

A PEOPLE OF FAITH

John Rackley concludes his series on what it means to have faith in Christ at the beginning of the 21st century.

Ruth Perrin's book *Changing Shape: The Faith lives of Millennials (born 1980s-2010)* responds to a frequent question asked by parents:

"Why is it that when they were all raised the same way, one of my children has Christian faith and the other two want nothing to do with it?"

Perrin comes up with these answers:

- a. They have lived through decline of churches
- b. There is a general turning away from 'institution'
- c. Religious belief has become an option rather than an obligation
- d. The 20s are an age of many changes and deciding what you believe takes time.

When she enquired of the Millennial age group who stayed with the Church and others who left she concludes that they ask of people of faith:

Be truthful – deal in experience not just ideas; be trustworthy and don't fudge.

Talk with us – help us express what we are struggling with; do not turn away from what you have not thought of or encountered before; explain why doctrine might be important but avoid making it a prescription for our involvement; "Google gives me information; what I need is time and people who will help acquire wisdom and discernment".

Create real community – cross-generational friendship are important; "we are a long way from where we were brought up we need is what family gives at its best"; learn how to network.

Give us something to live for- "we want to commit to something bigger than ourselves"; start from what is happening to the world; embrace justice issues.

And finally - be more honest, more hospitable, more relational, more radical and more passionate about Jesus.

In others words, be like the four friends who broke open a roof (Mark chapter 2), the Samaritan who found God in an enemy (Luke chapter 10), and a Jesus who welcomed faith wherever he saw it and not just where it was expected.

I found what she wrote very familiar of the people I know in that age group. They are challenging the churches to be different and not rely on depend on what has always been done or said. I am excited, frustrated and disconcerted.

I started this series with the following questions. Now, I want to give a set of answers. They are *my* answers. They may not be *yours*. So what do you think?

What does it means to have faith in Christ at the beginning of the 21st century?

Is 'belief' the same as 'faith'?

What did Jesus say about faith?

What does it mean to be a person of Faith (Christian)?

- A person of faith knows that faith is a fundamental human characteristic.
- A person of faith knows that faith is more than agreeing to a set of beliefs.
- A person of Faith (Christian) believes that there is a God who has self-revealed in Christ.

- Such a person practices faith which:
 - has the insight, boldness and persistence to convert concern into action;
 - does all you can, not just hoping something will turn up;
 - causes other people inconvenience and to think differently;
 - goes to the edge to get a glimpse of something different;
 - is willing to be surprised;
 - is ready to change its mind and see what is familiar in a new way;
 - sees the range of possibilities in a situation;
 - has the courage to face the unknown.

- A person of faith knows they will not have the last word on their life.
- A person of faith believes that there is more to it all than meets the eye.
- A person of faith believes that there is a divine purpose in it all.
- A person of faith seeks to the change one of the great challenges that the world faces.

Putting some detail on this. For me being a person of Faith (Christian) means:

- 1. A life based in prayer;**
- 2. A continual exploration of the teaching and character of Jesus;**
- 3. A recognition that the Church must always be adapting to the Mission of God;**
- 4. A focus on the need to explain what having Christian Faith means;**
- 5. A focus on the requirement to take on the consequences of the Climate Emergency.**

A prayer for these times.

Risen lord

From despair and darkness, and from lack of hope,
From our disappointments and lack of vision –

Raise us up to be

Bringers of hope,
Grounded in faith,
Loyal to the Truth,
Full of expectation

For tomorrow and all our tomorrows.

Risen lord

Who called Mary by name,
Walked the road to Emmaus,
And retrieved the faith of Peter,
So come to us,
That we may worship you
Our Risen Lord and Master Jesus Christ
And walk on with the flame of your love
within us.

Amen