that we could atone for sins, first by an imperfect animal sacrifice, and later with the perfect sacrifice of His son Jesus.

Again, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in the flood of Noah's day, He always saved the remnant of his faithful people. Even after His chosen people, the Israelites, had continually gone against His laws, He repeatedly forgave them, and later assimilated the Gentiles into His group of chosen people, to become spiritual Israelites.

He gave us the statute of marriage, so that we would have love and companionship in our lives. After this would come children; the greatest blessing. Why do we think that we alone are responsible for their creation? God could "close our wombs" as He did with Abraham's wife, Sarah, and later with Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist. Let's never forget that our children are a gift from God, not a right.

While we work to support our families, do we feel that it is purely our input that feeds, supports and grows them? God assures us that He feeds and cares for even the tiniest sparrow, so as His children, how much more will he care for us. He also tells us that if we seek first His Kingdom, and His righteousness, all these things (food, drink, clothing etc) will be added to us (Matt 6:25-34). But beware of false teachers who preach that God wants us all to be rich!

He has given us the privilege of prayer. We have a 24 hour a day hotline to the Lord! Now that Jesus is sitting on the right side of God, we can pray through him to our Father. God knows our needs, but wants us to acknowledge our dependence and love for Him by prayer. We can also help others by asking God to help those in need.

Worshiping God is not complicated. You don't need to have a whole lot of knowledge, or attend the biggest and most popular church. In fact, you don't need to go to church at all, although the bible encourages us to meet with other Christians to worship God.

As Christians, we have only one handbook, the bible. It was written by ordinary men, under divine inspiration. Despite the critics who claim it is hard to understand, contradicts itself, or is just full of visions and history, it is really not so. I know. I've read it twice (nearly!). The great thing, is that the more you read it, the more it all makes sense. Because it was written for ordinary people like you and me. In the same way, God's requirements for us are not difficult. He tells us in Micah 6:8 "He has

shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

God loves us so much, that He sent his only son Jesus to die for us. You have probably heard that often, but have you ever really thought about it? Abraham was told by God to sacrifice his only son - not long after God had told him that his descendants would inherit the earth. He didn't say "why" or "how", he just went ahead with preparations to do it. God sent his angel, at the last moment, to halt the sacrifice, Abraham having proved his faith in God. But in Jesus' case, no one called a halt, not even Jesus himself. So what does Jesus' death mean for us? It means that he has paid a ransom for us, so we are free.

Where are you going when you die? Modern theology would have you believe that you are going to heaven when you die. It doesn't really matter, even if you're an agnostic, you'll go, according to many. You may find it strange that the bible nowhere says that we go to heaven when we die. In fact it says that when we die, we will know nothing. The bible is full of scriptures affirming this. Death is often referred to as "sleep" in the bible. We are reassured that we will "sleep" in the grave, until the resurrection. This will happen when Jesus returns to earth, to judge all humanity. Those found worthy will be given immortal bodies, and will live on the earth with Jesus as king. Isaiah tells us that in these times there will be no more death, sickness, sadness, hunger or war. This is the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached while here on earth, the one that we pray for when we pray the Lord's Prayer: "thy Kingdom come". We will live just as God originally intended us to - right here on the earth. Would you like to be one of those people? You can!

We are fellow heirs with Christ, heirs to The Kingdom, The land. We inherit eternal life. Galatians 3:29 says it simply, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise." It all ties back into the Old Testament promises God made with Abraham that the nations would be blessed through him and inherit the land. We are heirs to the promise. When you are an heir, you inherit! What do we inherit? The Kingdom of God.

Jesus spent his time healing the sick and explaining the signs of the last days; what the Kingdom of God will be like; and how we should think and act if we want to inherit the Kingdom. It would have been thrilling to hear him speak. Can you imagine his passion? He was not just prophesying about the future, he was sharing his destiny of being King of the Kingdom of God.

I believe that for our sins to be forgiven, we must believe that Jesus was the Son of God. We need to acknowledge that we sin against God and that we require a Saviour to be pure, holy and blameless before God. It's very humbling to admit that we have done things wrong. We generally consider ourselves to be pretty good, decent people, when we compare ourselves with those around us. However, when compared to Jesus who did not sin, although tempted like us, we come up short. We cannot be perfect....not without Jesus' sacrificial blood to cover our sins and make us white as snow. It's symbolic, but inside our hearts, it's very real. It is realizing that we are sinners and that we need Jesus to be allowed to enter the Kingdom of God and have eternal life in the age to come. So, when will he come? No one knows, not even the angels or Jesus. Only God knows when Jesus will return. Remember, God is God, the creator of all things. Jesus is His Son!

This is so crucial to understand, in order to tie the Scriptures together. It is so simple, yet people have problems accepting such a basic, simple Gospel. They want to complicate it - make it more difficult to understand. But, I don't think you have to be a Biblical Scholar to grasp these simple truths.

I believe we need to study and examine the Scriptures with diligence and with a humble heart. I don't claim to have all the answers! Quite the opposite! The more I learn, the more I realize what I do not

know! However, I am captivated by the Word of God. I pray daily for wisdom and understanding. I question. I study. I want to be prepared to share, what little I do know, with others! I want to be confident that I will receive the gift of eternal life. I do not want to miss anything that God is willing to grant me now, here in the land of the living!

I think it's important to note that no Christian has reached full spiritual maturity and has become sinless and perfect. Maybe we might think, "Wow, I'll never get to that point. What's the use of even trying?" Even though we may be changing, attempting to obey His Word, and walking in His Spirit, we still sin. We still lose our tempers or say things we shouldn't. We can't try to pretend we're already perfect and have our lives all together all of the time! No, we must be honest. We're still learning. We're still making mistakes. However, we enjoy the peace and knowledge that come with Jesus' blood covering our mistakes, allowing God to see us as perfect, holy and blameless. We can ask for forgiveness, and then approach His throne with confidence, knowing God has forgiven us...because God knows we are still just people created from dust! He knows our battles and struggles and strongholds. In our weakness, He is there for us. Loving us. Forgiving us.

Don't miss God and His plan for you. As I mature in Christ, I learn to trust and obey. What God has planned for me, is better than what I can even imagine for myself and for my family. Why do we struggle with letting go of our control to a loving God who likes to give great gifts to His children? We don't trust Him enough to realize that He plans good for us, not harm. We don't know Him well enough.

I urge you today: Get to know Him. Seek Him while He can still be found. Be reconciled today. Don't wait another day. Just pray, "Father, I want this. I want to know you. I want forgiveness. I believe that Jesus is Your Son. Become my God and let me be your child. I repent. I am so sorry for the things I have done, said or thought. I need you." The next step is to obey Him. For, if you truly love God, you will obey Him.

I believe this is the most important thing you could ever do with your life: decide to follow Jesus. It's just that simple. Really.

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