

Coach House Church BEACONS

WHY KEEP FOLLOWING GOD?

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Why does anyone still bother with Christianity? Most people in the UK don't, and that's true most of all for millennials. So I want to offer you three crude, practical reasons why I'm a 'bothered millennial', who has, for some reason, remained a Christian till the grand old age of 26.

Faith in God has offered more, kept me sane and actually worked. And that's just the half of it. What follows are not detailed arguments for the existence of God, but three core, personal reasons which have encouraged me to remain in the faith over the years. There's much more to it, but it's just a taster.

While I was at university, the best coffee shop in town was opposite our department. Phenomenal drinks came as standard with the choice of about 8 different milks and professional artwork on the foam. The café was chic and the baristas were chic-er. Once I was even – even! – lectured that I 'couldn't' have milk in my Americano, and 'had to' drink it black. The one salient feature, however, was the size of the drinks. They were tiny! One time I got a flat white to take out and got halfway down the road before finding out that my already tiny cup was only half full. I went back, argued the toss, and got a refill. It was good, but there wasn't much of it. I contrast this with Premier Inn breakfast limitless coffee refills – you can literally take as much as you can carry with you. Once Dad and I filled up two large flasks of it before the next part of our journey. It wasn't the best, but there was tons of it!

One key reason I have remained a Christian is because I constantly find 'more' with God. Dumb things like coffee refills shows us that it's hard to get a lot for a little, and when you do, it's often not that good. But even the most enjoyable relationships I've found and the best experiences I've had have their limitations –

but God doesn't. The more of God I have got to know over the years, the more goodness I've discovered.

Take this passage here, from John 4:14 which illustrates the point:

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

This is from the famous story of the Samaritan woman who goes to draw water from the well. Jesus shows her that whatever good she can get out of the well in front of her (in this case, fresh water in a parched land), it can never measure up to the life God gives us. God has provided for my material needs, but he has also changed the worst parts of my character and improved the best. In addition, God offers more, not just for this life, but for eternity in the next. I have discovered, in experience, that goodness never runs out with God.

Secondly, Faith in God has kept me sane. To adapt an illustration from John Piper, without God, I am free in the same way a balloon is free when you let go of it in a storm. It can fly just about anywhere but it's in danger of bursting from the pressure, being pelted with hail or zapped by lightning – and you certainly can't predict or control where it's going to go next. Without God, I am subject to my own nature, feelings, thoughts and impulses which are hard to direct or control. However, with God, I see that I am not only able to begin understanding myself, but more crucially, I am actually able to change. Another Bible verse, Proverbs 1:7 introduces the topic well: **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools[c] despise wisdom and instruction."**

Our own wisdom, nature and resources can only take us so far. Proverbs offers tons of advice on many things...including getting advice from others, which is good. However, even the wisest and most experienced people around us don't have all the answers. Even the wisest Christians around us don't have all the answers. As human beings we will always be limited, and that is why I've found it good to fear God, or consider him with awe and respect, because he is the only one wise enough to direct our paths. This hasn't fixed all my problems, but knowing God allows me to begin to understand the world around me, and as I have applied it to my life, I see the real changes that have come about as a result.

This brings me to the next point: Christianity actually works. This reason is very practical and it is simply this – the Bible has come true as I have followed it. The

things which it warned would be disappointing I eventually found to be disappointing. The things that brought the most joy I eventually found to be joyful. The changes God says he can do through Jesus, over time, he has actually done them. I'm discovering all the time how well the Bible describes the complicated experience living as a human being on earth, made to live in relationship with God, and being changed by him over time. One Bible verse which sums up my encouragement to you well comes from Psalm 34:8. It simply says **"taste and see that the LORD is good"**

Getting to know God is partly intellectual and emotional, but it is also practical. God asks us to live his way, almost as a test. It's like saying 'just you try me!' God is good to those who put their trust in him, so what have you got lose? This, like the other two points, is not an argument for the existence of God but a modest encouragement to experience God. As I've seen my life change over the years that I've been a Christian, it strengthens my faith that God is at work out. I keep seeing life work out just as he's said it would work out.

These 3 pointers are the very sharpest tip of the iceberg and a little tap on the shoulder to say that if you're seeking God, reading the Bible, or just curious about the faith – keep going. It's worth it. The elephant in the room, which I haven't mentioned in my crude three reasons, is this – the grace of God. God has been kind to me to an immeasurable degree. I could have gone off the rails at any time or followed my own dumb paths. But through his words in the Bible, his encouragements through other Christians and his sheer unyielding commitment - God has saved me.

I will end with these words from Ephesians 2:8-9: **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast."**



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