

faith matters 8

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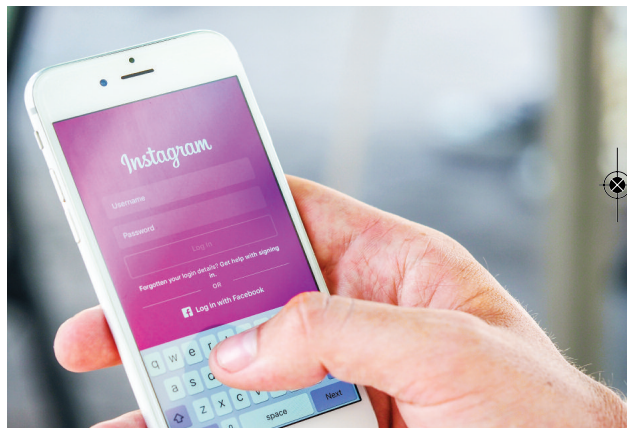
Checked

85 TIMES A DAY!

Jonathan Black, England

A recent survey showed the average phone user checks their mobile 85 times a day! It is probably the first thing you look at in the morning and the last thing at night. Why? We are afraid of missing fresh news! We don't want to overlook a message. The weather is important and so are the photos we took that day. Content that we are up to date we plug in the charger, until the next time we feel the need to check!

Did it ever enter your mind that one night you may set your phone down for the last time?



"Where will you spend eternity?"

Often when there is an accident people's mobile phones ring and pulsate with messages but there is no one to answer!

1 *Checked 85 times a day*

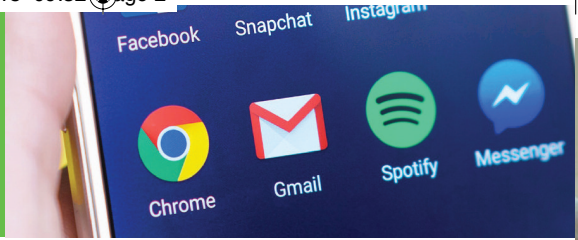
3 *Fit for Heaven*

5 *Creativity*

8 *Unexpected destination*

11 *Friends & Followers*

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We assume life will go on indefinitely, but the Bible says, 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment'. The evidence agrees. 150,000 people die every day on planet earth from various causes. Check it out on Google! That is why as you close your eyes at the end of a day, having checked all your messages you may have missed the most important message of all! You have answered all your emails but failed to respond to the greatest invitation of all! You are not only sleeping physically but sleeping spiritually!

What if you never pick up that phone again? You will enter a realm the Bible calls eternity. Your eternity will arrive via the doorway of death. You will have stepped into a world where there is no internet connection, no 'followers' and no 'snapchat' because eternity is endless. The only news will be that you have arrived! But where?

Does Jesus Christ await your arrival in Heaven? Or is the Devil following you with a 'thumbs up' until he has you over the finishing line of life's 'rat race' into an eternal Hell? What you do with Jesus Christ in time decides where you will be in eternity. You need Christ to get to Heaven because your sin separates you from God who is holy. You are

unclean by God's standard and can only be cleansed by one who is 100% clean – that means 'sinless'. Jesus Christ never sinned, He could not sin, Why did He die then? 'Christ died for our sins.' 1 Cor. 15. 3.

God, in His infinite love, sent Jesus Christ, who willingly paid the price for your sins, and mine, upon the cross. His death was not accidental. His purpose in living was to die for sinners. But death couldn't hold Him, and He rose from the dead and so today offers eternal life to every individual who believes on Him by faith. Baptism cannot save, religion cannot save, Christ alone can save.

If you never send another text or tweet make sure you have the most important thing anyone can have, eternal life! It never goes out of date; it will never need to be updated, recharged and can never be lost. 😊





Dr. P. Mullan, Ayr, Scotland

In the last few years, I have been struck by the increasing popularity of fitness clubs and gyms. With each passing year, it seems that several new gyms pop up around town. Recent data shows there are now over 9.7 million fitness members in the UK and one in every seven people in the UK is a gym member. More and more people are realizing the importance of regular exercise, as recommended by the NHS.

Some have taken this to another level altogether, for example, running triathlons and marathons. The reason they put their bodies through such pain is to build their strength, improve their cardiovascular fitness and, ultimately, to ensure they remain as healthy as possible. Do you ever find it odd that people

will do so much to get physically fit, and yet make no preparation to become fit for heaven? The Bible teaches that heaven is a real place. It describes it as perfect, with no sorrow, tears or death. It is where God lives, the one who wants to bring us into a relationship with Himself. There is ample evidence for God's existence in the creation all around us, in the reality of our conscience and in Christ's life, death and resurrection.

The Bible teaches that we are unfit for heaven because of our wrong thoughts and actions:

'there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God', Rom. 3. 23.

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Every single human, except the Lord Jesus, is guilty of breaking God's perfect standards. We all have a past full of regrets and shame. Each of us is plagued by greed, lust and self-righteousness. We are clearly unfit for heaven, and, as guilty sinners, we rightly deserve God's judgement in hell. To get physically fit, people exercise regularly with great discipline, and often go on special diets. However, getting fit for heaven is not a matter of personal endeavour. It does not happen by attending religious services, or going through certain rituals. The Lord Jesus once told one of the leading religious leaders of his day, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God', John 3. 3. He was pointing out that we need a spiritual change to fit us for heaven. We need to be given eternal life by God himself. Without this new life from God, we will never see heaven. Another passage in the Bible makes it clear how we can get to heaven, or be 'saved', 'For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast', Eph. 2. 8, 9.

God will freely give eternal life to any who will repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ. We

need to depend on Christ alone, because Christ alone has died for sinners: 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us', Rom. 5. 8.

'Our own good works will never fit us for heaven.'

It seems strange that, for many, getting physically fit is far more important than getting fit for heaven. The possibility of being lost for all eternity appears to be of no consequence. Of course, it can be easy to get caught up in what we can see, and how we look, yet the word of God tells us that it is the unseen which is more important: 'The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal', 2 Cor. 4. 18.

The Bible points out that that physical fitness can only benefit us in a limited way. Being fit for heaven, however, has never ending blessings: 'For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come', 1 Tim. 4. 8. Your spiritual need is far more important than your physical needs. Being fit for heaven should really be your top priority. Is it?

CREATIVITY



D. Mowat, Avoch, Scotland

There is a world of difference between being inventive and being creative.

Animals are inventive. They can, to limited degrees, problem-solve. They can adapt to fit and survive in new surroundings. They can intuitively devise ways of ensuring their young are protected and nurtured. They can build astonishingly complex utilitarian structures. But they never create anything just for the sheer pleasure of it. Human beings are the only animals who create objects for no other purpose than their own pleasure and satisfaction.

Humans paint, write poetry, sing, perform music, compose, lay out a flower bed, all creative as opposed to utilitarian acts. Men and women make things of beauty for no other purpose than so that they, and other humans, can enjoy them. And when we create something for our own satisfaction and pleasure, we

unconsciously attest that we were made in the image of a God who is creative. Great works of art, Handel's Messiah, Van Gogh's Sunflower, Milton's Paradise Lost, Shakespeare's Julius Caesar – all stand as eloquent and beautiful witnesses to a creative God.

When we use our imaginations to contemplate and plan something not already in existence, we show that we are made in the image of an intelligent, imaginative God. Albert Einstein said, 'The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination'. When a toddler picks up a crayon and starts to draw a crude picture, he is telling his delighted parents that he has one of the defining traits of humanity, creativity. The Bible begins with creativity – 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth', Gen. 1. 1. Creation (of anything) presupposes purpose and pleasure.

God created the universe for His own glory, and frankly took delight in what He had created. Again and again, in the opening chapter, we read, 'And God saw that it was good . . . And God saw that it was good', God's purpose was that this creation would express something of His own character, and contribute to His own glory.

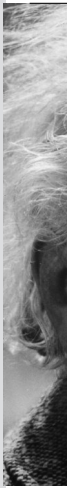
However, the story of the Bible rapidly takes a downward plunge. Through man's disobedience, sin invades the planet. Instead of reflecting the image of God, man is distorted in his character, and

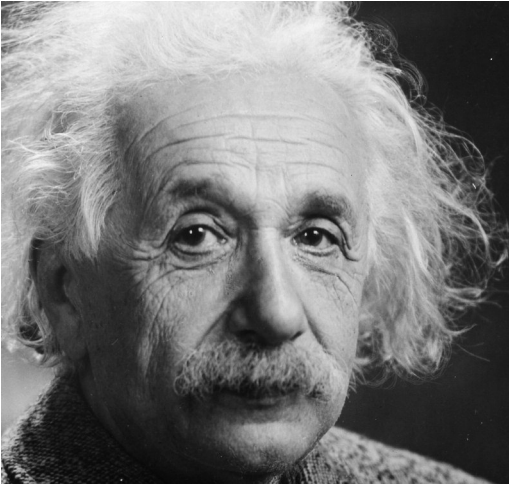
creation is blighted and bound. God given creative talents intended for man's enjoyment and God's glory become self-centred, twisted, corrupted. And so art, poetry, and music begin to be used to celebrate and express abominable evils and sins. None of this caught God by surprise, however. His plan was always that there would be a new creation. Paul

'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old passed away; behold, the new has come', 2 Cor. 5. 17.

writes in the New Testament, Christians are described as the first instalment of God's new creation, Jas. 1. 18. The good news of the Christian message is that God is re-creating men and women. Broken, sin-blighted lives are being restored and reshaped.

Characters are being changed. And it will end in glory. God's original creative intent will be fulfilled, and, ultimately, He will be delighted and satisfied with 'a new heavens and a new earth' that will radiate His glory and character. The message of the Bible is that you can be part of this glorious re-creation. The problem of sin, which has blighted our lives and condemned us to the judgement of





'The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.'

Albert Einstein

God, has been dealt with fully by God Himself. By sending His Son into the world, God signalled His intention to recover and restore lost humanity. By dying for our sins on the cross, Jesus has made it possible for God to be true to His standards, and at the same time, save those who trust in His Son. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead shows that His death has met all God's demands and that there can be a new beginning for creation.

The Bible describes those who have turned from their sins and trusted the Lord Jesus as 'His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus', Eph. 2. 10. God wants to re-create your life today, to

transform your character and give you a glorious future. Are you willing to experience the creativity of salvation?



'The resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead shows that His death has met all God's demands.'

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UNEXPECTED DESTINATION

Fraser Munro, Scotland

At the end of June 2017, a man from Essex who had been in Germany on business began his journey home. He showed his boarding pass to staff at Cologne Airport, entered the plane and soon fell asleep. When he awoke some time later, he discovered, to his surprise and shock that he was on the wrong plane! It was heading for America, rather than for England. His boarding pass said, London Stansted, but the plane touched down at Las Vegas. There was, for him, an unexpected destination!

Throughout life we make a series of journeys. Some are long; others are short. Some are for pleasure; others are for business. Some are chosen; others are compulsory. Some routes are new; others are familiar. At the start of each journey, however, is the expectation that the intended destination will be reached. If this is not the case, the consequences can range from inconvenience to disaster. Of course, life itself is a journey. The greatest of all journeys! This journey does not end at death. There is something more. There is something

beyond. Many recognize the reality of this fact. They seek to live in such a way that when life on earth is over heaven can be entered and eternity can be enjoyed. This is a popular view. To millions all over the world, this seems reasonable. This seems right. Surely God will be satisfied if I have tried my best! What more could I do? What more could He want? When we turn to the Bible, however, we discover God's response to such a philosophy. A response so significant that it is stated twice – in Proverbs chapter 14 verse 12 and

Proverbs chapter 16 verse 25: There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. The importance of this statement is immense! A way that is intended to lead to life, but a

at the world around us testifies of that. A look within our own hearts testifies of that. We have fallen short of our own standards, let alone God's. All of us, without exception, are affected and afflicted by sin. Think



way that leads to death. A way that is expected to end in Heaven, but a way that ends in Hell. An unexpected and very unpleasant destination indeed! The man who boarded the wrong plane was eventually able to rectify his mistake, but Hell is a destination from which there can be no return! But why is this way that seems so right actually so wrong? Why will a good life not take me to heaven? Think of the sinfulness of the soul. A look into the Bible testifies of that, 'All have sinned', Rom. 3. 23. A look

of the holiness of the house. A house-owner is entitled to regulate entry. He is under no obligation to allow anyone and anything over the threshold. Our good is not good enough for God. Heaven is His dwelling-place and God has decreed: There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, Rev. 21. 27. There is a city bright, Closed are its gates to sin.

Think of the demands of the dock. A number of years ago, a murder trial

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took place in Scotland. As a teenager, the accused had burst into a restaurant and shot dead a waiter. He had escaped from the scene and had managed to evade the authorities. He grew up, joined the army, rose through the ranks and was decorated for outstanding service in Iraq. Then justice caught up with him. He was arrested, charged and he then stood in the dock. He had undeniably done wrong, but could he not argue: Surely my good outweighs my bad? Such an argument was not made. Such an argument could not be made. Nor could an appeal be made for mercy. When a prisoner faces his judge, he cannot simply plead for forgiveness. If a crime is committed, consequences must flow. Justice demands that punishment must fall. Think of the cross of Christ. In Galatians chapter 2 verse 23, the apostle Paul makes this very point: If righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain. If I can work my way to heaven, then why did the Lord Jesus die? If I can get to heaven by my own efforts, then His death was needless, pointless and useless. Do you see how objectionable, how obnoxious, how offensive – to God – such a view is? In His life, the Lord Jesus declared: I am the way, John 14. 6. In His death, He opened up the way,

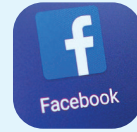
Christ died for our sins, 1 Cor. 15. 3. He took my place and bore the punishment my sins deserved. Two ways!

There is a way
which seemeth
right unto a man
and there is a way
which is right. The
first is man's way;
the second is God's
way.

The first consists of the imperfect works of men: the second is centred in the perfect work of Christ. The first is characterized by trying: the second is characterized by trusting. The first will end in disaster: the second will end in delight. From the pages of the Old Testament, a plea, a prayer: O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end, Deut. 32. 29. When you discover that you are on the wrong route, the best thing to do is change direction, and the best time to do it is as soon as possible. Consider your latter end. Where is the journey of life taking you? Avoid the ways of death. Instead, come to the Saviour. Depend upon Him; receive eternal life and the assurance of reaching the intended destination.

friends and *followers*

Jeremy Singer, Bridge of Weir, Scotland



Are you on Facebook? If you are, how many friends do you have? This depends on how often you accept friend requests. Are you on Twitter? If you are, how many people do you follow?

These are individuals you know and respect, people you want to hear from, people whose opinions you value. Let's forget about 21st-century social media for a moment. The concepts of friends and followers are as old as human society itself. We are friends with those we love, and we are followers of those we respect. A real friendship costs more than a seconds click. A real follower does more than a trivial retweet. Such meaningful relationships between human beings remind us of the deep and precious relationship that God wants us to have with Him.

To put it frankly, God became a man so we might be His friends and followers, John 1. 14. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son

of God, wants us to know Him and to trust Him. On the night before His death, the Lord Jesus said, Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends, John 15. 13. When He died on the cross at Calvary, the Lord Jesus made the ultimate friend request. He died for our sins, 1 Cor. 15. 3, so that we could know His forgiveness and reconciliation.

Although we are God's enemies, Rom. 5. 10, the Lord Jesus died so we could become His friends. Just days after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus looked Peter in the eye and said, Follow me, John 21. 22. Jesus had issued this command to His friend Peter on several previous occasions. Despite Peter's failures, the Lord Jesus never gave up on him. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, 1 John 1. 9.

Following Jesus means leaving our old lifestyle behind. It demands

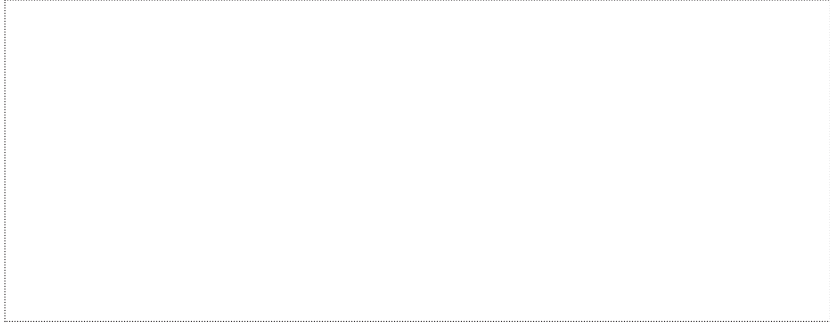
obedience to Him. Who has the most friends on Facebook? Who has the largest number of followers on Twitter? Outside this virtual sphere of social media, the Lord Jesus claims millions of friends and followers across the world. Each individual person who wants to be a friend of Christ must trust Him and follow in a life of obedience to Him. In the 1930s, self-help trainer Dale Carnegie wrote a book called, How to win friends and influence people. This popular book is still in print today. It describes the characteristics a person should cultivate to gain respect from others. The Lord Jesus Christ went about things in an entirely different, but infinitely more effective, way. To win friends, He chose to lay down his life on the cross, John 15. 13. To influence people, He calls them to take up [their] cross and follow me, Matt. 16. 24.

QUICK QUOTE

“God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supplies.”
Hudson Taylor

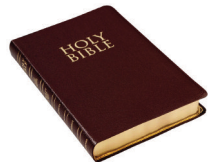
What think ye of Christ?

This copy of *faithmatters* comes to you with the compliments of:



We hope you have enjoyed reading this pamphlet and that you will decide to read the Bible for yourself. We are not asking that you join a church, or become ‘religious’ or turn over a new leaf, but that you find the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Friend. He can forgive your sins and assure you of peace in your life and a place in heaven.

If you do not have a Bible or New Testament of your own then do purchase one. They are available quite cheaply in most bookshops like Waterstones, or W. H. Smith, and in different versions to suit your reading taste.



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