

Faith is a funny old thing. If you've ever been to Sunday School you would have learnt stories that require faith - stories about floods, parting seas, voices coming from burning bushes and someone walking on water. Many people looking at these stories probably question why Christians choose to believe them. "How can you have faith that is built on things that sound so far fetch?" I can hear some people say. Faith by its very nature is believing in something you cannot prove. Just an aside, even within the Christian faith many will believe differently regarding these stories within the spectrum of '100% fact to cultural story' that communicates truth. Maybe you are somewhere on that spectrum or maybe not at all.

I was thinking about faith when on a recent journey north, I passed some graffiti on the side of the road that read "The earth is flat". I also remembered a newspaper article about someone explaining why they genuinely believed that the earth was indeed a flat disc rather than a sphere. He came to this conclusion after taking so many airplane rides. Yeah, I couldn't work out the logic either! Now I know a little bit of science and can clearly see that the earth is not flat, it's really not that hard to disprove this claim. Even though it's extreme it still requires some element of faith that the earth is in fact a sphere not a flat disk - we must have faith in our eyesight, our understanding of images and perspective. It's a long shot but there might be a little bit of doubt that we are in fact just living on a flat disc!

Why am I talking about this - well to have a Christian faith doesn't mean you don't doubt stuff. That you don't lie awake at night and wonder if your belief in God is just make believe. Doubts rather than being the enemy of faith are in fact part of faith. Frederick Buechner said "*Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith. They keep it awake and moving*". To never question, to never fear, to never worry, is just not part of the Christian faith. Even those people who came face to face with Jesus after he raised from the dead, still doubted. How much more will we who try to stay faithful to Jesus' doubt today?

So, a word to the doubters, and the faith seekers and worriers. Faith is not believing a ridged set of rules or laws unquestioningly, it's also not about conforming to a set standard. Faith is a journey, and like any good journey there are twists and turns, dead ends and beautiful vistas along the way. From all our community at the Free Church may God bless you on your journey of faith.

If you want to explore your faith a little bit more, I'm always happy to sit in Cara Coffee and talk faith - maybe drop me an email on martin@shelfordfreechurch.org.uk.

- Martin Cockerill