



Faith, confidence and the Bible

Paul S Williams, CEO Bible Society

14 March 2024

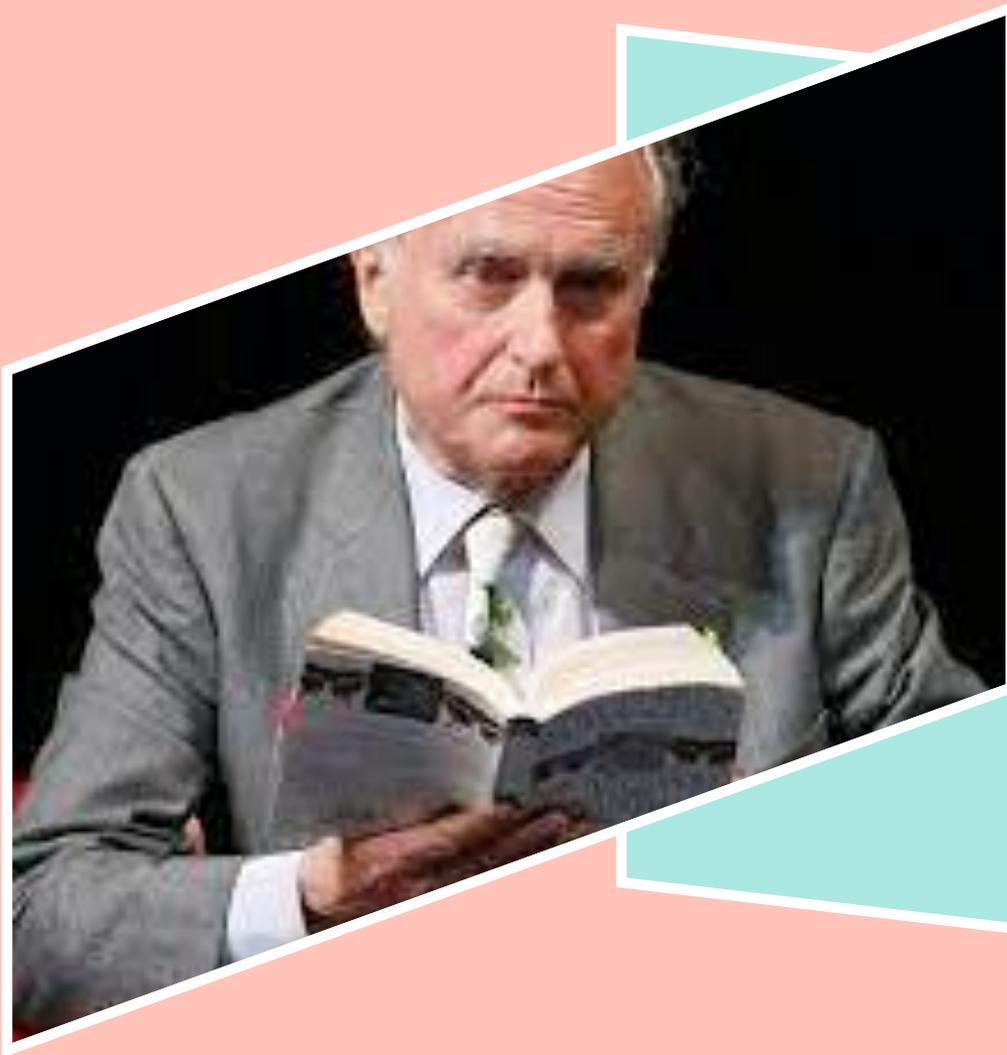
Bishops Study Day, Craven Arms

GROWING TOGETHER
Year of Faith 2024





What is faith?



“Faith, being belief that
isn't based on evidence,
is the principal vice of
any religion ...

RICHARD DAWKINS, “IS SCIENCE A
RELIGION?” *THE HUMANIST*, 1997 –
EMPHASIS ADDED



The Bible on Faith...

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.”

Hebrews 11:1-2

“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.”

James 2:19

“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Hebrews 11:6



The Promise of Faith



The Promise of Faith...

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.

⁶ Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you **which path to take.**”

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

“And **whatever you ask** in prayer,
you will receive, if you have faith.”

Matthew 21:22 (ESV)

“The fear of the LORD is the
beginning of **knowledge**,
but fools despise wisdom and
instruction..” Proverbs 1:7 (NIV)

“For it is by God's grace that **you
have been saved** through faith.”

Ephesians 2:8 (GNB)

“...take up the shield of faith, with which
you can **extinguish all the flaming arrows
of the evil one.**” Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)

“**For our life is a matter of faith, not of sight.**”

2 Corinthians 5:7 (GNB)

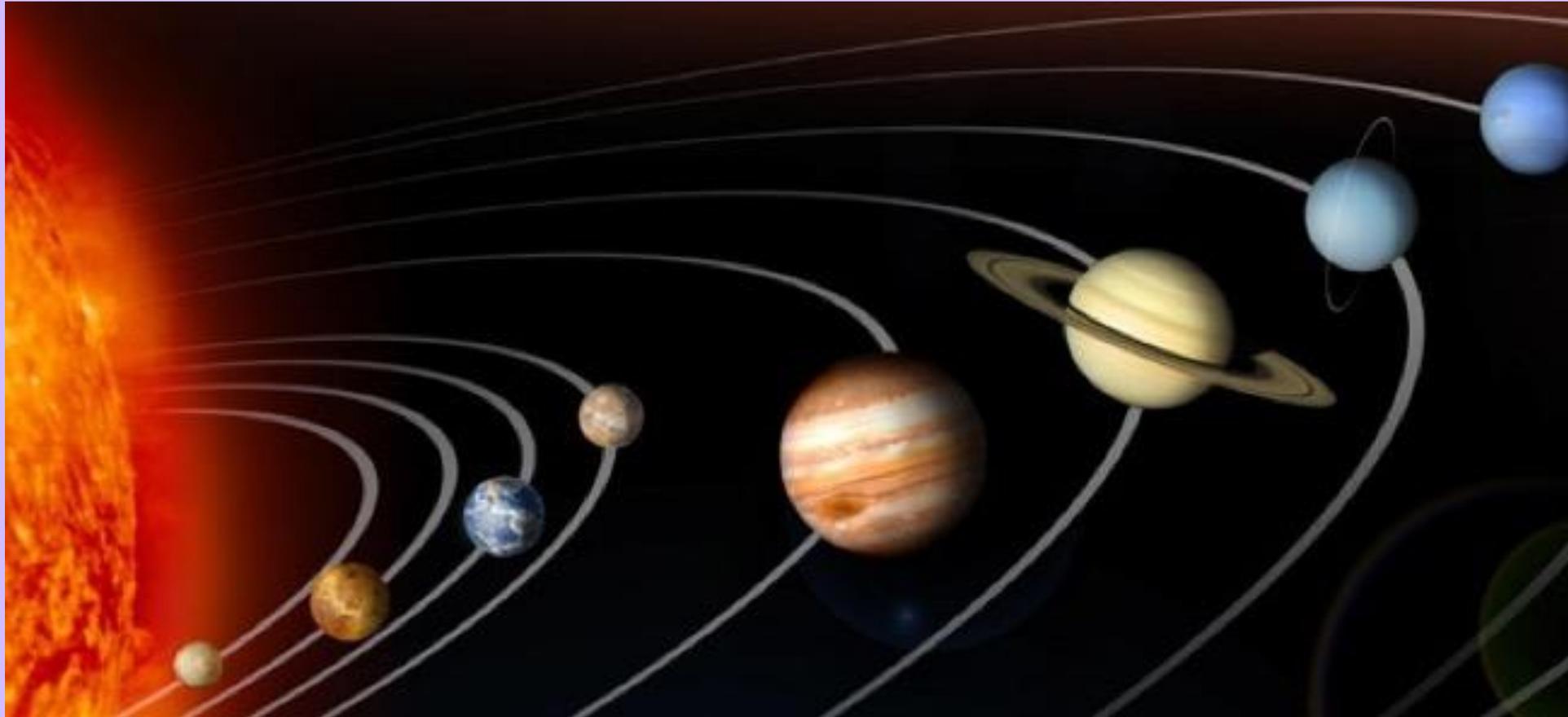


The Challenge of Faith

Our context is exile



The Bible: the Story that held us together



"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." C.S. Lewis

Western societies are fragmenting



“All the [spheres of knowledge] move like planets round the sun of God’s truth, and if they left their course they would soon be hurled back into chaos.”

E. Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, c1854

Exile



Exile – to be separated from one’s place of belonging

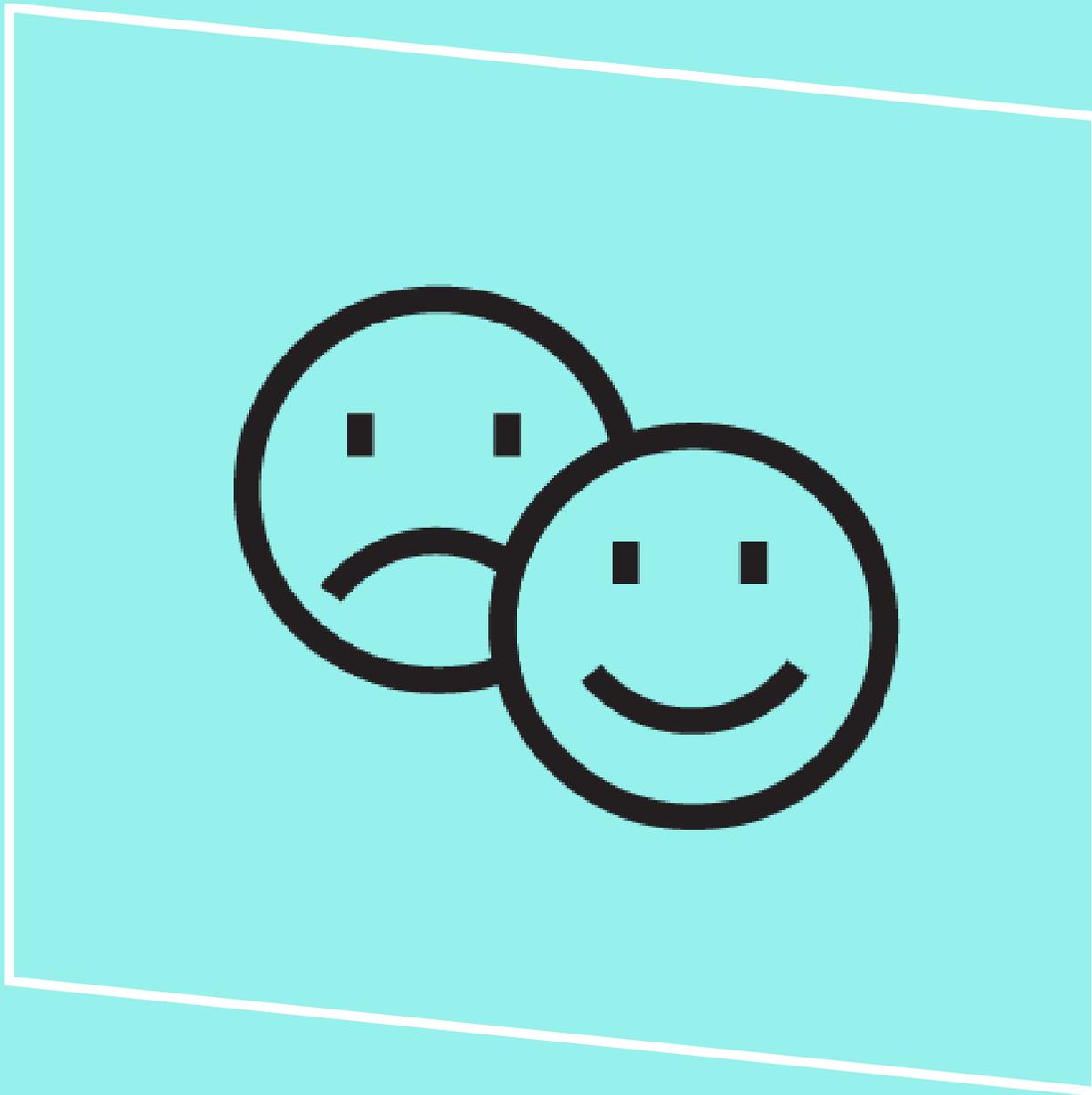
Cultural Dissonance

- the experience of refugees, migrants and exiles
- an uncomfortable sense of discord, confusion, or conflict experienced by people in the midst of change in their cultural environment

The Temptations of Exile



- Assimilate to the culture
- Withdraw to the ghetto
- Participate as a visitor or tourist



**What does it
feel like to
be ...**

A blurred background of a church service with people raising their hands and a large screen in the distance.

... a church
leader?



44%

of leaders thought their churches were effective in discipleship and mission

EIDO RESEARCH



Barriers:

- **Lack of people**
‘there’s not many of us, and we’re stretched and tired’
- **Apathy**
‘general sense of apathy, lack of commitment, and reluctance’

EIDO RESEARCH



... to be a Christian
in contemporary
society?





*Can the Church recover
a proper confidence in the gospel
in the midst of contemporary culture?*

From Alien to Ambassador



“Highly recommended.”—TIM KELLER

PAUL S. WILLIAMS

EXILES ON MISSION

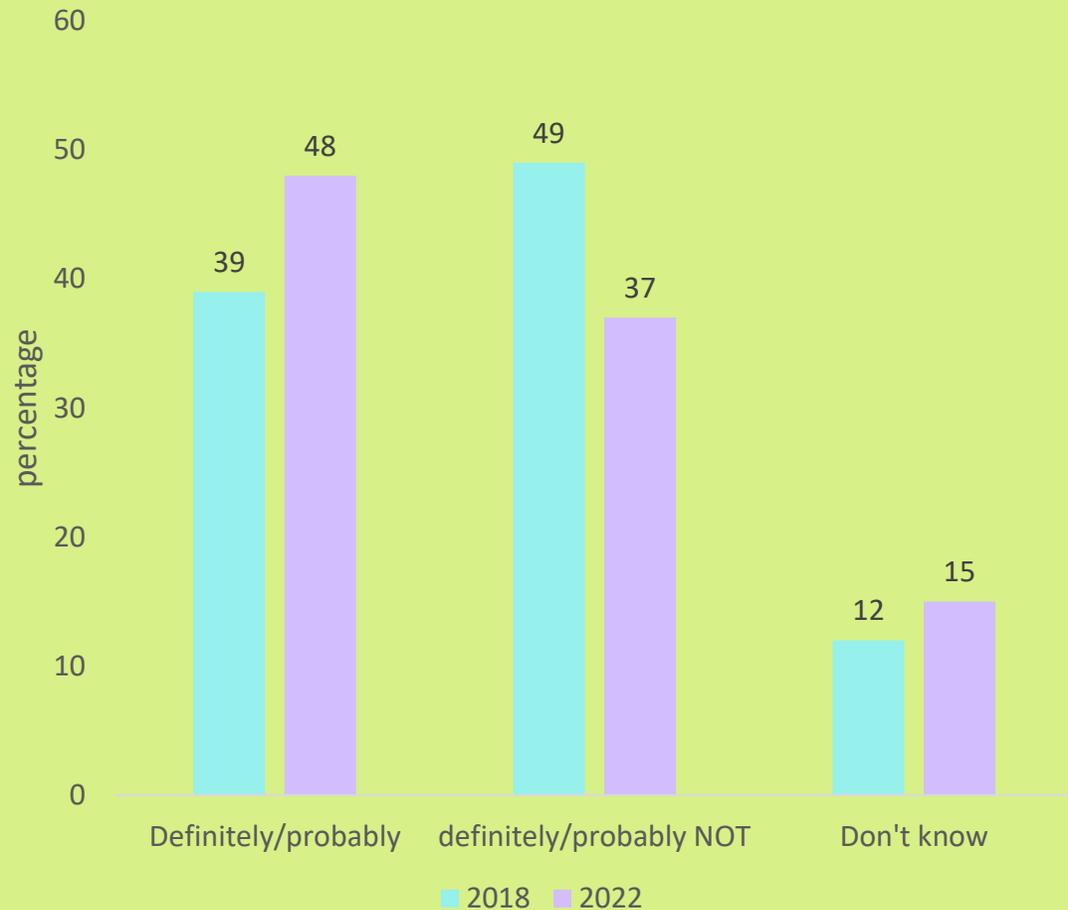
How Christians Can Thrive in a Post-Christian World



“There are several different ways of being a stranger in a foreign land.

- **Alien** - feels resentful and trapped - prone to anger and fear. This is the culture of the ghetto.
- Visitor or **tourist** - feels detached from the issues of contemporary culture. This keeps us aloof from being involved.
- **Ambassador** – knows that this experience is no accident because you feel commissioned – sent on purpose knowing that God is with us and for us..”

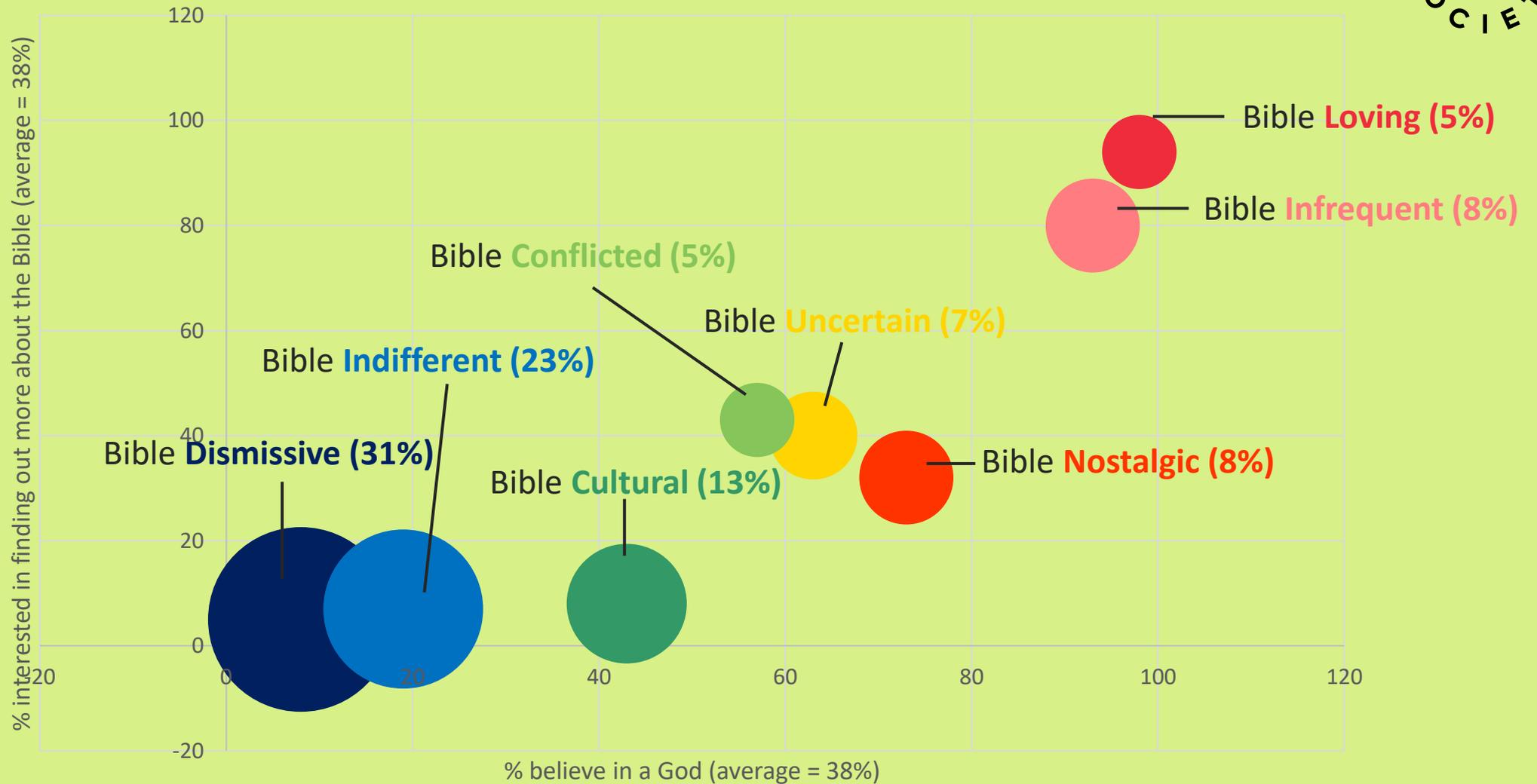
Belief in God – shift away from unbelief

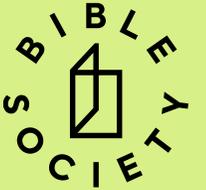


Which one of the following best describe your belief?

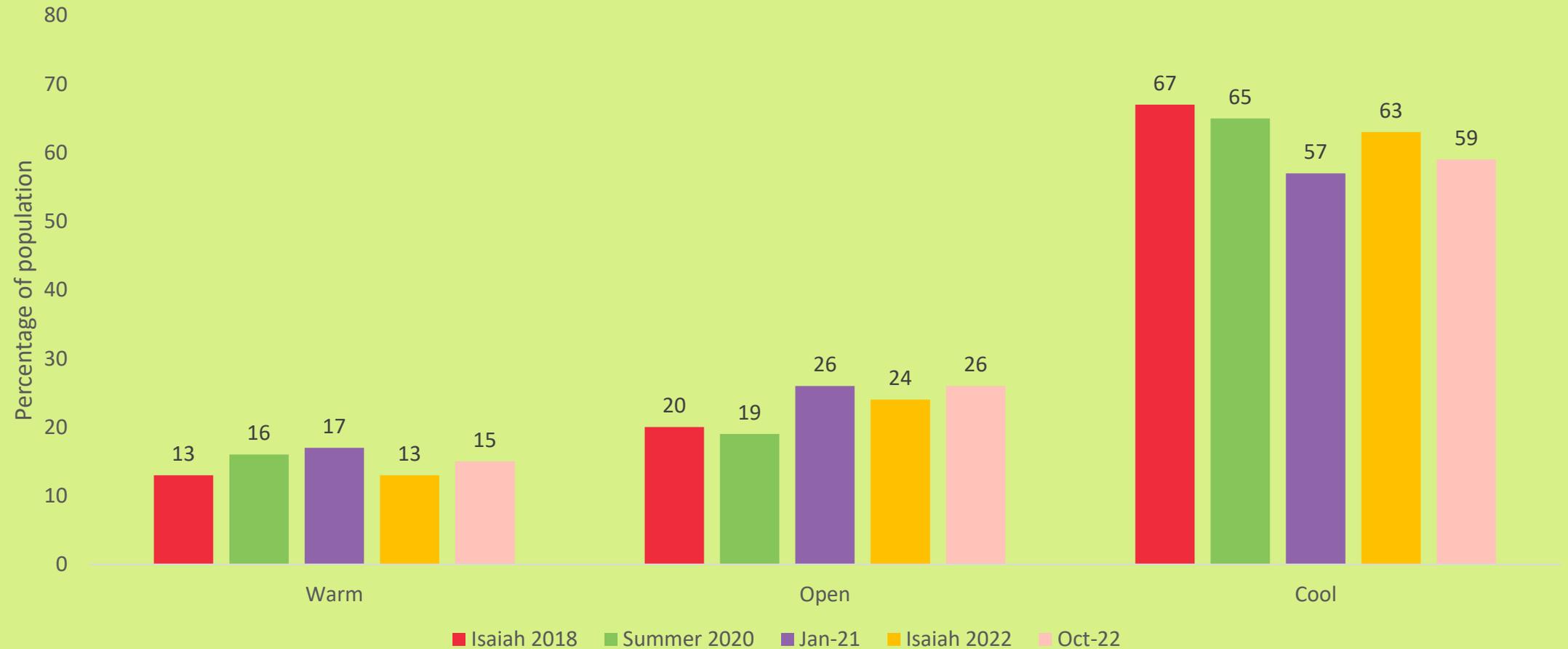
- There is definitely a God/gods or some ‘higher power’
- There is probably a God/gods or some ‘higher power’
- There is probably NOT a God/gods or some ‘higher power’
- There is definitely NOT a God/gods or some ‘higher power’
- Don’t know

Eight Mission Audiences





Mission Audiences are getting warmer...



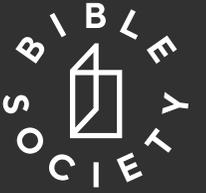
lumino.bible



The Challenge of Faith

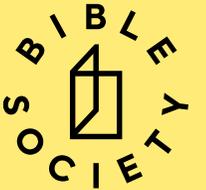


What words do people use to describe the Bible?

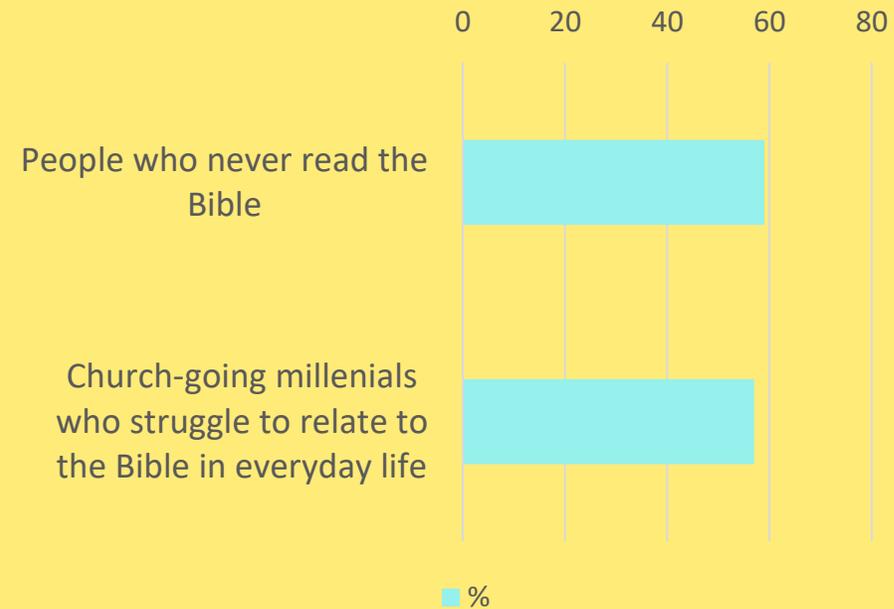


Anti-women
Boring Comforting
Homophobic
Complex Rule_book
Protection Useful Hope
Contradictory
Violent Big Truth Relevant
Outdated
Cohesive
Judgmental
Guidance Inspiring
Wisdom Overwhelming
Confusing
Challenging

We have fought over the Bible...



Proportion of...



...and then forgotten it

Why does it matter? – Humanity’s Spiritual Superfood



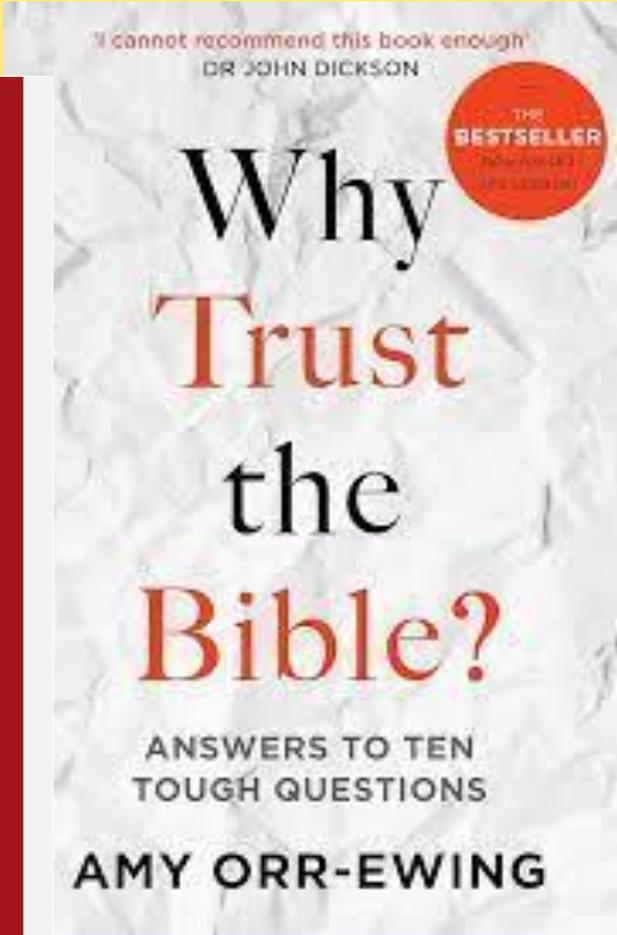
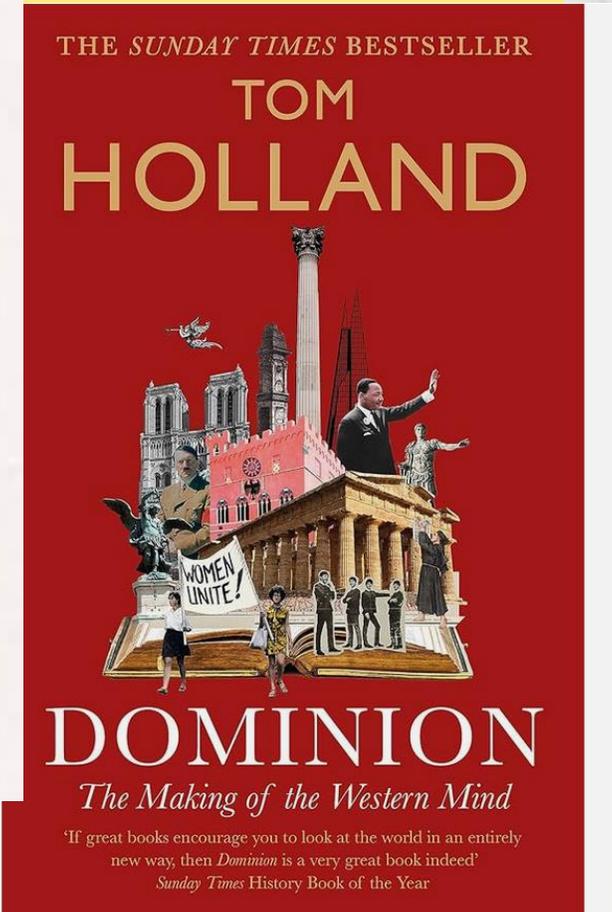
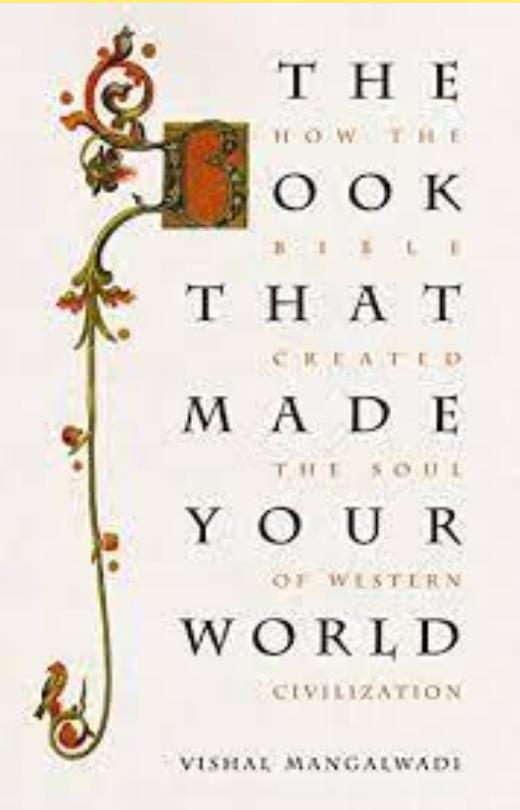
Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’ (Matthew 4.4)

How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
(Psalm 119.103)

Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’ (John 6.35)



Recommended Resources....





The Challenge of Faith

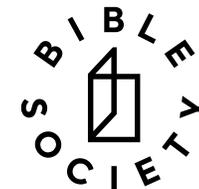
A black and white photograph of a man's face, showing him crying with his eyes closed and a pained expression. The photo is tilted and has a white border.

Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in
vain have I washed my hands in innocence.
All day long I have been plagued; I have
been punished every morning.

PSALM 73: 13-14



How do we grow faith?



Context – “If the world hates you keep in mind that it hated me first.” (John 15:18)

Bible – “Did God really say...?” (Ge 3:1)

Suffering – “In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33)

Faith is relational - “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17)

Relationships need time – Prayer and Bible meditation are vital

Faith acts! – “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Gal 5:6b)

Address doubts - “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24)

Ask for more! - The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5)





Thank you