



## Pastor's Page

### Banking on the Gospel

I felt strangely nervous as I left for my morning appointment. Driving to the venue I analysed the reason for my “butterflies” and concluded that it was maths!! Yes the reason that I was ill-at-ease was due to the fact that I’m not good at maths. Allow me to explain; you see I only managed to get grade 4 arithmetic at CSE level and here I was going for an interview at a bank!! Now just before you jump to the wrong conclusion, I wasn’t applying for a new job but simply meeting a financial adviser to talk about my fiscal incongruity! (very painful) In other words I’d agreed to talk money. (Well it seemed like a good idea at the time and it also saved me having to say “No!”) So, having parked the car, I headed into the bank with calculator in pocket, monthly statements in hand and migraine tablets in abundance!

Soon I met the Deputy Branch Manager who shook my hand and led me to a private room. After bringing me coffee he said “I hope you don’t mind me asking but what job do you do?” (I thought the baptismal waders might have given it away!) I’m a Baptist Minister I replied. “Oh” he said, “what’s the difference between you and the Church of England and the Roman Catholics?!” (I suddenly felt that I might fair better on financial issues!) “Well” I said, (taking a deep breath) “I’ll have to give you a bit of church history” “Great” he said “I love history!” So I began with the reformation! I expected his eyes to glaze over but he listened intently chipping in with more questions and insights. I did however think I’d overdone the history thing a bit when at one point he declared with great enthusiasm “Its amazing isn’t it the impact that Henry VIII has had on our world!! I kept going and soon he explained that he was a Muslim and that he thought all religions were basically the same. I then risked never get a bank loan by saying that I didn’t actually agree with him on that point. But I was quick to stress that Judaism, Christianity and Islam, had one major thing in common – namely they were all monotheistic faiths. (I basically said this because ‘monotheistic’ is the longest word I know!) The conversation continued as we touched on the crusades, the Arab world, the wealth of the Catholic Church, and the situation in Northern Ireland. He then said “basically Moses, Jesus and Mohammed were all preaching the same message weren’t they?” I disagreed but acknowledged that they emphasised some of the same truths, namely that there is only one God. I then stated that it’s what Christians believe about Jesus himself that singles them out from both Jews and Muslims. “We believe and worship Jesus as God” I declared. He paused for a moment then said “Yes” before adding “do you believe he died on the cross?” “Absolutely” I said, really getting into my stride! “But don’t you think it’s a shame” he continued “that his life was cut short when he could have done and said so much more?” “But that was the reason that he came” I replied “to die on the cross” “I don’t get it” he said “why did he have to die on the cross?” “To pay the price for all the wrong that we’ve done” I said then I quickly shared the gospel with him. He listened then said “thanks, I get it now, I’ve never understood that before.” Just as I was contemplating challenging him personally he said “I guess we’d better talk about your finances!!!” (And we did!)

**I’m sure Mr Hussain went away banking on me opening a new account. I went away banking on the gospel doing its work in this young man’s life. (Isaiah 55:11)**

31<sup>st</sup> August 2008