

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 3 Issue 8

January 8, 2023

## Q & A (I've Got Questions)



I like to think of myself as a life-long learner. And I believe that my motivation to learn is only one of the many blessings that God chose to give me. I learn something new every day.

One of the downsides to learning is discovering that I was wrong about something I thought was true. Fortunately, this isn't an everyday occurrence. Nevertheless, it happens enough that when I find out I was actually right about something, I'm sometimes skeptical that I may be missing something.

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EVERYONE  
HAVE A  
WONDERFUL  
AND SAFE  
WEEK!



## The Force (What is belief?)



Luke Skywalker had to learn to harness the power of the force to become a Jedi Knight. The force was a mysterious, omnipresent spirit that connected Luke to the collective power of the galaxy. Unfortunately, the force could be harnessed for both good and evil.

George Lucas, the creator of the Star Wars franchise, stated that the force "evolved out of various developments of character and plot." Lucas claims his goal was to create a concept familiar to several religions based on the premise that God exists.

The force succeeded as a common primitive desire to access a power greater than the challenges we face. The force itself had no moral compass. Instead, it was raw

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energy that exists because we exist. Not surprisingly, however, only a small number of characters can tap into the power of the force whose characters evolve into superheroes and villains.

Ironically, in return, the force directed the actions of those granted supernatural power, implying that the force had a will of its own. However, what's behind the will of the force remains a mystery.

Meanwhile, outside cinema fantasy, we catch a glimpse of power similar to the force.

For example, an attacker using a large knife injured three police officers on New Year's Eve. This attack caught my attention and started my exploration down memory lane of the force. Law enforcement's investigation uncovered that the attacker targeted police officers in response to influences motivated by a radical religious group.

My mind constructed a connection between using religious beliefs to motivate harm toward others and the concept of the force. This helped me rationalize how religious leaders conclude that God empowers them to perpetrate violence against others.

In this case, I'm not referring to a domesticated version of the

force coming out of the creative genius of George Lucas. However, the results of individuals assessing this force are projected in spectacular scenes for our viewing pleasure. Instead, this force is more powerful and deadly. And it has been used for centuries by humans to manipulate others to commit acts offensive to God.

Admittedly, I'm not bothered by the language of the force depicted in Star Wars, even in a religious context. After all, there are a few similarities between the force in Star Wars, the real world, and the Holy Spirit of God. In all of these cases, we're made aware of the connectedness between us. I see this as a starting point that is healthier than isolationism.

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about our role as Christians and my role as a religious leader in public discourse about violence. I admire the clergy who lead protests that speak out against systems that perpetuate violence. The violence of racism is particularly deadly and harms both the privileged and the victims.

But what is going on in the churches located in Russia? Are the religious leaders finding a way to justify the heinous actions of the Russian political leaders? Reuters reported that the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, supported the war against Ukraine and called for church leaders and members to

support Putin in the murdering of innocent civilians. Of course, he used "church" language that sanitized and justified brutality.

Is this utilizing the force for evil? I can't make any rational connection to God's will. I don't want to be associated with a church led by an individual justifying murder, regardless of their argument.

Similarly, religious leaders claiming that God condones terrorism seem more connected to the force of evil than to divine power.

The force is a human-made construct that captures the motivations of any seeking to wield power beyond human ability. While this may be a starting point for conversations about belief in God, the force won't take us very far into the truth of God.

The Bible has its own depiction of a divine Force with supernatural power. And tapping into this Force also begins with the belief that God exists. But there is more to it than simply acknowledging God exists.

In the Letter of James, we're reminded that even demons believe there is only One God. But their head knowledge creates fear within them. Fear rather than humility and resentment more so than awe.

In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom  
Sylvia Pittman  
Chris Freeman  
Richard Oram



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux  
Norma Buzzard

2022 LOCAL CHURCH REPORT TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE IS DUE SOON...

This report is due January 30th. I need the reports in to me by January 26th so I have enough time to go over them and email them to District Office before the 30th.

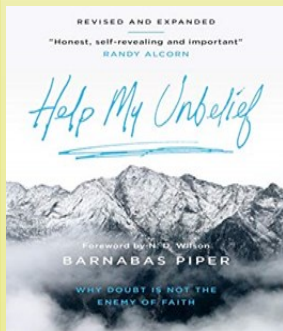
Connie

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PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom, but we are also gathering in the Asbury Library Conference Room at 12Noon every Wednesday, unless otherwise noted.

Please call the Church Office for more information, as things could change (810-235-0016).



This month's book series is called "Help My Unbelief" by Barnabas Piper. It is based on his personal journey, what faith really means. Join us each Wednesday

**COMING UP THIS WEEK  
JANUARY 9 – JANUARY 15**

- Jan 9 Mon 6:00pm Worship Team Meeting
- Jan 10 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm Food Distribution
- Jan 11 Wed 11Am-12Noon Food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen (no appts needed)  
12Noon Pastor Book Club
- Jan 12 Thu
- Jan 13 Fri
- Jan 14 Sat
- Jan 15 Sun 10:30am  
New Beginnings  
Contemporary Worship

(We are live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).)

## Upcoming Worship Series

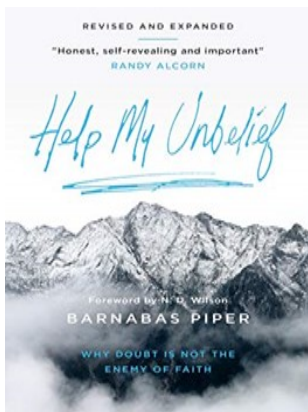


I'm fascinated by science. Unfortunately, my struggles with math limited how far I could progress. Nevertheless, I chose the science of computers as my field of study but focused on utilizing their power in business. Less math was required, and the demand was high. The problem for me was that I enjoyed the company of people more than machines.

Somewhere along the way, I moved further away from God. It was not the fault of science or technology, and I never thought of my situation as not believing. I never stopped believing God created science, scientist, and computer nerds. Nor did I find evidence in science that the universe came from somewhere other than God.

## Book Club News

We completed our series and discussions on *The Wonder of*



*Christmas*. This series was written and produced by the Skit Guys as an Advent worship se-

ries, and we adapted their content for our use.

As we move into 2023, our first book deals with a subject familiar to every believer. Unbelief is often an under-acknowledged condition of our hearts. And instead of dealing with our unbelief, we choose hypocrisy as an easier road to travel. In other words, what we do is different from what we believe.

means. In doing so, he explains how embracing doubts and questions can help us to get to know God better. His aim is to help us trust God in our everyday lives, even when we don't understand everything we may want to know.

This book encourages us to ask God the hard questions that stand between us and let go of our doubts. Leaving us with the confidence to trust God, even when some questions remain. Initially published in 2015, his revised and updated edition includes biographical stories about Afshin Ziafat, C.S. Lewis, and John Piper.

## Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor & Exec Dir
Connie Portillo	Office Manager
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Exec Chef & Dir Opers
Mike Sampson	Farms Manager
Chris Freeman	South Campus Bldg Mgr
Israel Unger	Finance Director
Kim Sims	Connections Suprv
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Katelin Maylum	Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods
	South Flint Soup Kitchen

In his book, *Help My Unbelief*, Barnabas Piper shares, based on his personal journey, what faith really

## Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony, Mirium	Welcome Team
Anthony, Jim	Ushers
Jonathon, Terrance	Production Team
Miriam	Children
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Christine & Norma	Cafe

One reviewer writes this:

## Upcoming Worship Series *...cont from pg 4*

Instead, it was a matter of shifting priorities. God became less important than my ambitions. I tried to keep this shift a secret while not realizing that it's obvious when this happens. And God knows long before we realize it ourselves.

Scripture is full of stories about this happening to people. The results are never good. However, God does not give up on anyone. Some of us are slow learners, and it takes a lifetime to figure it out. Sadly, too many never do and miss out on the joy that accompanies trusting God with everything.

Our new series is based on a book by Barnabas Piper titled *Help My Unbelief*. In his book, he shares his personal journey with doubt and unbelief. And you and I gain insight into what faith really means.

The book title comes from a story found in the Gospel of Mark. A man brings his son, hoping to find a cure for his son's convulsions. When Jesus confronts the man about whether he genuinely believed that his son could be healed, the man asks Jesus, "I do believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:14-29).

It turns out that embracing doubts and questions can help us to get to know God better. So our hope for this series is that each of us will come to trust God in our everyday lives. Even when we don't understand everything we may want to know.

Fortunately, God never gives up on us. N. D. Wilson writes in his forward for the book that "When we cannot see, we are still seen." Jesus searches for the lost in the same way a Shepherd never gives up until a lost sheep is found.

We kick off 2023 with a dive into a struggle that is common to all believers, doubt. Few of us call our condition unbelief. But our unwillingness to be honest with ourselves does not change reality. Until and unless we fully trust God with every aspect of our lives, unbelief has a grip on us.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes on our [YouTube channel](#). We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](#) at [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy

Barnabas Piper. *Help My Unbelief: Why doubt is not the enemy of faith*. © Barnabas Piper, 2020. Charlotte : The Good Book Company.

Knowing this reality, I've concluded that there may be some things I believe to be true about God that isn't true. This is a problem if there is a test that I'll need to pass before entering heaven. Fortunately, one of my beliefs is that there isn't an actual test. So perhaps, instead of a test, I'll experience Jesus having a belly laugh over some of my more outrageous beliefs that God finds particularly humorous.

This is the nature of belief as I've come to experience it. How about you? Do you have doubts about what you believe to be true about God?

According to his book, *Help My Unbelief*, Barnabas Piper has a few. And as a pastor and son of a pastor, I'm impressed at the questions he is willing to ask God. Some are the same as mine. But I still have questions about some of the beliefs he seems to take for granted.

One agreement we have in particular is about the Bible. We both believe God reveals precisely what God chooses to reveal in scripture. No more and no less. And scripture leaves us with more questions than answers. So why didn't God choose to tell us more?

While unsure of the answer, my guess begins with a question. Where would God stop if not where scripture stops? How many words would it take for God to fully disclose an infinite subject? Although I admit that math isn't my strongest subject, I'm pretty sure the answer is also infinite.

And I believe that God's nature continues to be revealed. However, our interpretations are imperfect and, a lot of times, downright wrong. But I believe God wants us to keep trying, which means we should never stop asking questions.

Barnabas reveals that his book's title comes from a story in Mark's Gospel. In the story, a man hopes that Jesus can heal his son. His son may have suffered from a condition beyond medical knowledge at the time. Nevertheless, the writer describes the boy's condition as possessed by an evil spirit.

Whether you believe in evil spirits is not the main point I want to highlight in this story. Jesus detected skepticism in the father's request when he added the qualification, "If you can?"

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." Is this the essence of what it means to believe? That anything and everything is possible? If so, I've got a way to go with my belief.

**"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief!"**

**Mark 9:23-24**

We read that in response to Jesus' comment, the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help my unbelief!"

Elsewhere in scripture, we learn that belief of the caliber that Jesus referred to is a divine gift. But, as much as we may want to believe, we simply can't on our power. Even if we spend a lifetime studying scripture, become fluent in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic, and graduate from seminary. We are not able to fully trust God without God's help.

Life Group Questions & Notes:

My friends, what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith if your actions do not prove it?... Do you believe that there is only one God? Good! The demons also believe...

James 2:14-20

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

Handwriting lines for notes.


QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

- 1. Read James 2:14-20. Do you find what James has to say troubling? If so, why? We also claim that salvation comes from belief in Jesus Christ — is James disputing this claim or supporting it? Explain. In what ways do your actions reflect your belief or unbelief?
2. Read this week's article titled The Force. Even if you've never seen one of the Star Wars movies you should be able to identify with the idea of a mystical power greater than the problems we're facing. How is the Holy Spirit an example of the Force (capital "F") for you? Is violence ever justified? When? Does my choice of separating the force (small "f") that religious leaders use to justify violence as a way to separate their claims from God's will agree with your view of God's intentions?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you to be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.

“Feed Flint”







A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

**Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.**

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting:  
[flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate](https://flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate)



January South Flint Soup  
Kitchen Food Giveaways

January 11th & 25th  
11am - Noon

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED FOR  
FOOD EVER!

South Flint Soup Kitchen

3410 Fenton Road  
3 blocks north of Atherton  
Flint, MI 48507

Questions? Call 810-239-3427





**ASBURY FARM FRESH**

**- TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10.00 -**

**SIGN UP FOR A FREE ASBURY FARMS ACCOUNT TODAY**

**AND**

Receive a \$15 credit on your account for your first purchase

**CREATE YOUR OWN VEGGIE BOX**

Select what goes in your box from each week's harvest. Get \$5 off your next order when you fill your box with \$15 of produce.

**WANT US TO DECIDE FOR YOU?**

Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. **A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.**

**\* CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN \***

Too often our struggles with doubt are hidden, pushed into the back of the cupboard like a corrosive agent that is too dangerous to touch. With clarity, warmth, and candor, Barnabas Piper shows us that doubt does not have to be something that corrodes, but rather in its right place can be something that strengthens faith. -Mark Sayers (07/01/2015).

Barnabas Piper is a pastor, author, podcaster, and speaker who lives near Nashville, Tennessee, with his family. He writes regularly for *He Reads Truth* and blogs at [BarnabasPiper.com](http://BarnabasPiper.com). Rev Piper has authored several books and Bible studies. In addition, he co-hosts *The Happy Rant* podcast, a popular show discussing issues of faith and culture in a light-hearted, humorous manner.

I invite you to join us each Sunday for worship as we explore belief, faith, doubt, and unbelief. We will dig deeper into these subjects each Wednesday as we read Piper's book together.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away, I encourage you to join us via Zoom for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others say by calling (929) 436-2866 -- enter the meeting ID, 282 039 5568#.

We are a diverse group and are delighted when new people join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy

*The Wonder of Christmas*. An Advent worship series written and produced by © Skit Guys, 2022. Used with Permission.

Barnabas Piper. *Help My Unbelief: Why doubt is not the enemy of faith*. © Barnabas Piper, 2020.  
Charlotte : The Good Book Company

And there's more. Just like the proof that the force is assessable to a Jedi, our belief in the presence of the Holy Spirit is also evident. Again, James weighs in on the evidence when he writes, "My friends, what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith (belief) if your actions do not prove it?" (James 2:14).

My friends; what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith if your actions do not prove it?

James 2:14

According to [StarWars.com](http://StarWars.com), "While the Force can grant users powerful abilities, it also directs their actions. And it has a will of its own, which both scholars and mystics have spent millennia seeking to understand."

Throughout history, believers have written thousands of opinions, articles, sermons, and books that help explain how and why the Holy Spirit yields power. And we're still searching, asking, and being surprised by God.

I invite you to tap into the Force by bringing your doubts, questions, and unbelief to God. Of course, you do this through study and prayer. But I've found that the actions of the Spirit really stir us when we worship. Something about the music, the message, and the people coming together invite the Holy Spirit into our lives that nothing else can accomplish.

I invite you to join us for worship. And if you have a prayer request you can submit your request online on our website [home page](#). In addition, prayer request forms are located around the church and during water and food giveaways.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org).

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The farm's new twist on a  
CSA Food Box!!!!

Bring home only the veggies you love!

Want more information??

Email: [kelly.jewett@outlook.com](mailto:kelly.jewett@outlook.com)



We were stoked to be kicking off our very first Asbury Farms Sliding Scale Food Box Program last week! Get the most local, organic, delicious produce!! Grown on the East Side!

Pick what veggies you want, how much you want and pay what you can between \$12.00 — \$24.00.

Every Saturday from 11:00am to 1:00pm

1601 Jane Ave Flint MI



Look for the big banner  
that says "SALE" ...

Fortunately, the gift of belief is available to everyone who asks.

Once we run out of questions. Once we run out of options. And when we finally surrender our lives wholly and entirely to God, we receive the gift of belief.

I invite you to join us for worship. And if you have a prayer request you can submit your request online on our website [home page](#). In addition, prayer request forms are located around the church and during water and food giveaways.

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FLINT ASBURY WATER BOX IS IN FULL OPERATION  
SERVING FRESH WATER – PLEASE JOIN US  
ON TUESDAYS FOR A 5 OR 2.5 GALLON OF WATER.  
STOP BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 10:00AM AND 1:00PM.



COMING SOON FLINT ASBURY DELICIOUS AND WHOLESOME MEAL KITS!!!

STAY TUNE ...

WILL POST MORE IN

OUR WEEKLY ASBURY

CIRCUIT RIDER!!





# First Saturdays at the Farm

Sliding Scale Veggie Sale

\$12-\$24 per 3-4lbs  
Pay what you can

HEALTH IS  
WEALTH.

Music by DJ lei lei

Farm Tour

Learn: Asbury's winterizations  
techniques

Asbury Farms

1601 Jane Ave  
12.00am - 3.00pm

QnA w/Experienced Horticulturists

Kid Stuff

Juggling and magic!!  
Cozy up with a cup of hot cocoa

More Details@ [facebook.com/AsburyFarmsFlint](https://www.facebook.com/AsburyFarmsFlint) events