

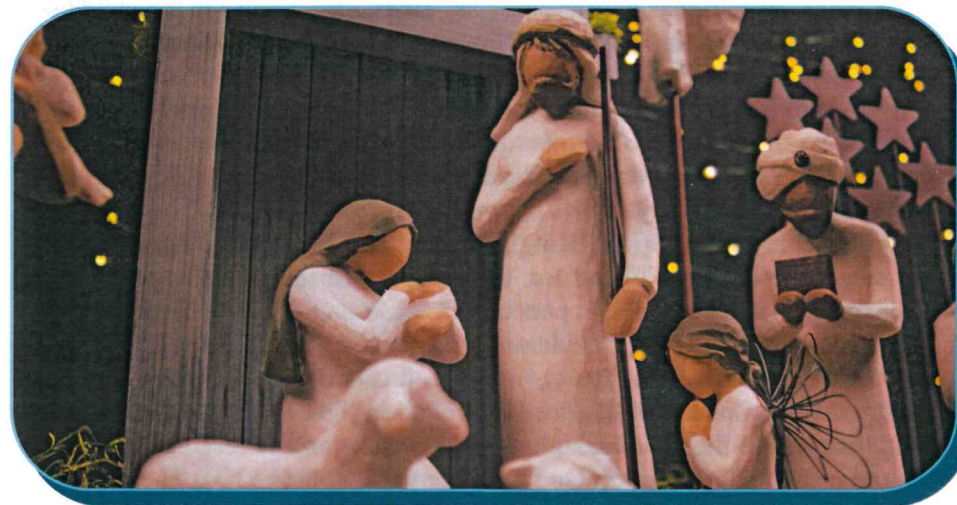


The Fountain
1023 N Chinowth St.
Visalia, CA 93291



The
FOUNTAIN
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Intentionally Growing, and #LivingSENT for Jesus



The
Fountain
Christian Church

Office Hours:

Mon-Thurs 9:00 AM— 4:30 PM

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The Relationship between Faith and Reason

By Pastor Sam Sears

Mark Twain once said, “Faith is believing what you know ain’t so.” I hold to the controversial opinion that Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) isn’t that great of an author, but I think even less of his understanding of faith, and his philosophical views in general. How do we respond to someone when they say something like this? Twain’s definition of faith has now permeated our culture, and we see it even leak its way into the church.

First, I should begin by defining biblical faith. Faith, the Greek word *pistis*, would later be translated as “fides,” the Latin for “trust.” Historically, it has been interpreted as closer to “trust” than the latter-day associations we have with the word. The Greek word is even derived from *pi-tho*: “to convince by argument.” It would be wrong to argue purely from the way the word was derived, as word meanings do change over time, but it can help us. More importantly, we can argue from how the word was used by the authors of the Bible.

Hebrews 11:1 in the King James famously records, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Many over-emphasize the “unseen” part of the verse and come to an erroneous conclusion. Note the word “evidence.” While we can’t see the wind, we can see “evidence” of the wind from its effect; it can also be measured and understood. This verse must also be interpreted in light of the numerous texts that demonstrate that Paul and others used persuasion and reasoning, as well as the command to worship God with our mind (Mark 12:3). The fact that faith is not visible does not mean that it is contrary to reason.

Can you see “trust?” The trust you have in a spouse? No, but you know it exists. David knew he could trust God to aid him in slaying the giant Goliath, because God had been there for the lion and the bear. When confronted by the disciples of John the Baptist, Jesus pointed them to the evidence of fulfilled prophecy as a reason for their teacher to trust that He was the Messiah. It was not a call to believe blindly. It was not a call to believe without or against what was known or could be demonstrated.

What of John 20:29 that records, “Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed?” Does this elevate blind faith? The context of this was Thomas’ extreme doubt, where he was not believing the evidence of Jesus Himself before his eyes and kept needing to see more and more. The section closes with, “So then, many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). John was

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presenting his entire account as evidence to believe in Jesus; if he were doing that, then it would be contradictory for him to suggest that less evidence is better. Jesus was addressing hyper-skepticism, not normal doubts or questions, and not the desire to examine evidence, but the denial of evidence when it’s in your face. That’s a very different issue.

Faith is not a momentary thing, either. John 15:4 exhorts the Christian to “abide” or actively continue in Christ. Our doubts may come and go, but faith is like a relationship with a spouse. There are moments when we are more sure or perhaps happier with our spouse than others, but we have an active commitment we have made with them, and that commitment — that trust, itself — continues apart from measuring its strength.

A biblical definition of “faith” is an active (or abiding) trust based on evidence. Faith isn’t based on what we do not know, but on what we do know, including about God, and He calls us to learn more and have our faith grown as we build a relationship with Him. Some have attempted to follow another worldview that puts faith at odds with reason and more in line with Twain than Jesus.

While you likely haven’t heard the term “Fideism,” its influence is surprisingly wide. Author Douglas Groothuis defines “Fideism” as, “an attempt to protect Christian faith against the assaults of reason by means of intellectual insulation and isolation.” It’s even called “an antidote to apologetics.” My desire is to meet the growing intellectual challenges, and that desire is based on the scriptural call to engage in what we call “apologetics” (1 Peter 3:15) — that is, giving a defense, using evidence in logical argumentation for why we believe what we do. Others have downplayed this as a failed experiment by Paul or even only something to be done inside the church, not as a part of evangelism.

Fideists sometimes that claim you can’t “argue someone into the kingdom” because of the fallen nature of man. Groothuis notes that, “Certainly, the effects of the Fall make apologetics more difficult, but they need not render it impossible.” I routinely interact with and read writings of people who indeed were “argued” into the kingdom like C.S. Lewis, Lee Strobel and J. Warner Wallace, among others. These are famous names who were convinced of the truth of Christianity after engaging with well-learned individuals who were able to respond to their doubts and questions.

Fideists on the other hand, would argue that apologetics is inappropriate and fruitless. God will either save someone or not, and they will either believe (have faith) or not, regardless of any evidence given, ignor-

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ing that the Holy Spirit can and does use this evidence and ignoring the patterns of evangelism we see in the New Testament, especially Acts.

But most people aren't Fideists, so how does this bad idea worm its way in? It's easier to tell people to "have faith" than to answer hard questions about what we believe and why we believe it. It even sounds more "holy" to say things like "I just believe," but as someone else has said, "Stupid for Jesus, is still stupid." Fideism treats reason as an enemy, and that's led to many leaving the church.

Right now, multiple research studies like those at Barna and various ones given to Ratio Christi during my time there, indicate that 70-80% of Christian young people leave the faith when they hit the college campus. Time and time again, when asked why, it's the lack of depth, lack of answers, and the idea that Christianity is opposed to science (and behind that assumption, they usually imply "against reason"). If we don't give young people a robust defense of Christianity or use it when reaching out to others, they will accept the strong critiques and attacks on Christianity as true, and we will seem like a people with no reason to think or believe the way we do, and they will both reject Christianity and think Christians are irrational furthering the divide in our culture.

Reason should be used to help us understand both the innerworkings of our faith and also to know the true faith and demonstrate truth to others. It's our ally, not our enemy. The idea that faith and reason are opposed is more in line with the gnostics. Gnostics were a famous group against whom our forefathers wrote an eloquent defense of the truth to combat their twisting of scripture. Let's continue the tradition of following the biblical command to worship God with our minds.

Groothuis, Douglas. Christian Apologetics A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith. IVP Academic Downers Grove, Illinois. 2011.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

December 2020

Lois Davis.....	1	David Saffell.....	19
Cody Yale.....	1	Keith Moore.....	23
Bev Coffman.....	2	Wayne Geis.....	25
Margy Lauffenberger.....	2	Valerie Ronk.....	26
Earl Subejano.....	5	Larry Lewis.....	29
Avery Joe Sears.....	6	Bob Brooks.....	30
Jeri Hendren.....	9	Audrey Ray.....	30
Lina Garcia.....	10	Carl Shane.....	31
Les Coffman.....	11	Greg Stowers.....	31
Karen Gunning.....	11		
William Switzer.....	11		
Samuel Morgan.....	12		
Dana Switzer.....	12		
April Kesterson.....	14		
Sadie Pelaiz.....	18		
		Kevin & Sharon Turl.....	29
		Sam & Heather Sears.....	31

Happy Anniversary!

Prayer Concerns

December 2020

Pray for the desire and opportunity to effectively share your faith!

Our Nation and Leaders

Teachers & Students in Visalia

Health

Ana Morales, Ashley Banuelos, Barbara Grant, Bill Bianchi, Cindy Marks, Donna Eastin, Frank Henley, Jean Lamb, Kevin Guy, Pam Shattuck, Pauline Gurule, Rick Hamilton, Fred Wilder, Sandy Zinger

Cancer

Charles Douglass, Hazel Bahrenburg, Jiggy Greene, Joe Grant, Joe Ryan, Michael Elder, Mike Brazil, Olly Ajluni, Shannan Ajluni

Other Needs

Nina Suttles (Vision); Sheila Wharton (Heart attack); Romy Sagastume & baby Zion (Healthy pregnancy & delivery)

Military

Andie Richwine - Marine

Brett Boland - Virginia

Jason Mariel - Afghanistan

Matthew Calhoun - Fort Knox

Michael Reid - Fort Worth, TX

Preston Correa - Marines

December 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 9:30 am Staff	2 9:30 am Women's Bible Study	3 10:00 am Book Study The Harbinger II	4 6:30 am Men's Group	5
6 8:30 am Worship 10:15 am Worship 4:00 pm Caroling	7 10:45 am Prayer Warriors 12:00 pm Women's Bible Study	8 9:30 am Staff	9	10 10:00 am Book Study The Harbinger II	11 6:30 am Men's Group	12
13 8:30 am Worship 10:15 am Worship	14 10:45 am Prayer Warriors 12:00 pm Women's Bible Study 6:00 pm Women's Bible Study	15 9:30 am Staff	16 9:30 am Women's Bible Study	17 10:00 am Book Study The Harbinger II	18 6:30 am Men's Group	19
20 8:30 am Worship 10:15 am Worship	21 10:45 am Prayer Warriors	22 9:30 am Staff	23	24 6:30 pm Christmas Eve Gathering	25 	26
27 8:30 am Worship 10:15 am Worship	28 10:45 am Prayer Warriors	29 9:30 am Staff	30	31		

Christmas Eve Gathering

By Chuck Romer

You are invited to our Christmas Eve gathering. It will be held on Dec. 24 at 6:30 p.m.

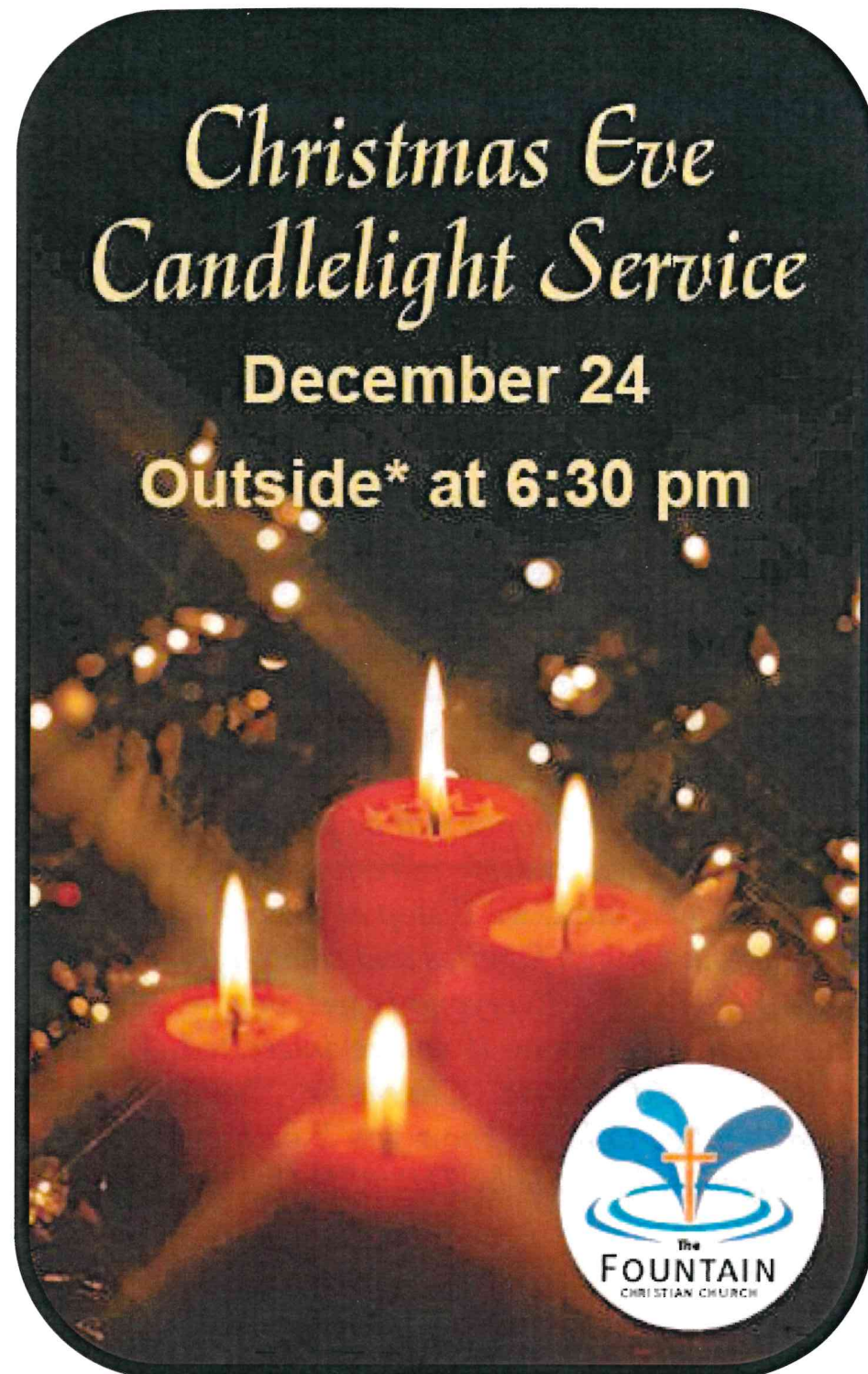
And if the weather cooperates,* we're planning to have the service OUTSIDE in the north parking lot – where our outdoor Sunday services have been held.

We'll have some fire pits and overhead heaters to help keep everyone warm. Or you can stay in your car and listen to the activities on your FM radio.

The program will be simple, perhaps 30 minutes or less. We're planning to sing a few carols, have a brief devotional time... and if we can figure out a simple, safe way to do it, we will also have a candle lighting time.

Please join us on Christmas Eve as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, our Lord!

**If the weather doesn't allow us to meet outside, we'll move the gathering inside.*



Christmas Caroling on December 6th

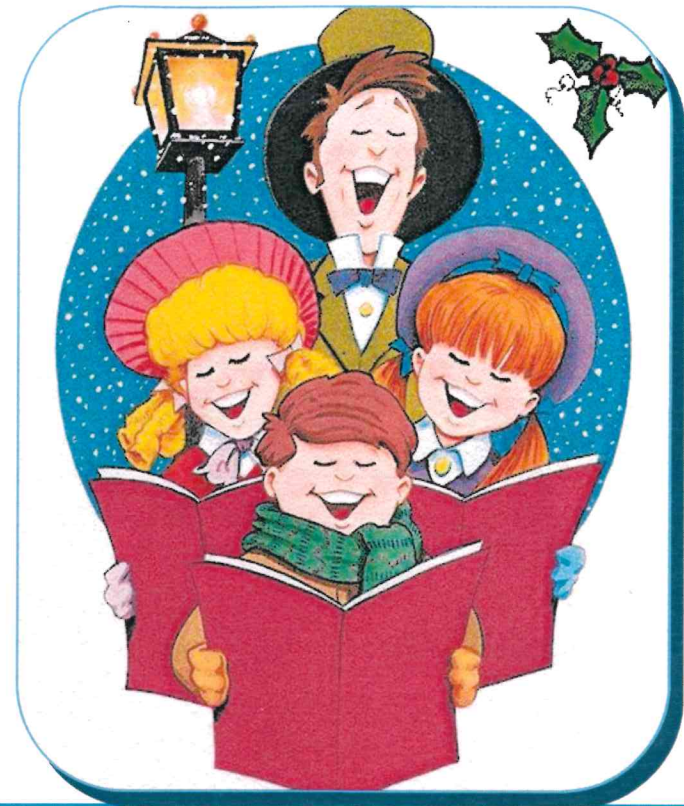
We just got news a few days ago that we've been invited to sing some Christmas Carols for the residents at the new Quail Park facility in north Visalia!

The date Quail Park has chosen is Sunday night, Dec. 6., with the program to begin at 4 p.m. We haven't seen the location yet, but they've told us that we will sing on one level... and the residents will be separated from us on a different level. But they really do want us to come and share the joy of Christmas.

You don't need to be part of our Sunday morning praise team or a member of the choir to participate – just bring a joyful heart and join us for a wonderful Christmas tradition.

HERE ARE THE ESSENTIALS:

- *Meet at the church to car pool. We'll leave no later than 3:45.*
- *Christmas Carol books will be provided.*
- *Quail Park will provide refreshments afterward.*
- *On our way back, we'll stop at the homes of 4 or 5 Fountain Church families and share a few carols.*
- *IMPORTANT – Everyone is welcome to come – but we need to know if you're interested. Please call/email/text Carrie, Chuck or Sheila in the church office to let us know you'll be there. Reservations must be made by THURSDAY, Dec. 3.*



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Date	Attendance	Giving
November 1	81	\$6,275.00
November 8	72	\$4,835.00
November 15	82	\$2,958.00
November 22	78	\$3111.00
November 29	\$
Online Giving.....		\$3500.00
Total		\$20,679.00

