

157 Changing our minds XI – The good news

As I explained in my 2017 article,^[0] ten years ago I totally lost my faith (“Does God exist?!”) and then spent 5/6 years rebuilding it. But I did so along exactly the same biblical lines as before, and I wasn’t happy – not until I rediscovered God’s love (2017) and moved to St Ed’s (2018).

As I started to face up to some of the things about my faith for which I felt I had to apologise to my non-believing friends and family,^[1] I gradually realised that no apologies were needed – the God of the Bible really was wonderful in every way, overflowing with love and acceptance. All I needed to apologise for was my **mistaken interpretations** of the Bible.

That’s what I’ve been working through in these past 156 articles – gradually thinking out where I’ve gone wrong. So here’s currently where I’m at, my overview of the Bible, which I now use in order to interpret some of the detail, especially some of the contradictory bits.

God is love – pretty indisputable – and “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Pet 3:9) That’s what any loving parent would want, right?

God is covenantal – making promises to his people.

God is inclusive – insisting that his people should welcome the alien and the stranger.

God is relationship – Father, Son, Holy Spirit

God enters the world – at creation and again at incarnation, in order to cement that relationship.

God is good – therefore his creation is fundamentally good; humans are fundamentally good.¹

God gives humans freewill, otherwise it wouldn’t be love – but that’s where the trouble starts.

And God is unreasonably forgiving – repeatedly, unfairly forgiving! (Ask Jonah about that.)

That’s the basis of my faith in the God of the Bible. What follows from those assumptions?

The church has to be community-based and open, welcoming the alien and the stranger.

Anyone can belong, no-one is excluded – you belong first and, in time, you can come to believe.

Sin is a serious problem – it breaks relationships – so take it seriously.

It’s so serious that the only solution was the cross – Jesus died for our sins.

¹ Yes, I realise some of you will baulk at that last clause. We can discuss it later, but that’s my current view.

Evil in all its forms is serious – it destroys people – so take it seriously.

It's so serious that the only solution was the cross – Jesus died to defeat evil.

Suffering is a serious problem – it can even break relationships – so take it seriously.

It's so serious that the only solution was the cross – Jesus entered into it and died.

What should be our response?

Worship this amazing God!

Work together to defeat sin and evil and suffering.

Celebrate our differences.

Care for one another, especially the alien and the stranger.

Well, that's where I've got to so far, but the journey is continuing!

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