

FARMING LIVES

STORIES OF PERSONAL FAITH



JOHN PHILLIPS

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INTRODUCTION

Whether you are a farmer, work in another capacity in the farming industry, have strong links to the farming community or whether you are like me, I hope that you will enjoy *Farming Lives*. (If you are like me, your only link with the farming community will be a love of farming produce!)

Those whose stories you will read do not count themselves as 'religious', but ordinary people who believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Although they constantly fail to live according to its teaching, despite their best efforts, they know that God forgives them.

As you read their stories, you will note that their faith has not provided special protection from the struggles and the suffering that are a feature of everyday life. But you will note that many make special mention of the peace that their faith has given them, through their trials.

And believing what the Bible teaches, they are

confident that their faith assures them of a place in heaven. If you are not familiar with the Bible's teaching yourself, I hope that, as well as enjoying the stories, you will also think about what it means to have a personal faith in God.

It has been a privilege to work in partnership with Farming Christian Link to publish this booklet and, in particular, with Matthew Fawcett, a trustee, who has contributed the section, *The Choice We Face*.

I also wish to thank –

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John Phillips

Director (Publishing), BeaconLight Trust

June 2025



FIONA'S STORY

**Fiona is a sheep
veterinary consultant in
County Durham, providing
specialist services to
farmers, veterinary
surgeons and others in
the sheep industry.**

I attended church regularly with my parents – always at Easter and Christmas. Yes, regularly but only twice a year! For me, that tradition ended following my first term at university. I was in church on Christmas Day, when I concluded: ‘How can there possibly be a God, when so many people only bother with Him at Easter and Christmas?’ I

determined that I would give up on church.

... I determined that I would give up on church

However, I knew that to deny the existence of God also required faith. I needed greater certainty of my ground, if only to argue my conviction with the Christians on the campus. Of course I was right – but I had to convince the Christians that they were wrong!

I was delighted when the Christian Union arranged an event for doubters like me. I was confident that I would quickly identify the weaknesses in their arguments. But the outcome was not what I expected – I had a dramatic turnaround. Two weeks later, I prayed to God: ‘I am sorry for how I have lived without giving You any thought. I do believe that Jesus died for my sins, and I now commit my life to Him.’

... I had a dramatic turnaround ... I found myself praying to God ...

The next morning, the sight of the spring flowers removed any lingering doubts. I remember very clearly the words that just came out: ‘There is a God. There

really is a God. I believe in Him and I believe in Jesus.’

As a scientist, evidence was everything to me. But that meeting made me realise that I had never bothered to examine the evidence for the existence of God. Two things now caused me to recognise the truth. First, the complexities and vastness of creation convinced me that there had to be a creator.

Second, as I began to seriously study the Bible for the first time, my doubts over its authenticity just evaporated. I had expected that it was littered with flaws and inconsistencies. I couldn’t find any. It must have been God who opened my eyes to the truth concerning Him.

**It must have been God who opened
my eyes to the truth ...**

That experience didn’t just change what I believed; it also changed me. Even as a child, I had been a strong-willed, self-sufficient and driven person with, dare I admit it, a high opinion of myself. And at university, I was ambitious, determined to succeed in my chosen career as a farm vet.

Now, my heart started going in a different direction; I tried to think about life from God's perspective. I was content to accept whatever He planned for me. Whilst pleased that it did prove to be a career as a vet, I would have happily settled with anything else He might have chosen for me.

Now, my heart started going in a different direction ...

I have now been a Christian for 30 years. I want my family members and friends to experience the joy of having Jesus in their life. I often use these verses when I pray for them.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:17-19



PHILIP'S STORY

Philip has run his mixed farming business on 120 acres in Derbyshire for 60 years, currently with beef sucklers and sheep.

I was well nourished on the Bible from birth. My parents were Christians (as were their parents), and it was very obvious to everyone who knew them that they loved God and lived according to the Bible's teaching.

By the age of about nine, I understood why Jesus had to leave heaven and come to earth. And in April 1977, when I was 13, I decided that I wanted to be a follower of Jesus. My brother also

made that decision that day.

I understood why Jesus had to ... come to earth

I recall the time, when I was about twelve, when there was a serious incident of poisoning on the farm. Contaminated water caused the milking herd severe distress for 48 hours. My parents only learned of the cause of the contamination several years later. Vandals had got onto the adjoining site, where engineering work was being undertaken, and released 1,000 gallons of paraffin into the watercourse used by our cattle.

At the time, what struck me most, and has remained with me, was the way my Mum and Dad reacted. They remained at peace, which reflected their confidence in God's love and faithfulness; they knew that, whatever the outcome, God would answer their prayers to help them through the incident.

... (my parents) knew that ... God would answer their prayers ...

The peace that they experienced reminds me now of what the Bible says:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.¹

My parents' trust in God at the time of that poisoning incident, and throughout their lives, was a great example to me, especially when I faced a crisis at the age of 18. I was diagnosed with a tumour inside my spinal cord, confining me to bed for 18 months.

I was completely dependent upon God, knowing that He could oversee my healing if He chose to do so. Two consultants refused to operate to remove the bone tumour, saying that the risk was too high, but I did not give up praying for healing.

... but I did not give up praying for healing

And God answered my prayer; another consultant agreed to undertake the surgery. Although the tumour was benign, I was assured that I would have been crippled if it had not been removed. I also sensed that God was telling me to pursue my dream to work with

my parents on the farm, despite the doctors' advice that it would be unwise. I now know, after 60 years, that I made the right decision under God's guidance.

I was again thankful for the skills of doctors 15 years ago. I had to call upon them after my face suffered serious damage when it clashed with the hoof of a Longhorn bull!

When I made my decision to follow Jesus at the age of 13, I knew that I would still be just as much at risk to illnesses, accidents, trials and tragedies as everyone. But I also knew that God would sustain me whatever I had to endure; I knew that He would never leave me. And that has proved to be true.

**But I also knew that God would sustain
me whatever I had to endure ...**

This is a favourite verse of mine:



*The eternal God is your refuge,
and underneath are the everlasting arms.*

Deuteronomy 33:27a

¹Philippians 4:6-7



IAN'S STORY

Ian runs a livestock scanning business, serving farmers across Lancashire, Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

I was born into a farming family in Yorkshire, although the farm is now in Lancashire; it was the change in the county boundaries that moved it!

I was taken to church and Sunday School by my Mum, a confirmed member of the Church of England, and my Dad, a Methodist, who held strongly to their conviction that pubs were dens of iniquity.

When not at school, I spent most of my time helping on the farm, which meant that I had little time to play with friends. As a result, I became a bit of a loner as a child and through my teenage years.

During my first year of studying agriculture at Nottingham University, I became convinced of the truth that I was taught as a child – that Jesus died for sinners. I was a sinner and I made the most important decision of my life when I asked Him to save me. I know that He did.

... I asked Him (Jesus) to save me

After university, I started work with a sheep breeding company and, also, did some sheep shearing, before setting up to scan sheep. As that only provided employment in the winter, I had to look elsewhere for work in the summer. It didn't take me long to decide on New Zealand, with its massive sheep population.

Now 25, it was not an easy time in New Zealand. I felt quite lonely. And without any Christian friends and no regular contact with a church, my faith was quite fragile. When I fell ill with a severe bout of flu, my faith

failed and I exploded, denouncing the belief that I had grown up with. I told God, 'I don't believe in You!'

**... I exploded ... I told God,
'I don't believe in You!'**

I couldn't imagine that I would ever feel worse than I did that day. And I never imagined what I would have to face the following day. My pick-up truck was involved in a serious collision with a sheep wagon, leaving me unconscious and trapped under the steering wheel for an hour, before being airlifted to hospital. I was in a coma for four weeks.

I was left with a dent in my skull and with impaired speech. But good also came from it – an absolute conviction that I was wrong about God. I now knew that He *did* exist and had preserved my life.

**I now knew that He (God) *did* exist
and had preserved my life.**

It is 38 years since I decided to follow Christ, a decision I have never regretted. I have not had an easy life. My wife and I have experienced tough times, notably our son's illness with stage 4 cancer when he was eight.

Now 20, he has epilepsy which limits what he is able to do.

But I am at peace with God, knowing that He has forgiven my sins and that He is always with me. And I know that I will spend eternity with Him in heaven.

... I know that I will spend eternity with Him (God) in heaven.

These verses are from a favourite Bible passage of mine.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:28, 38-39

A vertical photograph on the left side of the page showing a close-up of green wheat stalks with long, thin awns, slightly out of focus in the background.

DAN'S STORY

Dan lives in the Cotswolds where he is the assistant manager of a 2,500 acre organic arable and beef farm.

I thoroughly enjoyed growing up on a farm, initially in Staffordshire and then in Dorset when my father took over the tenancy of a farm. As a ten-year-old, I particularly enjoyed hay making and drilling new grass leys. Later, in Dorset, I was able to pursue mountain biking, kayaking, sailing and shooting.

My parents and grandparents all had a strong faith and it reflected in their lives. Both my Mum and

Grandpa served as churchwardens and my Grandma volunteered much of her free time to serve the church.

Inevitably, I had a good grasp of right and wrong from observing them and, especially, from the teaching from the Bible, both in the home and at church. But knowing what is right doesn't mean that it's any easier for a young person to do what is right, and I soon learnt what it means to experience God's amazing thoughts and ways.

... I soon learnt what it means to experience God's amazing thoughts and ways.

I felt God was prompting me to work within the farming industry and I went to Reading University to study Agricultural Business Management. It was a crucial time for my faith. For the first year and for much of the second, I invested a lot of time in socialising – possibly too much. I wanted to be accepted and not allow my faith to be a barrier to a wide circle of friendships.

However, during my final year, I took on the leadership of a Bible study group, which helped me to grow in my faith and to have God as my focus and priority again.

Farming can be lonely and, at times, quite stressful. My faith is a great help in those tough times when I am struggling. Through prayer, reading the Bible and ultimately trusting in the Lord, I gain confidence and feel able to carry on, even when the day feels like it's falling apart. And I am so grateful, and continually thank Him, when life is running smoothly.

My faith is a great help ... when I am struggling.

Spending time alone with God in prayer draws me close to Him and brings me peace, whatever I may be up against. This is particularly important as I am often committed to the farm 24/7, preventing me from getting to church as regularly as I would wish, and even from meeting up with Christian friends at other times. But, through prayer, I can still bring my heart to the Lord and worship Him, remaining grounded in Him in my head and heart.

Being around nature every day, I am often humbled by the wonder and beauty of creation; it reminds me of God's power, whether it be the stunning landscape or being in awe at the birth of a calf or lamb. I do find it

difficult to understand how people can deny the existence of a god who created the universe and who sustains it.

... I am often humbled by the wonder and beauty of creation ...

I got married in 2022 and my wife and I have recently welcomed the birth of our first child. We look forward to showing him God's love as we bring him up. We know that God has a plan for his life. Perhaps it will be farming!

This is a favourite Bible verse of mine.



*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.*

Proverbs 3:5-6



CHRIS'S STORY

Chris has had a variety of farming businesses and interests, including lecturing. With his wife, Nicky, he established a farm centre in Devon, now run by his family.

I didn't have the happiest of starts in life: my parents had separated, with some acrimony, before I was born. With my mother having to work, she had little option but to send us to a boarding school when I was four and my brother seven.

I was really a bit of a loner up to the age of 13. My life improved

then with a change of school, which had a very clear Christian ethos. I began to understand what it meant to live as a follower of Jesus.

I went on to study at Seale-Hayne Agricultural College, having fallen in love with farms at the age of three, when my Mum took me to visit a friend's farm. I joined the college's Christian Union and began attending church, until I realised that I was not good enough for God. It was only later that I learned no one will ever be good enough.

... I realised that I was not good enough for God

Sadly, I spent nearly ten years looking for love, while shunning God and the perfect love that He offers. At the same time, I immersed myself in farming, lecturing and several farm-related business interests.

That search for love led me to have several girlfriends! I felt sure I was heading towards marriage to a Finnish girl I had been dating for some time. But my ego was deflated when I 'popped the question' and my offer was rejected.

Foolishly, instead of putting my search for love on hold, I stepped it up. The result was disastrous. In under two years I was married and divorced, leaving me burdened with guilt, for I had broken a vow made before God. It confirmed what I already knew – I really was a sinner.

**It confirmed what I already knew
– I really was a sinner.**

Now, at the age of 30, I was feeling depressed, longing for a clean sheet. Alone at home one evening, I suddenly had an overwhelming sense of Jesus' presence. On my knees, I begged Him to save me from His judgement. I knew immediately that my prayer had been answered; God had forgiven me and I now had that clean sheet.

**... God had forgiven me and I now
had that clean sheet.**

I made a promise to God – that I would do anything He wanted, but hoping that He wouldn't want me to remain a bachelor! He didn't. I was approached by a lady looking for a placement on a farm for her daughter. I was very reluctant, but told her to get back in touch if

she couldn't find a placement elsewhere. She did contact me again and the moment that I set eyes on her daughter, Nicky, I was certain that she would be my wife! Four years later she was!

God has blessed me with a happy marriage, a wonderful family, and with something else that I had set my heart upon – a farm centre, which quickly became a big tourist attraction. And I have had the joy of unexpected time with my family, having received a diagnosis that I might not live beyond 2020. I praise God for His goodness and, most especially, for Jesus.

Here are two verses from a favourite psalm.



*I lift up my eyes to the mountains –
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

*He will not let your foot slip –
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.*

Psalm 121:1-4



CHARLIE'S STORY

Charlie lives in North West England where he practises sheep shearing and dry stone walling, alongside general farm work.

Surely, there cannot be a better place to be raised than on a sheep and cattle farm. My three younger siblings and I had great fun, with plenty of opportunities for mischief. And with my cousins next door, I could always be sure of finding a willing 'partner in crime'.

In reciting the Lord's Prayer at church each week, I asked God to forgive me for 'my trespasses'.

Our parents' faith was evident in all the everyday tasks of life. They expressed their relationship with Jesus so simply and it enriched every area of our family life. When Dad needed God's help – such as with a calving – he would often pause to pray.

As a teenager, I knew that I had to decide whether I really wanted a relationship with Jesus myself. At a camp when I was 17, a speaker emphasised how foolish it was to keep putting off that decision. Despite wanting to become a follower of Jesus, I was foolish that night.

A few days later, I was involved in a car crash. For 24 hours I was deeply troubled by the thought that, if I had died, I would have gone to hell. I couldn't put off the decision any longer. I spoke to my Dad and he helped me to pray to commit my life to Jesus.

... if I had died, I would have gone to hell

That prayer brought me such relief. But it also had an impact on the way I viewed the world. It's difficult to explain, but it seemed as if I was now viewing the world the right way up! And there was another mystery; my

relationship with my father just got better, now that I also had a relationship with Father God in heaven.

**... I was now viewing the world
the right way up!**

As I started training as a sheep shearer, I believed, like many other 17-year-olds, that a trip to New Zealand was an absolute necessity! Or perhaps it was more the thought of the adventure that appealed. In Central North Island, every farm had a purpose-built shearing shed with up to 18 shearing stands. One farm had 14,000 sheep; I had been accustomed to flocks of between 200 and 500 in Lancashire.

200 sheep a day was a significant landmark for us trainee shearers and I gradually built up towards it. One afternoon, when it seemed as though I might finally achieve it, the farmer joined the shearing (and cheering) gang to urge me on. I didn't let them down. Just after 4:30pm, I sheared sheep number 200.

I then faced the bigger challenge – the traditional celebration of drinking two large jars of beer. My fellow shearers, knowing that I had abstained from excessive drinking, put me under even greater pressure! I was

happy to fail this test, retiring after the first jar.

My time in New Zealand was great fun. But the one defining moment of my life was that step of faith on 6th October 2015. The joy of having Jesus in my life will last forever, for it does not depend upon life's changing circumstances. And with it comes real peace, knowing that you are no longer under God's judgement.

The joy of having Jesus in my life will last forever

I do not count myself as a good person. But I know for certain that I am a forgiven person.

These are two favourite Bible verses of mine.



But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:8 and 5:1



ALISON'S STORY

I am a 'farmer' by marriage to James, a fourth generation farmer, who runs an arable farm in Suffolk. Although not involved with the farm day to day, I am equipped to help if needed.

An incident when I was just seven has had a profoundly damaging effect upon me. I found myself as the only girl amongst a group of boys in a shed. I cannot recall exactly what happened between me and two of the boys, one of whom was quite a bit older than me.

I realised, some years later, how

that incident had made me very vulnerable to wanting to please people, leading to unwise decisions.

When I was 16, I decided to leave home. I started work as a dental nurse and soon I had my first taste of the ritual of 'after work drinks'. Surprisingly, it was my first taste of alcohol. It was love at first taste, a love that quickly spiralled out of control.

**... it was my first taste of alcohol.
It was love at first taste ...**

Alongside the clubbing and partying, other things took hold of me. Whilst I loved everything I did, I absolutely hated myself. I started to punish myself. I became obsessed with exercise, and I ate as little as possible, so that I could maximise the drinking.

**Whilst I loved everything I did, I
absolutely hated myself.**

I was under the grip of alcohol for more than ten years. A glimmer of light then appeared, with the arrival of another dentist at the practice, Rebecca. When she announced that she was a Christian, I determined not to let her infect me with any God stuff. But she was

determined to befriend me and she won me over by her genuine care.

Amazingly, I agreed to study the Bible with her, and it set me thinking, 'Might there be a way back from this life?' And yet, I was drinking so heavily that I was barely able to function. Inevitably, my job came to an end.

... it set me thinking, 'Might there be a way back from this life?'

One morning, after one of my very worst benders, I called my Mum. She warned me, 'You need Jesus in your life; otherwise, it will come to an end.' I was ready to admit it. On my knees, I cried out, 'God, if you are real, please sort my life out.'

... I cried out, 'God, if you are real, please sort my life out.'

I really felt that God had heard my prayer when the local vicar invited me to join a mission trip to Uganda. It was an amazing experience, not least because I knew that I belonged within that group and I began to sense that I also belonged to God..

On my return, I embarked on a genuine relationship with Jesus. I started helping with the youth work in the church and I cut down on my drinking. But it would be six years before I was completely free from the addiction.

I was baptised – in the sea – signalling that I was truly a new person. To quote the Bible, I was ‘born again’.

**... I was truly a new person.
... I was ‘born again’.**

Eight years later, I entered the world of farming when James and I were married in Rwanda. We have since made over 20 visits to Africa to help train and mentor church leaders.

We both serve as associate pastors in our church. God is also using me to support women in the sex industry and in addiction and to train others to do the same.

This is a favourite Bible verse.



For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16



PHILL'S STORY

**Phill farms sheep and pigs
on a 180 acre hill farm in
Derbyshire.**

My Christian journey started some 15 years ago when a Land Rover pulled into the farmyard. A lady got out with her son, Sam, who had just finished school. She asked if I could give him a job. I said I would love to but the farm only earned enough for my wages. She replied, 'He does not need paying, he just needs to work.'

So, he came bright and early next morning, and I set him to work instantly. I began to see something in him that I did not, at

the time, understand. He had a tremendous work ethic, he was polite and often spoke about his faith in Jesus Christ. Little did I know at the time, but Sam's witness was the start of my coming to faith. The way that he behaved and spoke was consistent with what he believed. I am reminded of a verse from the Bible: *'In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.'*¹

... Sam's witness was the start of my coming to faith.

I used to take him home at the end of the day and I was often invited in for a cup of tea. His father, Martin, the local Baptist Minister, would speak to me of Jesus and the gospel. This continued for several months. When he gave me a Bible, the thought came to me: I had been casting doubt on the Bible but without having read it. So I started to read it, but I failed to find anything to contradict what Martin was teaching.

... but I failed to find anything to contradict what Martin was teaching.

Our conversations continued for about two years where I was resisting what he was preaching. I was quite stubborn and would not give in. Scripture says, *'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'*²

Several things caused me to soften my attitude. Firstly, with our marriage of 20 years in a bad place, we were thinking of splitting up. Secondly, the farm was not doing well: the sheep trade was not good; the pigs were down in price; we were losing a large amount of rented acreage; and we could not afford to replace ageing machinery.

Finally, with our lives falling apart and at a loss to know what to do, we decided to go to church. And I began to realise that worrying is inconsistent with the Bible's teaching, as it doubts God's sovereignty. Things began to change and in the spring of 2012 we became committed Christians and were baptised.

**... with our lives falling apart ... we
decided to go to church.**

The farm has weathered the storm, and importantly, we

now supply a local farm shop. This has provided us with a more stable environment financially. Our marriage is still holding fast through whatever challenges the Lord throws our way. We are now free from anxiety, as we trust God to meet our needs.

We are both active members of the church and we serve as trustees of Farming Christian Link (FCL). As FCL volunteers, we love to attend agricultural shows, engaging visitors with the gospel and offering literature. We trust that, by God's grace, the Word of God will change lives, as it has ours.

This is one of my favourite Bible verses:



But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33

¹1 Corinthians 9:14 ²James 4:7



SHIRLEY'S STORY

**Shirley and her husband,
Bryan, are beef and sheep
farmers in North
Lancashire.**

Farming has been my life. My parents had a small arable farm and I grew up as a shy country girl. And, whilst we did not attend chapel regularly as a family, I did have some exposure to Christianity from my time at primary school. My best friend, Rachel – still my best friend more than 40 years later! – was brought up to believe that the Bible is true, her father being a preacher. Her simple faith had an impact on me.

Another influence was the wonderful children's story Bible that was read to us at school. The stories of the creation, of Noah's Ark and the flood, of Abraham – and many others – really captivated my imagination. Sadly, we didn't have a Bible in our home.

The (Bible) stories ... really captivated my imagination.

At secondary school, I was quite happy to attend Christian Union meetings – but only when it was cold or wet! I respected my friend and the other CU members for their faith and yet, it did not make any sense to me. After losing touch with Rachel for a while when I left school, I connected again a year or so later and started attending church with her, both the youth club and the Sunday evening services.

As I spent time with this group, most of whom professed to be Christians, I soon realised that their faith actually made a difference to their lives. And it sparked an interest in me to investigate what it actually meant to be a Christian.

I think I always believed that God and Jesus were real and that heaven was a real place. But, as I thought about heaven, I decided that hell must also be a real place. That was a scary thought and I knew that I had to make up my mind about this issue of faith.

... I decided that hell must also be a real place.

I began attending church more regularly and with a greater appetite for learning what the Bible teaches. I was now 19 when, on a Sunday in November 1996, I was confronted with the fact that I was a sinner – not that I was an especially nasty person. I was a sinner, just as everyone else was, because I was living to please myself rather than God. And for that reason, I was not heading for heaven but for hell.

That was a frightening thought. I wasted no time in confessing my sin and asking God to forgive me; I knew that Jesus had died, in my place, so that I could be forgiven. I knew immediately that God had forgiven me; the fear was gone and a wonderful peace now filled me, assuring me that heaven is where I would spend eternity.

I knew immediately that God had forgiven me ...

That is an amazing thought – that one day, I will be with God and Jesus and will be with them forever, and there will be no more pain or tears. But on that day in November 29 years ago, I didn't only secure my future. I began a personal relationship with God who created everything. I find it difficult to grasp that He knows everything about me and loves me and cares for me as though I am His only child.

And He is there for me whenever I need to unload my burdens. I can turn to Him whenever I am finding life stressful or facing a tough decision.

These verses are from a favourite Bible passage of mine.



*The Lord lives! Praise be to my Rock!
Exalted be God my Saviour!
Therefore I will praise you, Lord, among the
nations;
I will sing the praises of your name.*

Psalm 18:46



ROB'S STORY

Rob is a beef, cattle and sheep farmer in Gloucestershire, running a 420 acre farm near to the Cotswold town of Cirencester. The family uprooted from Nottinghamshire to take over the farm in the mid-1990's.

Looking back, I think I may have been expected to continue the farming tradition of at least five generations in our family. Although I never felt under any great pressure to do so, I could not imagine doing anything other than farming.

Being part of the local Methodist church was an important part of life for us as a family. My mother was a Sunday School teacher and local preacher. I embraced the Bible's teaching and accepted for myself the faith of my parents – and of my grandparents.

My faith was challenged as I began studying at agricultural college. I thank God that He kept me from embracing the pleasures that can seem so attractive to students, but which will never satisfy our deepest longings. Rejecting that life, I was able to affirm my faith as a follower of Jesus.

The big event in my life – other than my marriage and the birth of each of our four sons – came in 2018, at the age of 32. It was the news that I had a brain tumour. Surgery followed, and courses of radiotherapy for seven weeks and chemotherapy for 52 weeks. I was very thankful that I was able to trust in God – and still can! I am not sure how I would have coped without my faith.

**I am not sure how I would have
coped without my faith.**

Remarkably, the initial shock – and fear – passed within about a week, leaving me with a wonderful feeling of peace. I was conscious of God clearly speaking to me through worship music, scripture and preaching, telling me that what I was facing would soon pass. The experience drew me into a deeper relationship with Him, my Heavenly Father. As His child, I was reminded that His love for me is far greater than the love any human being could ever show me.

The experience drew me into a deeper relationship with Him (God) ...

One of my favourite psalms assures us of God's care and protection; it tells us:



*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shelter of the Almighty.*

*He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;¹*

Psalm 91:1,4a

This is a wonderful picture of God's children being sheltered like chicks under the wings of the hen.

Many people use the issue of suffering and pain as a reason for refusing to believe in God. A common argument goes like this: 'How can a loving God allow good people to suffer? If God does exist, either He lacks the power to do anything about suffering or He is indifferent to it – He cannot care.'

There are no easy answers to questions like this, and I cannot understand why God chose to heal me, when there are many people He does not heal. But I keep focused on what is fundamental to my faith – Jesus' suffering and why *He* suffered. He was brutally beaten, even before He was hung on the cross to die. And He endured that excruciating death for us, to save us from God's punishment our sin deserves.

And He (Jesus) endured that excruciating death for us ...

And I keep focused, too, on the fact that this life will soon pass. As God's child, I can look forward to the life that awaits me – in heaven with Jesus. There will be no suffering, pain or tears there, and that life will last forever.

THE CHOICE WE FACE



All who have shared their stories in this booklet acknowledge how their life has been changed by their faith in Jesus. That is true for me too. Let me explain a little bit more about Jesus and what the Bible teaches.

Of course, Jesus was no ordinary man when He was born into the world just over 2,000 years ago. He was human and, like us, became hungry and tired, and



experienced the same emotions, such as sadness, loneliness and joy.

But He was also divine; He was both God and man, for He came to earth as the Son of God. This meant that He was totally different from us in two respects. Firstly, He had extraordinary power: for example, to use five loaves and two fishes to feed a crowd of more than 5,000; to turn water into wine; and to calm a storm. Secondly, He lived a perfect life – not even an evil thought ever entered His mind.

He (Jesus) was both God and man ...

How different we are. From the day we were born, we have had the capacity to 'sin'. My son reminds me of that with his tantrums when he cannot have his own way. That sinful nature will remain with him – and with us all – until we die. We mustn't fall into the trap of thinking that we are 'good people', simply by comparing ourselves with others. God measures us against His standard of absolute holiness. And no one, apart from Jesus, will ever meet that standard.

God measures us against His standard of absolute holiness.

Our sin separates us from God. And that is the very reason Jesus came into the world. He came to deal with the problem of our sin, to make it possible for us to have that relationship with God that He longs for.

He (Jesus) came to deal with the problem of our sin.

The Bible uses a number of illustrations from farming. One is a prophecy given about 700 years before Jesus' birth: *'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have*



turned, everyone, to his own way; ...[†] No one can deny the truth of this. Just like sheep who are always looking to wander from the care of their shepherd, we also wander away from God and His laws and protection, preferring to please ourselves.

But the second part of that prophecy explains how God has dealt with our problem of sin. It tells us, '*... the Lord has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all.*'[†] That prophecy was fulfilled 2,000 years ago when Jesus was crucified. In dying, Jesus took the punishment for my sin and yours. As that verse says, our iniquity (sin) was laid upon Jesus, allowing God to accept us as clean, with no blemish of sin, and so declare us 'not guilty'. This is the choice we face; will we accept or reject Jesus' offer?

This is the choice we face; will we accept or reject Jesus' offer?

On my farm, the first task of my day reminds me of what God has done for us. I visit the cow shed to scrape out the muck and filth and push it through slats into the tank below, leaving the floor clean – if not spotless!

For me, this is a great picture of God shifting the muck in our lives on to Jesus. I don't like to think that there is any muck in my life, but the Bible tells us that, to God, *'all our righteous acts are like filthy rags'*².

Jesus was raised from the dead and, later, returned to heaven to be with His Father. One day He will come back to earth as judge – to judge everyone who has ever lived. There will be no warning of His return; we are told that He will come like a *'thief in the night'*³.

One day He (Jesus) will come back to earth as judge ...

Our 'good works' will count for nothing; only whether we have been forgiven. This alone will determine whether

we spend eternity with God in heaven, or face His wrath, and eternal punishment.

We can be sure that God will welcome us if we:

- 1 admit our sin and accept that we deserve to be punished
- 2 believe that Jesus died to take the punishment Himself
- 3 confess the wrong things in our life and repent of them; that is, turn away from our wrong thoughts and behaviours
- 4 choose to live to please God as a follower of Jesus

If you are ready to take this step, you can do so now by using this prayer.

Dear Father God,

I admit that I am like the sheep who wanders away from the shepherd. Like that sheep, I have turned my back on You, preferring to go my own way and choosing to live the way I want to live.

I am sorry. Please forgive me. I realise the choice I have to make and I now choose to start living to please You. I accept that is only possible because You sent Jesus to take the punishment that I deserve.

Thank You, Jesus, for dying for my sins.

Amen

If you have prayed this prayer and been sincere, God welcomes you into His family as His child. You are a new person; all your sins are forgiven.

Don't worry if you do not feel any different. It is important not to rely on our feelings but on God's promises in the Bible.

You will need support as you begin this new life. If you know someone who is a true follower of Jesus, ask them to help you.

If you are not ready to make a decision, please do not close your mind to what is the most important issue we all have to face; it will be too late when Jesus returns from heaven. We do not know when that will be.

If you have any questions, I encourage you to speak to a Christian you know or contact Farming Christian Link.

I have never regretted the decision I made, in 2017, to repent of my sin and accept God's forgiveness through trusting Jesus Christ. If you decide to trust Jesus yourself, as I do hope you will, I know you will never regret it either.

May God bless you.

Matthew Fawcett

Trustee, Farming Christian Link - June 2025

¹Isaiah 53:6, ²Isaiah 64:6, ³1 Thessalonians 5:1-3



The work of Farming Christian Link began in 1934 (although known then as the Farmers Christian Postal Service).

It was established to reach people in farming and rural communities in the UK with the core message of the Bible, which is summarised in this one verse.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

FCL remains committed to that same purpose today, declaring that same message of God's love and how He



demonstrated it by sending His Son, Jesus, to die for the sins of us all. Now, FCL's primary means of achieving that is through attending many of the agricultural, country and other shows held throughout the year.

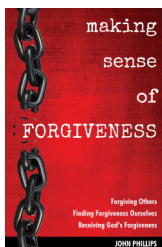
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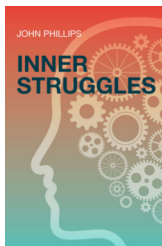


BeaconLight equips Christians worldwide to know
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Making Sense of Forgiveness

The book explains what it really means to forgive and includes many stories of how victims of serious crimes have been able to forgive. It also suggests how we should seek forgiveness ourselves when we have hurt others.



Inner Struggles

This little book uses verses from the Bible as a means of offering hope and comfort to those who recognise their need of God's help in their struggles.



The Hug

A giveaway booklet for people who feel trapped by life. A little story of hope, with a hug in the middle and a home at the end.



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FARMING LIVES

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JOHN PHILLIPS

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