



Talk 4 – How Can We Have Faith?

Duration 44 Minutes
HTB Transcripts

Key:

Personal Story / Testimony that Nicky Gumbel tells in the classic Alpha talk. These may be replaced with a live speaker's personal story or the speaker may tell the story about Nicky in the same way Nicky tells stories about others.

Story that Nicky tells about someone else (about a friend or a story he heard or read about).

Quotes are key to the talk to emphasise a point and to enable guests to engage and relate to a point made. There is now a way that people can seek permission to omit or replace quotes used in the original talks. A quote should be replaced with something equally effective to maintain the balance of teaching, story, and references to other information sources.

Key Quotes will need approval to change (these will be identified by a comment in the left column). Please email publications@alpha.org with your request.

Key Bible Passages are identified and you may wish to display these visually for your guests.

Red type identifies a part of the key teaching text that may be removed or altered for contextualisation.

Text left untouched is the standard key message content of the Alpha talk.

NOTE: Key elements of this script are: personal stories, humour and reference to media / popular culture to draw the guests in to engage with the talk.

Parts of the talk may need to be contextualised for other contexts or cultures but make sure you maintain the key elements of humour and personal testimony. Notice how quotes, and stories are used throughout to add emphasis to the main points of the talk (theology and testimony).

NOTE: This talk uses an effective personal illustration of marriage throughout. If the speaker is not married it is possible to use the same illustration about someone else (e.g. your parents who are married) or alternatively replace the illustration with another example that is equally effective. This will affect the introduction and stories throughout the talk.

Are you a morning person or an evening person? Some people are at their best in the morning, some people are at their best in the evening — and some people, I suppose, are

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never at their best! But if I'm at my best at any time of the day, it's probably in the morning. I kind of wake up full of energy; but as the day goes on my energy fades, and by nine o'clock I'm ready to go to bed; by ten o'clock I'm falling asleep, and by eleven o'clock I am asleep, wherever I am.

And I've always been like that. Even when I was at university I was like that. And so, you know, if at university you're always in bed by eleven, that is pretty sad! And I had a reputation for always being in bed by eleven.

When I was 21, right at the end of my time at Cambridge there was a May Ball, and I met up with someone who I'd known for a bit before, but she was a young woman about the same age as me, and we started talking and we started dancing, and we danced a bit more and we talked a bit more, and eleven o'clock came and went and three o'clock came and went, five o'clock came and went. Seven o'clock in the morning we started playing tennis! And then we went on a punt down the river, and then we had lunch. I had not had a moment's sleep; I didn't feel remotely tired. I discovered afterwards that all my friends had decided I was definitely going to marry this woman, because I was up after eleven o'clock at night! And they were right — I did marry her.

And for me, life was never the same again. My old life had gone; a new life had begun.

Paul writing to Christians in Corinth — 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17 — says this: 'Those who become Christians become new persons. They're not the same any more, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun.' Relationships are exciting, and the most exciting relationship of all is our relationship with God.

Let me read to you a couple of things people wrote on their questionnaires at the end of the last course. I'm so grateful to people for the way they write so honestly about their experiences.

One person wrote this: 'I experienced God for the first time: the feeling of completeness and need for forgiveness that I so desperately needed was satisfied.'

Another wrote this: 'My life has changed radically and for the better. I'm a new person now — a Christian.' What does that mean, 'a Christian?'

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Sometimes people say, `Christian — that surely just means “nice person”: ”Oh, they’re a Christian person.”” But that’s not the original meaning, because you could be a very nice atheist; but you wouldn’t necessarily want to be called a Christian, because you’re not.

Some people say, `Well, surely we’re all Christians, because this is a Christian country. And if you’re born in a Christian country, that makes you a Christian.’ But being born in a Christian country doesn't make you a Christian any more than, **say, being born in a McDonald's would make you a hamburger! It doesn't follow.**

Sometimes people say, `Well, I believe in God. Does that make me a Christian?’ No. One of the things one of the New Testament writers says is, ‘Even the demons believe in God.’ They know there’s a God, but it doesn’t make them Christian.

A Christian is a Christ-ian, a follower of Christ Jesus, someone who has a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. How that relationship happens will vary enormously. I mean, some people know the exact date. I know the exact date: 16 February 1974. Before that I was not a Christian. I became a Christian on that day, and since then I’ve been a Christian.

Other people would say, `Do you know, I can never remember a time that I wasn’t a Christian.’ Others would say, `Well, I think there was a time when I wasn’t a Christian, and I think I am a Christian now, but I couldn’t tell you exactly how it happened. It was a bit of a process.’ It doesn’t matter which of those categories you’re in; what matters is that you know that you are a Christian now.

C. S. Lewis used this analogy: he said, ‘It’s a bit like if you’re on a train from Paris to Berlin. Some people will be awake at the moment the train crosses the border, and they’ll know the exact moment it happened. Other people won’t. It doesn’t matter; what matters is that you know that you’re in Berlin now. And what matters is that you know that you’re a Christian now —and you can know that.’

St John writes this: he says, ‘Yet to all who received him, to those who received Jesus, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God’ — in other words, in the closest possible relationship with God, a child of God. That’s a common analogy in the New Testament. The New Testament also sometimes uses the analogy of a

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husband and wife. It's that close a relationship. But the point is this: if you're in that relationship, you know you're in that relationship.

Again, on the questionnaires we ask the question, 'Would you have called yourself a Christian at the beginning of Alpha?' And the answer to this question, 'Would you have called yourself a Christian at the beginning of Alpha?' on one course here were some of the answers to that. One person wrote: 'Yes, but without any real experience of a relationship with God.' Another wrote: 'Sort of.' Another: 'In inverted commas.' Another: 'Not sure.' Another: 'Ish.' Another: 'Yes, though looking back, possibly no.'

Now, if you're in a relationship, you know. Supposing you were to ask my wife Pippa, 'Pippa, are you married?' and she was to say, 'Yes, but without any real experience of a relationship' or 'Sort of' or 'In inverted commas' or 'Not sure' or 'Ish' or 'Yes, though looking back, possibly no!'

God wants us to be sure. Again, St. John writes this — and I think this verse is in the manuals there:

'I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.'

How can we know that? How can we know that we're a Christian? How can we know that we have eternal life?



Talk Point 1

THE WORD OF GOD

Our confidence, our knowledge is based on – it's like the three legs of a tripod: each of them are essential. And each of them are members of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. The first is this: the word of God. Our confidence is based on this book, the promises in this book. And therefore it's based on facts and not on feelings.

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If you asked me how do I know I'm married, one answer I could give you is to show you this: this is a document. It's our marriage certificate. This is evidence that we're married. And if you asked me how I know I'm a Christian, I would point to this book.

You see, our feelings are changeable. They go up and down — with the weather, with what we've had to eat the night before or drink the night before. And if our faith was dependent on our feelings, it would be up and down all the time, because our feelings go up and down all the time.

I've told you I'm a member of this gym, and I promise you I won't tell you any more squash stories or gym stories after this one — this is the last one! But one time I went down to play squash, and again there wasn't anybody there, so I went into the gym, and I saw that they had on a challenge: it was called 'The Ultimate Challenge'. In fact, I'd only just joined the gym at that time. And I like a challenge, so I thought, 'Ooh, I'll do that!' And they said, 'Well, actually you need to train for six weeks before you do it.' So I said, 'Oh, don't worry about that. I'd like to do it anyway.' They said, 'Well, look, you can do it at various different levels. You can do it at Super Fit, you can do it at Fighting Fit, you can do it at Getting Fit, or you can do it at Older And Wiser — and we recommend for you Older and Wiser.'

I said, 'No, no, no, no, no, I'll do it at Super Fit.' So they said 'No' — you know, they really tried to discourage me, very kindly. But I'm kind of stubborn and very competitive, so I said, 'Okay, I'm going to do it at Super Fit.' So they said, 'Okay, this is what you have to do: you have to bike 5 kilometres, then you do 40 bench-press, then you do 100 press-ups, then you run 2 miles uphill, then you do ...' — there were basically 10 exercises designed to use every single muscle in your body. And you had to do it in under 45 minutes.

So I said, 'Right, I'm going to do it.' I hadn't quite realised how far five kilometres is on a bike, and by the time I — even with that one I was pouring with sweat, and, you know, word got round that I was doing it and a little crowd had gathered to watch, and that made me even more determined and even more competitive, even though I was beginning to realise that this was only the first exercise and there were nine to go! But it was just sheer pride that got me through it, because I really was not ready to do it.

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But somehow or other I managed to do it, and they said, ‘Congratulations,’ they said, ‘You have survived ‘The Ultimate Challenge’. Here is a t-shirt which says “I Survived The Ultimate Challenge.”’ I was so pleased with myself! They gave me a free drink and a £5 token — I was so pleased! I went home to tell my family. I said, ‘Look, “I Survived The Ultimate Challenge!”’ I said, ‘Look — here’s my token, my £5 token!’ I even kept the free drink, because I wanted to show them what I’d got for this amazing achievement! And I was right up there, I was so pleased. The following morning.. I was fine. I went back down and said, ‘Look, fine!’ Bit of stretching. The morning after that, I could not move! Every muscle in my body had frozen. I couldn’t even get out of bed! You know, Pippa had to help me out of bed. It was agony going down the stairs. I couldn’t even eat breakfast — it was — just lifting, that was ...! No way I could have biked into work. I couldn’t even drive into work! I could not have done that or this with a foot! So Pippa very kindly drove me into work. And I was determined that no one would know what I’d done. So I tried to walk into the staff meeting looking as if I was fine, so I was going ... And the first person who saw me said, ‘Nicky, what on earth has happened to you?’ And I felt such an idiot. I’d gone from going right up there to right down there.

Now, as you know, this happens every day in our lives for various reasons. And if our faith was dependent on how we felt, we would never be sure whether we’re a Christian or not. Some days we would be and some days we wouldn’t. But it’s not; it’s dependent on the promises of God.

And the first one I want to look at is Revelation, chapter 3, verse 20. This is Jesus speaking to a church — and the church, of course, is made up of individuals. And he says this:

‘Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.’

[If you do not have the picture for the following illustration, you may reword this to describe the painting without the visual, or else remove]

Holman Hunt, the pre-Raphaelite painter, illustrated this verse with this painting. And he painted it three times. The most famous one is in St Paul’s Cathedral. It’s called *The Light of The World*. And it illustrates this verse: Jesus, the Light of the World, is standing at the door

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of someone's house. And the house represents your life, my life.

And this particular person has never opened their life to Christ, and that's shown by the fact that this door is overgrown with weeds and thorns and thistles that have grown up around it. And Jesus is saying:

'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door — invites me in — I will come in and eat with them and they with me.'

Eating together, in the Middle East and in ancient times, as today, is a sign of friendship. He's saying, in other words, 'I want to come in and have a friendship, a relationship with you, a friendship with you.'

Well, when Holman Hunt painted this picture, someone said to him, 'Hang on a second. You've made a mistake.' He said, 'What's that?' He said, 'Well, you've left off the handle. There's no handle on the door.' And Holman Hunt replied, 'That's not a mistake. There is a handle, but the handle is on the inside.'

In other words, Jesus is not going to force his way into your life or my life. He says, 'I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will come in.' He doesn't say, 'I might come in' — it's a promise: 'I will come in.' So, for example, if any of you prayed the prayer that we prayed at the end of the talk last week and invited Jesus to come into your life, you can be sure he came in, whatever you felt. It's not dependent on feelings; it's a promise: 'If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.'

Another promise is: 'I will be with you always.' Once he's come in, he's always with us. That doesn't mean that we're always talking to him. It's a bit like if you share an **office** with someone: you're not always necessarily talking to that person, but you're conscious that they're in the room with you.

And then he says: 'I give them eternal life.' We looked the first week at the evidence for the resurrection. The implications of the resurrection are staggering, because Jesus rising from the dead assures us first of all about the past. It means we really can know that we're forgiven. When we looked at the cross last week, it's such a difficult subject to grasp and we

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think, 'How can we know that that really did happen when Jesus died on the cross?' The answer is we know it because he rose from the dead. God raised him from the dead.

And so the resurrection was not kind of the reversal of a defeat that had taken place on the cross; it was the manifestation of a victory. It's the evidence that it really worked, that we really can be forgiven; the past can be wiped clean.

Then it assures us about the present: that we really can have a relationship with Jesus. Jesus is not dead; he's alive. And therefore you can know him, I can know him.

It assures us about the future: because If Jesus was buried — dead, buried and rose again, that means that one day, when you and I die and are buried, we too can be raised to new life. This life is not the end. History is not kind of meaningless or cyclical. It's moving towards a glorious climax. One day Jesus will return, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Then those who put their faith in Christ will go to be with him forever, in a place where there's no crying or pain or temptation or sin or suffering or separation from loved ones. We'll be given glorious, painless resurrection bodies. We will be transformed into the likeness of Christ. There is life beyond the grave.

Some people think, 'Eternal life, that sounds really boring.' But St Paul wrote this: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.'

C. S. Lewis uses this analogy. He says:

'The term is over. The holidays have begun. The dream is ended. This is the morning. All their life in this world had only been the cover and the title page. Now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read, which goes on for ever, in which every chapter is better than the one before.'

Those are the promises of God, the word of God.

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Talk Point 2

THE WORK OF JESUS

Second leg of the tripod is the work of Jesus. It's based not on what we do, but on what Jesus has done for us.

Again, if you asked me how I know I'm married, I could show you the wedding certificate, but another thing I could do is point you to an event that took place here on 7 January 1978. And if you asked me how I know I'm a Christian, I would point to an event in history: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's how we know that God loves us.

Would you like to turn to Romans, chapter 6, verse 23? St Paul writes this:

'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord — or, as some versions put it, the free gift of God.'

[Either tell this story about Nicky Gumbel (in the same way he tells stories about others) or replace with your own similar story]

I don't know what you feel when you hear the expression 'free gift', but if you're anything like me — I'm cynical about free gifts, because we get, don't we, now you get them on your phone: you know, 'You've won a million pounds!' There are circulars that come round offering free gifts endlessly. And we always think there's a catch — well, we know there's a catch. I came back from holiday one time and found this circular. It said:

'N. Gumbel's potential million! Mr N. Gumbel, will you be the UK winner? Mr N. Gumbel is one of the lucky London SW4 residents selected. Dear Mr Gumbel, why have we selected you? Because we believe you deserve it!' — That's nice, isn't it! 'After all, you've been working long and hard for your share of the good things in life.' — I don't think they realised I was a vicar!

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'It's time you were rewarded. You could be holding the winning number right now, Mr N. Gumbel!' — I think they thought the more they repeated my name, the more impressive it would be!

'The Gumbel certificate is yours and yours alone. Act now, Mr N. Gumbel, and you can have it all. Believe me when I tell you that there is no catch, Mr N. Gumbel.'

And then I looked to see what I had really won, and that was a free Datamaster. How was I going to get hold of this? *'Enter me in the million-dollar' — I don't know why it's dollars in England! — 'dream sweepstake and rush my free Datamaster and begin my 40-week subscription to Time Magazine.'* — There's a catch.

So I went to the next letter in the post, which was addressed not to me but to my wife. And the headline of this was:

'A fabulous award for you, Mrs Gumbell! Is it a cheque for £15,000 or is it a Ford Mondeo? Great news — you really are a winner in our Empire Star Prize Draw.' — She had actually won something! So exciting. What had she won? Here we are:

'Free gift: salt & pepper cruet set. This charming pair of chickens sit comfortably nesting in a wicker basket, lined in a colourful gingham cloth — a delightful addition to your dining table. Yours free if your order is over £40.'

There's always a catch. But not with God's gift. God's gift is free. It's not cheap, but it's free to us. It cost Jesus everything.

Would you like to turn to 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 21? The apostle Paul writes this:

'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'

Last week we looked at a verse in the Old Testament from Isaiah, chapter 53, verse 6, which says this: 'All we, like sheep, have gone astray' — this represented us, this represented the things that we've done wrong. 'All we like sheep have gone astray, we've turned, every one, to our own way' — and I said let this hand represent Jesus Christ, who never did anything

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wrong. And what the verse says is: on the cross ‘the Lord has laid on him’ — on Jesus — ‘the iniquity of us all’.

The apostle Paul adds something in this verse. Let this white handkerchief represent the righteousness of Christ. Jesus lived a sinless life; he never did anything wrong. He was righteous in God’s eyes. There was nothing between him and God. He had a perfect relationship with God the Father.

What this verse says is that God made him, on the cross — this says: ‘God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.’ On the cross Jesus took our sin — he ‘made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’.

Isn’t it amazing: an exchange took place which means it’s possible for us, because of what Jesus did, to be in a right relationship — that’s what ‘righteousness’ means — a right relationship with God and, as a result, right relationships with other people. So that God looks at us in the same way that he looked at his own Son, Jesus Christ, because of what Jesus did on the cross for us. It’s almost unbelievable.

So how do we receive this gift that God offers? We receive it by repentance and faith. Repentance is turning away from the bad stuff, the stuff that messes up our lives. God doesn’t ask us to leave behind things that are good for us, but things that they may be outwardly attractive, but things that you know actually damage our lives. What we leave behind is nothing compared to what we receive, and it’s nothing compared to what Jesus gave up on the cross. But we do have to turn away from the bad stuff. That’s repentance.

We receive by repentance and then faith. What is faith? Faith is trust. Everybody exercises faith — you’re all exercising faith tonight: by sitting on these chairs you’re exercising faith. You’re putting your trust in those chairs by sitting on them. In a deeper way, when two people get married they exercise faith. When you say ‘I will’, you’re entrusting your life to another person. That’s faith.

Blondin was a famous tightrope walker and acrobat in the nineteenth century. Large crowds used to watch him, particularly when he was crossing the Niagara Falls. There is a story of one time when a royal party came over from England to watch it, and it included the Duke of Newcastle. And on this particular occasion what Blondin did was, having

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walked across and back, he then took a wheelbarrow and he wheeled that across and back. And there was a huge crowd there cheering him. And Blondin went up to the party, the royal party, and he said, 'Look, do you believe that I could put somebody in the wheelbarrow and wheel them across?' And they all said yes. The Duke of Newcastle said yes, and he turned to the Duke of Newcastle and he said, 'Hop in!'

Now, that is faith! It would have been foolish — he didn't, incidentally, hop in! But he was wise not to, because, well, certainly I wouldn't want to put my faith in a tightrope walker. But putting your faith in Jesus is a wise move, because Jesus is utterly trustworthy.

Somebody was in our small group on Alpha one time, and some time afterwards, his mother died and he asked me to take the funeral. And the day after the funeral he wrote to me, and he said this:

'During the funeral service I suddenly understood what it meant to be a Christian. In those thirty minutes my eyes were fully opened for the first time. I realised why I had not been wracked with grief and bitterness at the loss of my mother.

Sure, I had cried and I was saddened; but I knew — I know — that her faith in Jesus Christ had saved her and that she would enjoy eternal life. I had seen it in her eyes just before she died last Thursday, and yesterday I felt the realisation flood through me, warm and rich and comforting. It was then that I finally understood the enormity of the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross: that we really can have eternal life in heaven through him.'



Talk Point 3

THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

That's the second leg of the tripod. The third leg of the tripod is the witness of the Holy Spirit. So the word of God, the work of Jesus; thirdly, the witness of the Holy Spirit. It's based on him and not on us.

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If you asked me the question how do I know I'm married, I can point to a marriage certificate, I can point to an event that took place here, but the third thing that I can point to is twenty-eight years of experience of marriage.

And if you asked me how I know I'm a Christian, I can point to this book [*the Bible*], to the event that took place in history; but I can also point to experience.

We looked at this verse where Jesus says: 'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.' Actually, it's not Jesus who comes in; it's the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus. Jesus comes in by his Spirit. Jesus can only be in one place at one time, but the Spirit of God can be everywhere. And the Spirit of God can come into your life and my life.

What happens when he comes in? Well, he begins to transform us. And some of these things you can see objectively. Would you like to turn to Galatians, chapter 5, verse 22? Paul writes this:

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.'

Sometimes people say, you know, 'I'm a bit worried what would happen if I became a Christian.' They say, 'I don't want to change. And if I did change, how would I change?' Here's the answer: 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness' — these are the characteristics that begin to develop in our lives. It doesn't happen overnight.

Charlie Mackesy is a good friend of ours, an artist. He once played a practical joke on me. Because somebody had given us a pear-tree, and we'd planted it in our garden. And I was so excited about this, because I thought, you know, this is *The Good Life* — I'll be eating pears. And I'd go out into the garden and look to see whether the pears were growing, and of course they weren't. And Charlie knew I did this. So one day he got a Granny Smith apple and he sewed it onto the tree. And I am stupid, but I'm not that stupid!

But the point is that you don't get a fully-grown fruit overnight; it takes time to grow.

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And these fruit of the Spirit in our lives, they take time. And in my case, they're taking a very long time! But hopefully, as life goes on we become more loving, more joyful, more kind, more patient.

Then our relationships change. One of the things that I noticed, and I don't know whether any of you have begun to notice this even maybe in the last couple of weeks: my attitude to God changed; to Jesus. Before, to me, *Jesus* was a swear word. Or if I heard *Jesus* on the radio I'd switch to some other thing, because I wasn't interested in religion. Suddenly, when I heard about Jesus, I turned it up, because I was in a relationship with him, I knew him, I was interested.

Relationships with other Christians changed. Before I was a Christian, other Christians — I avoided them. I was kind of deeply suspicious of them. I thought they were weird, I thought they were really odd, I thought they were really sad people.

At the university I was at, they used to have porridge parties! I mean, who has porridge parties! But then I became a Christian, and I went to a porridge party — and I discovered that actually they were amazing people.

My attitude to other people, even just people who I'd never met before changed. I remember, again, Charlie saying that, how his attitude to other people changed. He felt this love for people. I remember him telling me one time he walked into an off-licence and he felt this overwhelming love for the person serving him — not just because of what he was serving him! But that is a love that comes from the Holy Spirit.

And it's a love that drives us to make a difference to our world. This is not just a kind of selfish thing, that we feel great; it's that we're given a desire and a passion to do something about our world and to make a difference to our world. This is not an easy thing — being a Christian is never going to be an easy thing. It's hugely challenging, hugely exciting, but it's not easy.

And then not only are there objective changes; there's also a subjective experience. The Holy Spirit brings a deep, personal conviction that we are children of God. Paul writes in Romans 8, verse 16, that 'the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of

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God’.

What’s the difference between faith and knowledge?

[You may want to tell this story about Nicky or replace it with your own example of taking a step of faith in the face of uncertainty.]

Let me use this illustration. I told you that I used to practise as a barrister. One time I was — I did a mixture of prosecuting and defending, but this particular occasion I was prosecuting at Knightsbridge Crown Court.

And I was prosecuting somebody for stealing jewellery from Harvey Nichols, £10,000 worth of jewellery. And the only evidence against this man was his fingerprints. Well, since no two people, even identical twins, can have the same fingerprints, normally if there are fingerprints a person pleads guilty. But this man didn’t plead guilty; he said: ‘Yeah, my fingerprints were on that glass cabinet’ from which the jewellery disappeared, ‘but I was in there with my girlfriend shopping on that day, and I might well have put my hand on the counter, and that might be why my fingerprints are there.’

I didn’t know whether the jury was going to believe him or not, because every decision a jury makes is an act of faith. They weren’t there. They don’t know. They listen to the evidence and they make a step of faith — which is not entirely dissimilar from what it means to put your faith in Christ. You make a decision and you take a step of faith. It’s not irrational, it’s not a blind leap of faith; it’s a step of faith based on evidence.

But I didn’t know whether they would take that step of faith or not. They did. They convicted him. And then a police officer testified. He went into the witness box and he testified to something that they weren’t allowed to know when they were making that decision, and that is this man’s previous convictions, which ran to two and a half pages, for stealing jewellery from department stores. And he was awaiting trial for two further cases of stealing jewellery from department stores. And you could see the look on the jury’s faces: just relief — they knew. They’d taken a step of faith, but then they knew.

And inviting Jesus in is a step of faith. But when he comes in, the Holy Spirit testifies: he

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'testifies to our spirit that we are children of God' and that we're loved by him.

I have three children, and they're all grown-up now. But I remember one time when I was going through — I've got two sons, and my youngest is a daughter. My daughter was 13 at the time. And I was going through her school reports. And, you know, I'm far from a model parent in any area, so I'm not putting this forward as a model at all — it's probably completely the wrong way to go through your children's reports. But I always feel that children are made to work far too hard, and I've always given them the advice, 'Don't work too hard.' And I always think their reports are — you know, any teacher who criticised them, I just didn't believe it at all! And I always thought they were fantastic.

And so I was going through the reports, and I was just saying to my daughter, you know, 'You're fantastic! You're amazing!' And she was going, 'Yeah, but I didn't do very well at French.' And I was saying, 'Oh, you're just so fantastic! You know, I'm so ...' You know, I'm completely biased, prejudiced — I just think she's absolutely amazing. I said, 'I think you're absolutely amazing! I love you! I adore you! I love you because I love you!' She must have been so embarrassed, can you imagine, at 13! But I said, 'I just — I love you, I love you because I love you.' And I found at that moment something happened to me: because as I go through life, I often feel a failure. I often feel I've messed up, 'I've failed again!' And at that moment I felt the Holy Spirit witness to my spirit and say, 'Don't you realise that I love you even more than you love your own child? I love you because I love you.'

That's how we know that we're in a relationship with God: we know it because of the promises of God — he will come in. We know it because of the death of Jesus for us, what he did for us. And we know it because the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

May we pray. Again, I want to give people an opportunity. You may just want to be quiet for a moment, and you may say you're not ready to pray. But again, there might just be one person here who would like to pray. And I want to pray a prayer similar to the one that I prayed last week. And Jesus is alive, he's here tonight. You can pray this in your heart, echo it in your heart. Just say:

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that you love me so much. Thank you that you stand at the door

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of my life and you knock.

And tonight I want to invite you in. I turn away from all the bad stuff in my life, all the things that I know are not right. I'm sorry for them and I ask your forgiveness.

Thank you that you died for me on the cross so that I could be totally forgiven, the slate could be wiped clean and that I can make a new start.

And tonight I put my trust in you. I ask you to come in and to fill me with your Holy Spirit, to help me to lead the kind of life that deep down I long to lead. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.



Talk 4 – How Can We Have Faith?

Duration 44 Minutes
HTB Transcripts

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