

- A life of honest, godly abundance: you may not turn out famous or have loads of money but your life will be worth it.
- Liberation from guilt and failure in your past
- Knowing you are loved and valued, whatever
- Your own journey through death and beyond, is not alone, it is alongside God
- A power greater than you can muster, to overcome any spiral of addiction/sin
- Freedom from wanting more in the world
- Direction, meaning and reason to life
- On the winning side: God overcomes evil
- Being with God in prayer, through the Spirit
- Being forgiven over and over again.
- Discovering, even when frail, that wholeness is more important than physical health
- A spirituality with a rational foundation
- Becoming like Jesus, a child of God
- Having a moral framework for life
- A wide variety of Christian support groups
- Relax, even when your control is lost, God will take over the helm.

So how do I get my faith back?

The God I believe in is not a vicious and wrathful God, but a caring, loving and merciful God. God wants you back, and faith is not an effort from you so much as a gift of God to you. Receive a pot-plant and you need to water it, receive a horse and you need to feed it and ride it. Receive faith and you need to pray with it, meet with others to help it live in you. The offer of God is

there on the table. You know that. It is your choice whether you accept the gift.

So - talk to God - and listen?

A prayer:

Forgive my journey away from you, Father, forgive my failings and faults of the past. I do recognise your love for me in the life and death of Jesus and I want to return. Will you help me do that, please. Help me to find a place where others will help support my faith, help me to use, and not abuse the gift of faith I have, and grow my faith, trust and love. Fill me anew with you Holy Spirit. Help me to feel you working good things in me, and most of all, thank you for not giving up on me.

Thank you God. Amen.

And now?

Read the Bible. Read Mark, then Luke. Get into a habit of praying before you get up in the morning or before you go to bed. Make a list of the people and things that matter to you and bring them to God in prayer every day. Order a Bible reading scheme or get an app that does it on your phone. There are some below. Find a church that suits your music style, your type of worship, and commit to it week by week for a year.

www.biblereadingnotes.org.uk

www.content.scriptureunion.org.uk

www.bibleinoneyear.org



Have you lost your faith?

You may feel sad that you once had a faith, but have now lost it. Life stops

revolving about God with you; God drops out of the equation. If you are open to recover your faith, then read on! And I'm always happy to talk.

Heart and Head?

Faith is about both heart and head. You need to know your faith is rational and even if you can't get through arguing it yourself, you want to know someone whom you trust, can argue it.



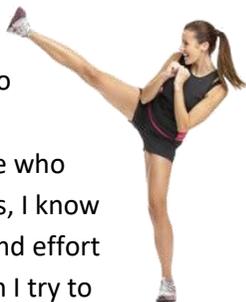
But faith is mostly about the heart. There is a passion that underpins faith where you feel, seldom or often, it doesn't matter, that God is with you. Faith requires some personal encounters with God, a mystery, an experience, something to remember, to fall back on that is not simply logic, but something more.

Faith is both a gift and a choice. You choose to believe and choose to trust in God. But we are unwise if we choose things blindly, we need evidence and that is often why people lose their faith. The evidence, that once seemed to be

there, is gone either suddenly through a trauma, or slowly, wilting away like an unwatered plant.

Use it or lose it!

A friend told me that he drives to the gym every day and once in a while he actually goes in. As one who struggles with any type of fitness, I know there is an investment of time and effort required otherwise I suffer when I try to do something demanding after a long time lapse.



It is much the same with faith. Use it or lose it. And lots of people say... why bother?

The disciples

The disciples knew Jesus through head and heart. They listened to his teachings which made sense to them. They also saw the effect of Jesus' miracles feeding five thousand with minimal rations, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind. Theirs was extraordinary experience over the three years of Jesus' ministry, and it stood them in good stead for the rest of their lives. Based on their thinking and experience they had a faith which sustained them, even after Jesus was no longer with them physically. By faith they continued to be disciples. They let God in and lived their lives for God, taking on a moral and spiritual code and tasks they thought were beyond them.

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The reality

Christians are assured of some things that are very important. Firstly that God, the creator of the universe, knows us individually, and cares deeply about how we live our lives. We believe we are here precisely because God values love with all its joy and pain, above the safety of nothingness. We can love one another only because, in the first place, God loves us.

The sacrifice

Part of God's care and love was a momentous event 2000 years ago. We believe that God came into our world so that we would know, forever, and understand that the nature of God is love. You may have read some of the Old Testament (pre Jesus) in the Bible, but the Christian focus has to be the nature of God as revealed in Jesus in the New Testament. That life was full of faith, education and carpentry until he was 30, then, for three years, a life of teaching, healing and, ultimately, sacrifice.

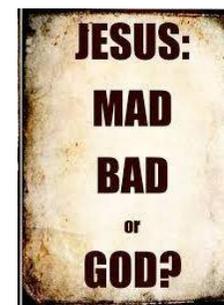


"Greater love has no one than that he should give his life for a friend," said Jesus, and that is exactly what he did. If Jesus had not died, no one would have known about him. He would have been just another forgotten-about preacher. If he had not risen,

no one would have known about him. He would have been amongst the thousands, maybe tens of thousands that the Romans crucified that year.

His sacrifice, and his rising made an impact which undoubtedly has changed the world. It still resonates in education, health, human rights, government and the law in many countries.

Christians believe that if there had just been one of us— God in Jesus would still have died for that single person - to get the relationship right.



The question is whether, in Jesus, God was dealing with the failures and misunderstandings of humanity or whether Jesus was bluffing. Jesus called himself the Son of God, and so did many others. Some

thought he was deluded (but do such people really do miracles), some thought he was bad (but which bad person chooses to die for others?). There really is only one alternative to mad and bad, given what he claimed about himself, and that Jesus was indeed part of the Trinity of God.

The positives of Christianity

So why is Christianity the largest, and still growing, religion in the world. Well - look at the plusses Are these what you want for your life?