

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 4 Issue 9

Hellfire (Divine Mercy)



Mustafa Kilic

Country singer Rodney Atkins in his hit song, "Going Through Hell," suggests, "Keep on going, don't slow down, if you're scared don't show it. You might get out before the devil even knows you're there."

Supposedly, a Winston Churchill quote inspired his song. "If you're going through hell, keep going." And an old Irish toast, "May you be in heaven five minutes before the devil knows you're dead." *Page 2*

Heaven (Rabbit Holes)



Brett Sayles

It makes little sense that a pastor should struggle to find what to say about heaven. After all, heaven is our ultimate goal, our reward and God's promise for eternal life free from pain. It simply does not make sense.

This week's message finds support from chapter four of

Adam Hamilton's book. But I needed more.

I'm thankful for Lewis Carol's *Alice in Wonderland*. Her classic serves well for conundrums like heaven, and one of the many life lessons from her book includes the idiom "down the rabbit hole."

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JUNE 9, 2024

EVERYONE
HAVE A
WONDERFUL
WEEKEND!

DONATE

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Hellfire (Divine Mercy)

cont. from pg 1

For some, hell represents those times when nothing goes our way. For others, hell is a place of divine punishment where bad people go after death. Regardless, I think most of us agree hell is not the place we want to be. Whether there is really hellfire, there is nothing about hell that sounds pleasant.

Hell does not specifically appear in the Old Testament. Instead, God doled out divine punishment in one's lifetime and passed onto progeny (think climate change). Although Daniel offers this insight, "Many of those who have already died will live again: some will enjoy eternal life, and some will suffer eternal disgrace" (Daniel 12:2).

In the gospels, we read Jesus used an Aramaic word translated into Greek as Geenna. In English, it's translated as hell. Geenna referred to a garbage dump, south of Jerusalem, where a fire constantly burned, known as Gehenna of fire. Elsewhere, Jesus used more descriptive phrases to describe what happens when we turn against God.

So who goes to hell?

The late C. S. Lewis said, "The doors of hell are locked on the inside." Staying in Geenna may ultimately be a choice. But John tells us that Jesus came to save rather than condemn humankind.

For many, salvation comes only to those who specifically ask Jesus for grace and acknowledging Him as God's only Son. Everyone else, according to their logic, goes to Geenna, which they presume is correctly translated as hell.

But what about children who never reach an age where they're able to ask Jesus for grace? What about adults whose cognitive abilities limit their understanding? What about persons unable to talk? What about persons abused by clergy or other church goers? How about persons understandably turned off by hypocrisy? What about persons who grew up in other faiths?

How can a God of love, a God of grace, a God willing to live humbly among sinful people condemn anyone to eternal punishment?

Is it possible many Christians are drawing conclusions with partial information or incorrect interpretations?

For example, Adam Hamilton, in chapter three of our companion book for this series, reminds us that Jesus offered grace to all who repented of wrongdoing. However, wrongdoing had nothing to do with whether persons believed Jesus is God's Son.

In fact, Jesus does not seem to focus on what we say. Rather, He looks deeper into our soul. Deep enough to recognize His own image buried beneath the surface.

Hamilton describes three general categories of Christian beliefs based upon how questions about divine punishment are answered. Exclusivism focuses on the personal acceptance of Christ for salvation. No other way is possible.

Universalism goes to the other extreme. God saves all people in the end whether or not they want saving.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kevin Croom Jonathon Misner
 Sylvia Pittman Terrance Williams
 Mirium Watson Norma Natrass



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
 HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Nancy Elston



COMING UP THIS WEEK
JUNE 10 - 16



June 10	Mon	2:30pm	Staff Meeting
June 11	Tue	10:00am	Food Distribution
June 12	Wed		
June 13	Thu	1:00pm	United Women in Faith
June 14	Fri		
June 15	Sat		
June 16	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 "Doubt"

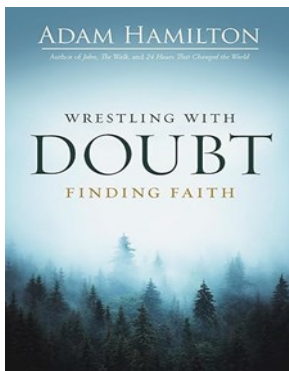


Beginning the Sunday after Mother's Day we begin a new series titled *Doubt*. Our series is based, in large part, on Adam Hamilton's book with doubt in the title.

Most of us have some doubt about what we claim to believe. Even if we don't verbalize our doubt, we express it in our decisions and actions. We say we have faith, yet we're anxious from worry. We say we trust God, and then go to great lengths to show distrust.

Doubt is part of the human condition.

Book Club News



Our companion book for our new worship series, beginning on the Sunday after Mother's Day, is Adam Hamilton's

Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith.

Amazon's website describes his book this way:

Everyone has doubts. Where is God when bad things happen? Does God hear our prayers? Is there a heaven? How can we know? Often, we treat such questions as the enemy of faith. But uncertainty does not mean our belief is lacking. Doubt can be a path to a deeper, richer encounter with God.

In *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*, join best-selling author and pastor Adam Hamilton as he discusses some of our most significant sources of doubt and shows how a steady trust in God can emerge from them.

We have a limited number of copies of Adam Hamilton's book. But copies are available through most book retailers and libraries. The price on Amazon as of the publication of this article is \$13.49 for paperback and \$9.99 for the Kindle edition.

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Anthony & Jim Ushers
Jonathon & Terrance Production Team
Yasheah & Mirium Nursery
Christine & Norma Cafe

Upcoming Worship Series — “Doubt” ..

“We want certainty, but God gives us mystery,” writes Adam Hamilton in our companion book for this series, titled *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith* (see Book Club News). Hamilton argues doubt is both natural and healthy. As long as our doubt is motivated further reflection and a search for truth.

Here is the outline if you want to read the chapters from our companion book as we progress through our series:

May 19	Is there a God?	Chapters Intro-1
May 26	The Good Book?	Chapter 2
June 2	Are all non-Christians going to hell?	Chapter 3
June 9	Is Heaven real?	Chapter 4
June 16	When prayers go unanswered	Chapter 5
June 23	Why do the innocent suffer?	Chapter 6

The heavens tell about the
glory of God. The skies
show that his hands
created them. Day after
day they speak about it.
Night after night they
make it known.

Psalm 19:1-2

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes on [Facebook](#) and 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 [FlintAsburyChurch.org](#).


Pastor Tommy

Adam Hamilton. *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2023.

“Feed Flint”



“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**

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its Savior.

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 and John 14:1-4. What do these promises mean for you?
2. Read this week's articles titled Heaven. Do you believe heaven is real? Why or why not?
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.



South Flint Soup Kitchen ...

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Our clients need bottled water for cooking,
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their teeth with, and MORE!

Donations are accepted Monday-Friday

11:00am-12 Noon at South Flint Soup Kitchen,

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Flint MI 48507

Any questions, please call 239-3427 or 235-0016 or

Email us at southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

To donate: www.mightycause.com/feedflint



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Donate Now



More Information :



(810) 235-0016



funding@flintasbury.org

Here is the schedule of chapters for our *Doubt* Series:

May 19	Chapters Intro-1
May 26	Chapter 2
June 2	Chapter 3
June 9	Chapter 4
June 16	Chapter 5
June 23	Chapter 6

Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that week's chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. You can purchase your own copy or visit your local library.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question or enter a prayer request on our website's homepage — FlintAsburyChurch.org.

Pastor Tommy

Adam Hamilton. *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2023.

Cash or checks can be sent to/dropped off at South Flint Soup Kitchen, 3410 Fenton Road, Flint, MI 48507. Please make checks out to South Flint Soup Kitchen!

Online at www.mightycause.com/feedflint

Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday 11am-12Noon. Calling ahead is not necessary, but our needs change frequently, so calling ahead of time is a good idea!

Give time! We need volunteers!!! Volunteers arrive at 9:30am and are done by 12:30pm. Tasks include handing out lunches, assisting in the Angel Closet, light cleaning, putting together items to pass out to clients, and more.

Refer people!!

Questions??? Call 810-239-3427
or email southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

The rabbit hole is a place where you make unexpected discoveries during an adventure you hadn't planned on taking. As is often the case, I didn't see the rabbit hole in front of me. It started with googling a few keywords and phrases that came to mind as I reflected on Hamilton's question that labels this week's chapter, "Is Heaven Real?"

Well, heaven is real, isn't it?

Join me in the rabbit hole where we run into cognitive dissonance. We will call her dissonance for short. This is where our brain struggles to hold on to two ideas where we can't imagine a way for both to be true. When we experience dissonance, it's annoying. Think toothache.

Dissonance reminds me of Mary meeting Jesus outside the tomb where His body was placed after the crucifixion. She did not recognize Him, not because Jesus had changed. Rather, Mary's way of viewing the world needed to change.

Mary was stuck. Either she stayed in the comfortable past where dead people are not alive or she struggles through to a new truth. Jesus is alive.

In the middle of my conversation with dissonance, another stranger shows up called neuroplasticity. What an awesome fellow. Neuroplasticity is the ability of our brains to get unstuck. It brings hope to persons who suffered trauma. Think reprogramming.

I learned, however, neuroplasticity has a personality quirk. As our brain reprograms itself repetitive experiences, imagined or real, creates a new neural path which may insist on its way. We're stuck in a different rut.

The upcoming presidential election has me worried. By some guesses we're more divided than at anytime in our country's history, including the time leading up to the civil war. I'm concerned that the plasticity of too many brains is stuck.

Meanwhile, this past week, we remembered the sacrifices made 80 years ago on the beaches of Normandy. Our country was divided on whether our country had any business supporting a war in Europe. A group calling themselves "The America First Committee" argued against U.S. involvement. Fortunately, the isolationist didn't prevail. And one of the remaining veterans reminded us in an interview, "Freedom isn't free."

It took several nations working together to stop the atrocities perpetrated by ordinary people following a tyrant. A person who rose to power by convincing enough supporters that anyone who disagreed was an enemy. The people rallied around the ideals of hatred, labelling and Germany first, believing the lies and joining the cult of a popular politician. Eventually, the rigidity of their collective consciousness frozen in place.

So how are these topics connected? That's the fun of rabbit holes. There's no restriction on subject matter, so nothing seems related, at first. But Alice can tell you if you hang in there, pieces fall into place.

One night when Jesus was with His followers for supper. He knew it was time for a farewell conversation. Scholars call this His "farewell discourse." I am thinking His friends wondered if Jesus was spending time in a rabbit hole. It was a lengthy monologue that included explanation, prayers and promises.

Jesus said, "There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am" (John 14:2-3)

I often share these words when officiating memorial services, hoping to comfort those in attendance. These words are part of a promise that heaven is real. Sometimes I wonder if they're said so often we're immune to what Jesus was saying.

So we don't look at the troubles we can see now. Rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 Corinthians 4:18

I'm guessing Mary was at supper that night. Likely, waiting on the others. I wonder how much she heard of what Jesus said about what to expect?

Perhaps Mary heard just enough, but the idea lay just outside range of her imagination. But then something happened. Jesus

said her name and the neurons in her brain discovered a new path. It was Jesus speaking to her. Jesus is alive.

Jesus promised He would come back to get her. And His promise is not just for Mary, Matthew, James, John and the others. Paul discovered it was him also, when his brain was reprogrammed.

Paul shared his new way of seeing life with the people in Corinth. "For we know that when we die and leave this earthly body, we will have an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands" (2 Corinthians 5:1). Paul wanted his friends to know Jesus' promise was also for them.

I did not meet heaven while in the rabbit hole. But I remember a young girl named Heaven and how she explored everything that caught her eye, as though it was her first time seeing a flower or a stone. She reminded me of the way William Young described the Holy Spirit in his 2008 novel *The Shack*.

Her name was Sarayu, which means "a common wind" because she seemed to be everywhere at once. And everything was awesome for Sarayu.

I can't tell you what heaven is like, nor can I promise you it's real. But my promises aren't what matters and neither are the promises of anyone else relevant when it comes to heaven.

Jesus promises to return and take us to be with Him. This is all we need to know that whatever heaven might be, it is real. And this is what I choose to believe.

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 [FlintAsburyChurch.org](#).

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Pastor Tommy

Parts of our series was inspired by Adam Hamilton. *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2023. William P. Young, *The Shack*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Windblown Media 2008.

Inclusivism also believes God offers grace to all persons regardless of their circumstances, the beliefs they held during their lifetime, or the havoc they caused. But some, even when confronted face to face with Christ after death, simply cannot let go of their arrogance.

For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its Savior.

John 3:17

Many of the early church leaders settled on this notion. Today, numerous Christians hold this view across most denominations.

Matthew offers the most comprehensive list of omissions resulting in eternal punishment. And the list focuses entirely on helping persons in need. Jesus emphasized the saved filled the glasses and plates of the thirsty and hungry. The saved clothed the naked, tended to the sick, visited the imprisoned and befriended the isolated. The unsaved face eternal punishment.

Hamilton writes, "What if hell is a place for the narcissists, the self-absorbed, the users and abusers, the cruel and unjust, those who loved the darkness more than the light, those who prefer self-love to selfless love—for those who, to the end, refuse God's grace?"

What if hellfire is nothing more than the emptiness we all feel whenever we put too much distance between ourselves and God's love for us or our love for others?

In my experience, Christians spend too much energy condemning others. Perhaps because of projecting our own brokenness. Instead, let's be thankful that we know the love of God in Jesus Christ. And let us cherish every moment, every person, and everything God created as though it matters eternally.

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