

## Faith as a journey

### Part 1

Best or worst journey – share with neighbour and then any feedback

### Part 2

Passport – freedom to travel

- put in drawer and stay at home
- use it, journey, find out more about world and self

Journey is necessary to get to destination

Sometimes just A to B

Sometimes it's about what happens on the way

Tell you about a journey we made

Not the worst/best – but one of the most interesting

Skiing in Switz

Like trains. Reduce carbon footprint – go by train

6 of us

Fri lunchtime to London Marylebone

Across London to St Pancras

Eurostar to Paris

Stay in Paris overnight near Gare du Nord

Walk to Gare de l'Est

Train East to Strasbourg, then south and into Switz

Change at Basel for Interlaken

Little train up to Lauterbrunnen where we were staying and would meet the rest of the party

Arrive in pm rather than middle of night, so enjoy first day's skiing more.

Confirmed plans with friends

Tickets purchased as became available

Good to go!

*High point*

Practicalities

Luggage

Ski boots/ helmets – heavy and lots of space. Worked out luggage - reduce space for other stuff.

Skis – special ski bag which Paul would carry

Come the day, completed packing, locked up house

Walked down to DDG – realised how heavy and awkward a bag full of skis are!

Skis on train

Skis across London in rush hour

Skis on to Eurostar

Skis into the tiny lift at the seedy hotel - ? red light district??

Squeezed into our equally seedy hotel room

*Low point*

Would not have managed without our friends

Dinner

With friends

Veggie in France!

Trip to Sacre Coeur

Looking out over Paris

Croissants

Buying food to take on TGV

Friends and fun

*High point*

Collect skis

Walk to Gde l'Est

Skis on to train

Relax!

Carried along. Lots to see. Games

Map – for gliders

Trundled along, overall pleasant time

*Forward arrow*

Delay

? late into Basel

? miss connection

*Low point*

Didn't miss connection

Liz discovered forgotten chocolate

*High point*

Rest of journey fairly uneventful

*Forward arrow*

Arrived safely and on time

Had dinner together in local restaurant

Good night's sleep

Skiing

And then the skis and boots came into their own

Would not have been much point making the journey without them.

*Skiing symbol*

And then – we had a fabulous holiday

And our carbon footprint was about 25% of flying.

Win all round

### Part 3

Now I'd like to tell you a story about another journey, made by someone I know.

I'll call her Geraldine

Not a journey in the same sense as the ski trip

Still a journey

Geraldine's Christian journey – her journey with God.

Got her Christian passport when she was baptized as a baby

Church primary school, church once a month or so

Confirmed at 12

Church choir, church organisation, church activities

College – bit of a dip

Liked being settled. Back to church

Got married

Church, helped with Sunday School

Had a baby – had baby baptized

Moved – another church

Different friends

God was not just an abstract idea thought about for an hour on Sunday morning, plus lots of church activities

God was real and alive and interested in her

He was saying "Really; follow me

Let's go on an adventure together"

Began to know God rather than just know *about* God

Thirsty for more

Bible (with notes), praying, talking with others to get a bigger picture of God, trusting, changing, discovering and using gifts

More love, more patience

Made mistakes – some big ones

Found God was faithful

Found that we can't earn God's favour – that he loves us because he does, not because we "do"

Found that with God she had begun to discern the part she had to play in the world, and the strength and support to do it.

And after many years, she is still on that journey. Still growing more, learning more, travelling each day with God.

I guess you would say that Geraldine is getting well on in her journey now. Maybe, on our ski journey, somewhere btwn Basel and Interlaken.

So I asked her if she thought there were any similarities btwn her Christian journey and the ski trip that Paul and I made all those years ago. And this is what I came away with....

**Passport** – the decision to take it out of the drawer and go on the journey. A passport is kind of helpful for ID otherwise, but that's not really what it's for. Similarly with baptism. It marks us out as a member of God's family, but if we never "activate" that membership by really trusting God with all aspects of our life then we're not really fully using it for what it was intended.

**Priorities** – we had to prioritise what we took on the journey cos there wasn't room for everything. We needed ski boots and skis so other things had to be left. Journeying with God means that we have to think about what is most important when we put God first. Silly example, chosen because it doesn't apply here, but to give a flavour. If the only time we can get to church is when a popular TV programme is on, then which do we choose? We will always find time for the things that are most important to us.

**Ups and downs** – lots of ups and downs on the journey. And some trundling along too. Literal highs like Sacre Coeur. Lows like thinking we were going to miss our connection. Journeying with God has its wonderful times and times when it is really hard and we don't understand. Times of clarity and times of doubt. In many ways we learn most from the hard times.

**Where are we??!** Glider map. Not always crystal clear where we were or where we were going. Sometimes the route isn't clear, but God has the bird's eye view.

**We don't do it alone.** God is always with us – in fact the joy is, that we become much more aware of his presence. And friends – God gives us the church family. Not just for friendship and support – though v important – but also to talk to, to help us to understand him better. Moving On course, someone said “it's really helpful to hear what others think because often it's a different perspective from mine and gives me a bigger picture, more ideas to consider”

**Hard work – we need food!** Worship, Bible (with notes), prayer, study groups, Christian books, time away..... Anything that refreshes our souls.

**Cross** – Jesus talks about “taking up our cross” and following him. Skis came to represent the cross! Awkward, cumbersome, heavy, hard to carry.

Inconvenient. Equally, the defining mark of why we were on this journey. We made some friends on the way because of them. We also found ourselves in some awkward situations. Sometimes we could set them aside for a bit, but they had to come with us. They were the point.

And when we arrived – such joy to put them on and use them for the wonderful purpose for which they were made.

Similarly it's hard to carry the cross on our Christian journey. It's awkward, cumbersome, heavy, hard to carry. Inconvenient. And as we carry the cross we will make some friends along the way. Equally we will have some difficult times, difficult conversations. But as with the skis, the cross is the defining mark of why we were on this journey.

And just as the skis, when worn, are transformed from an awkward difficult burden and allow us to experience the joy, the thrill, the exhilaration of skiing; so, in heaven, all will be transformed by the cross.

The Christian journey – two stories.

In the Gospel we heard Jesus say that even if our faith is as tiny as a mustard seed, when we journey with God, amazing things will grow from it.

In the Epistle we heard Paul urging Timothy to continue in the Christian journey that he had begun.

Ordinary people, ordinary lives, transformed into something extraordinary.....

And that invitation is still open to us all – at any time, no matter what our age or circumstances. An invitation to journey deeper with God, further into what Jesus called “life in abundance”, the “life of the age to come” – a foretaste of heaven, here on earth.

May we also have the courage, the faith and the trust to accept Jesus’ invitation to journey with him, and to travel that path to the end of our lives.

Amen