

# Just a Minute..

2 Corinthians 4:18 "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."



The Bible Society of Egypt<sup>1</sup> recounted the testimony of a woman who lost 11 family members during the recent terrorist attack on the bus filled with Christians, travelling to a monastery in Minya. One of the many visitors to these victims, wishing to convey support, solidarity and condolences, was a government minister. During the visit, the women told the minister, "Don't worry about me, I am worried about you! I am worried about where you will go after you die!"

The minister was taken aback, and those around him apologised, suggesting that this woman was overly distraught. But she would not allow her message to be discounted. "No! I am in my right mind. I've lost 11 members of my family and I have nothing else to lose! But I am at peace knowing they are in Heaven. But what about you? Have you read the Bible?" And she urged him to read the Bible and consider his destiny!

What a joy to have certainty about eternity. This we are promised in scripture<sup>2</sup> and by Christ Himself<sup>3</sup>. But what we are not promised is that during our time on earth our paths will not be filled with the uncertainties that life has to offer. The certainty of the 'unseen' eternity combined with the 'seen' uncertainties of this 'temporary' life, is a tension that every believer has to face. Richard Rohr, in one of his daily devotions, describes this tension as follows: "There are commonly two kinds of human beings: there are people who want **CERTITUDE** and there are people who want **UNDERSTANDING**; and these two often cannot understand one another. If you think you have a right to certitude, then show me where the Gospel ever promised or offered you that. **If God wanted us to have evidence, rational proof, and perfect clarity, the incarnation of Jesus would have been delayed till the invention of audio recorders and video cameras.**"

Richard explains as follows: "Rational certitude is exactly what the Scriptures do not offer us. They offer us something much better and an entirely different way of knowing: an intimate relationship, a dark journey, a path where we must discover for ourselves that grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness are absolutely necessary for survival in an uncertain world. You only need enough clarity and ground to know how to live without certitude! Yes, we really are saved by faith. People who live in this way never stop growing, are not easily defeated, and frankly, are fun to live with."

*You can tell mature and authentic faith by people's ability to deal with darkness, failure, and non-validation of the ego—and by their quiet but confident joy! **Infantile religion insists on certainty every step of the way and thus is not very happy.***"

We sometimes tend to think that the opposite of faith is unbelief and we want to protect our hearts from doubt at all costs. But, if we have no doubt, we need no faith. Absolute certainty is the opposite of faith. The more certain we are about something, the less we have a need for faith, or hope for that matter. Faith is a journey of discovery, often marked by doubt and questions. We should always look to the certainty of a Saviour called Jesus, and then be allowed to discover the route, the speed and the journey.

Peter Enns, in his book *The Sin of Certainty*, writes as follows<sup>4</sup>: "Having the right belief is not the same as having faith. Many Christians have gone off course by putting belief and certainty at the centre of their faith instead of simply following and trusting Jesus."

But this tension between certitude and understanding also confirms the vision and mission of INcontext International. At INcontext we deal with **UNDERSTANDING**, not **CERTITUDE**. We do not provide certainty that refugees will not launch terror attacks in Europe, but we do provide an understanding that God is using this movement of people to

<sup>1</sup> <http://bibles4egypt.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

<sup>3</sup> John 3:15 "...that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

<sup>4</sup>The sin of certainty: Why God desires our trust more than our 'correct' beliefs. Harper One 2016

draw souls into the Kingdom. We do not provide certainty that President Donald Trump will be a virtuous leader, but we do provide an understanding that God appoints leaders for seasons and that He will use him for such a time as this. We cannot provide certitude that South African laws will continue to guarantee freedom of religion, but we can provide understanding that God sometimes ordains hardship to display the cross of Salvation. We cannot say with certainty that IS will be defeated, but we can provide an understanding that Muslims are disillusioned by the violence of people of their own faith and are running to the Lord. And the list goes on.

Please join us in prayer as we seek wisdom, discernment and understanding in this season of uncertainties.