

How to Talk about Jesus Without Sounding Like an Idiot

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[0 : 00] Well, good afternoon, folks. There's a small number of you, so you are going to have to be more interactive than you might normally be. Good afternoon.

Oh, that's more like it. Fantastic. Even to the people in the back, good afternoon. Great to see a few of you. We may be small in number, but that's okay. The fun thing about these kind of events is sometimes you get huge crowds.

We did an event like this in Dundee. We had about 300 and sometimes slightly smaller. But the advantage of a slightly smaller group is when it comes to Q&A; provided you're not shy and actually ask questions, that means the chance of you actually getting your question answered is much higher than it is in a kind of smaller group.

But really looking forward to diving in this afternoon to a couple of really, hopefully all of you really helpful topics. In a moment, I want to open up this whole question of how we can share our faith in Christ with our friends, neighbours, colleagues, classmates, without looking like an idiot, to be blunt. And then after we've had a sort of tea and refreshment break, we're going to dive into the whole question of what it means to be a human being, which arguably is one of the biggest questions of our age right now.

[1 : 07] Are we just atoms and particles or are we something more? And we're going to cover quite a lot of material this afternoon. And if you're taking notes, you may discover that I have a tendency to go at quite high speed and you may struggle to keep up.

So to alleviate that tendency that I have to present at 100 miles an hour, my colleague from the Solar Centre for Public Christianity, the lovely David Hartnett, is going to pass a clipboard around in a moment while I speak.

If you jot your email address down on that clipboard, we'll do a couple of things. The first thing is we'll sell your email address to Google and make lots of money. We have to fund the ministry somehow. Actually, there's no point doing that because they've got it anyway.

They've probably got it off Facebook. And more seriously, what we'll do is we'll send you the slides from this talk and the next talk. So all of the quotes, facts, figures, useful bits and pieces, that will come to you as a kind of PDF.

So Dave will send that round while we get going on. But to kind of set the scene before I want to go in this first session, Martin mentioned in his intro that I've come this afternoon from Dundee, which has been home for the last two and a half years.

[2 : 12] I was about to say I drove from Dundee. Actually, the wind out there is such we were tempted just to put a sail up and just see if we could just blow our way down the M90. So Dundee is currently home. But before that, Canada was home.

I lived in Toronto in Canada for six years. And I did a lot of evangelistic ministry in places like universities and business settings and so forth.

And often I ended up speaking to very skeptical audiences. You look like a very friendly audience this afternoon. But I often addressed skeptical audiences, hostile audiences even, such as Baptists, for example.

And on one occasion I was speaking on a university campus just outside Toronto there in Canada. And I think I was doing a session on the reliability of the Bible.

And we had about 300 people there that evening and lots of non-Christians in the audience. It was a fairly kind of lively Q&A.; But after the event was over, a university student, a young man, came down the aisle to speak to me.

[3 : 08] I could sort of see him making a beeline for me, marching with a very determined look on his face. And he got to the front and came right up to me and he said, the problem with this whole evening, Andy, is I hate Christians.

Now, I'm a bit slow on the uptake, but I found myself thinking, he's probably an atheist. So I said, are you by any chance an atheist? He said, yes. And the problem with you lot, and again, you know it's going to go well when someone says the problem with you lot.

He said, the problem with you lot, the problem with you Christians, is you are anti-progress, anti-science, anti-gay, anti-lesbian, anti-transgender, anti-environment, anti-reason, anti-women. You had about 15 other antis on the list. Some I'd never heard of, actually. I didn't know I was supposed to be against these. I found myself thinking, can I just stop, pause you there for a moment, sir, and write those two down? Because if I'm going to be a bigot, I ought to at least be an informed one.

And finally he got to the end of his little rant. And by this point it wasn't just him. There were about sort of 12 other students gathered around listening. I think one person even was passing a bucket of popcorn around.

[4 : 10] Sort of, you know, Christians versus lions round two. And I found myself thinking, what do I say? You know, he's launched this litany of attacks at not just me but at Christians in general. But I think it was possibly later in the day I'd maybe had one too many coffees because I sort of came over all iconoclastic.

I looked at him and I said, what was the last thing that you said on that list of things that Christians are against? He said, you're anti-women. I looked at him and I said, interesting, I thought that was what you said.

I said, I don't actually happen to think that Christians are. But hypothetically, if we were, what would be wrong with that? I wish I could have shown you a picture of his face on the screen beside me, or possibly on that screen actually because it's a slightly better resolution than that one.

He did a sort of goldfish impression actually. He looked at me and he said, he went like this, he sort of went like that. And he said, well, it's just wrong, isn't it? I went, come on, you're a university student.

This is one of the best universities in Canada. You can do better than it's just wrong, isn't it? So he thought about it for a moment. He said, it's wrong to discriminate against somebody on the basis of their gender. I said, all you've done is rephrased your original statement using longer words.

[5 : 18] Come on, why is it wrong? Why is it wrong to discriminate against somebody on the basis of their gender? And for the next three or four minutes, he tried to sort of give me reasons and I just played the annoying three-year-old.

I actually have a three-year-old and a six-year-old in the house. So I'm very familiar with short words that begin with W and end with question marks. Y is a very good one. And he would say something.

I would say, well, why is that the case? And after about three or four minutes, he looked at me and he said, this is really frustrating. He said, I know that it's wrong to be anti-women and all of these things.

He said, but I can't give you a reason. I can't give you a reason. There has to be a reason. I said, well, there is, but it's in the Christian faith, not in atheism personally, I think is the answer. But then I looked at him again and I said, interesting, isn't it?

That you said that Christianity is anti-reason, but I can give you reasons why it's wrong to discriminate against people. I think all human beings bear the image of God and have value and dignity. I said, but of course, that's my worldview, not yours.

[6 : 17] I then decided I'd get a bit more cheeky, actually. I looked at him and I said, what are you studying here at McMaster University? He said, I'm in the medical program. I'm a medical student. I said, wonderful, what branch of medicine are you thinking of going into?

He said, I want to go into surgery. I want to be able to cut people open one day. I said, maybe don't put that on your job application letter. I would like to cut people open. Can I come and work at your hospital? It's the wrong kind of message, but aside from that, I said, interesting, let's imagine that one day you achieve that dream.

And one day you end up as a doctor, as a surgeon. Doctors have tremendous power over life and death. And maybe one day, you'll have tremendous power over people. And maybe one day, when

you're a doctor, you'll be tempted to behave in some ethically inappropriate way.

And I said, at that point, I hope you've found a better basis for treating people with value and dignity than I should because I should because I should because I should. Because otherwise, with all due respect to you, I said, God help your patients.

I wish I could tell you that he kind of fell to the ground next to me and had a weeping repentance in front of the auditorium. But he did say to me, he said, this is interesting. He said, this has been one of the most fascinating conversations I've had of late.

[7 : 31] I've never thought about some of these things. And I just said, well, you know, I think maybe you should. And the good news is, the Christian Union on campus is starting something called Alpha next week. Why don't you go and talk to them and maybe sign up for it and maybe you can explore some of these questions in more detail.

What I did in that kind of sort of vaguely amusing conversation was something I want to really sort of teach you this afternoon as a really helpful approach to evangelism.

Basically, what I did is I asked questions. If you think back over that story I've just told you, I basically just asked a series of questions. Why and what and what do you mean by that and why do you think that and this kind of thing.

And you see, questions are very, very powerful when it comes to sharing our faith, talking about Jesus, engaging with a skeptical, hostile world. In fact, there are four things that questions do really, really well.

First thing that questions do really, really well is they can expose motives and assumptions. You know, people have, you know, different perceptions of the Christian faith. People have challenges to our faith and they can come for different reasons.

[8 : 35] I was in Edinburgh two nights ago speaking to about 100 young people there at an event Scripture Union had organized. And we were looking together at the topic of why does God allow suffering and pain?

Why, if God is good and God is powerful, why is there pain and evil in the world? And one of the things I said to the students, I said, when someone asks you that question, and many of them said they'd had that question from their friends and their classmates, I said, you know, it's very important to know why you're being asked that question.

Is somebody saying to you, how can you as a Christian believe in a God who's good and powerful and the suffering in the world? Are they asking you that question because they've heard that's a brilliant question to annoy Christians with?

Or are they asking you that question because their beloved, you know, their brother, their sister has just been diagnosed with leukemia and they're wrestling, you know, emotionally with some horrific medical diagnosis in their family?

And a very helpful thing you can do straight away when someone raises an objection to your faith is simply begin by saying, that's a really interesting question. Why do you ask it? Why do you ask that question? Because if you can get to the assumption, the motive, the reason for the question, and my one regret in one sense, looking back at that conversation I told you about at McMaster University, just because of the context and I was tired and there were other people dashing around, I would love to have sat down with that student and actually gone, that's quite a lot of hostility that you've launched with there.

[9 : 57] What's going on? You know, my suspicion is I would have discovered some bad experience with church or Christianity there in his backstory because you don't normally walk to the front of an auditorium and launch a broadside of a speaker like that, at least without saying hello, and certainly not Canadians don't tend to do it, but there we are.

So questions can expose motives and assumptions. Questions can also help create a conversation. And I think one of the things we've forgotten sometimes as Christians is that the most effective thing we can do in terms of personal evangelism is just learn to have really good natural conversations. A couple of years ago, my wife and I and the kids were on holiday in Keswick in the Lake District, one of our kind of favorite places to go. And one of the things I love about being the parents of young children is the evangelistic opportunities that young kids often create.

It's quite phenomenal. So there we were on holiday in Keswick. Second day, we were at the playground in the center of the town. And I think my 18-month-old son did something unspeakably horrendous to another small child, which is a great way to make friends, really, because you can begin by apologizing.

You know, I'm sorry my son has whacked your son over the head with a branch. But through that sort of experience, we became friends with this other family who were not Christians. And over the course of the week, we hung out with them quite a lot and got to know them.

[11:16] And on the very last night of our holiday, we were having curry together. And over the course of the week, they'd found out I was a Christian. They tried to figure out what I do. I always find my non-Christian friends struggle to understand what I do.

The idea that I go around and answer people's questions for a living doesn't compute. But anyway, over the course of the week, we talked about faith in different ways. But on the last night, we were having curry together. And this other family, the wife looked at us across the table.

And she looked at my wife and I and she said, I can't work you guys out. I really can't work you guys out. She said, you're clearly really into this kind of Jesus thing that is obviously really important to you.

She said, but you're not crunchy. I remember looking at my wife and she looked at me and we kind of scratched our heads. I looked back at her and I said, what do you mean crunchy? She said, oh, you know, crunchy Christians.

I went, no, you've lost meat. What are crunchy Christians? It sounds like a sort of cannibalistic breakfast cereal. You know, what are crunchy Christians? She went, oh, you know, the kind of religious people that any topic you mention, you can hear the intake of breath the kind of reaction.

[12:19] Everything is negative. She said, you haven't said anything negative all week. She said, what's going on? And that led to a whole other conversation. But I remember saying to my wife afterwards, I love that phrase, crunchy Christians.

Someone should write a book called How Not to Be a Crunchy Christian. And I guess in their minds, they'd only met Christians who every time you try and have a conversation about everything are kind of negative and difficult and awkward.

And I thought, what a shame. Because as Christians, if we were just known to be interesting people to talk with, even if we disagree with some of our friends on topics, that we were just people who were good conversationalists.

And questions can do this really, really well. Learning to ask questions. And I'm going to give you some examples of how that can work in a moment. So questions can expose motives. They can help create a conversation.

Questions also force the other person to think. I think there's a kind of myth in our culture right now that it's only Christians who really have to answer for what we believe. Our atheist friends, our secular friends, our Muslim friends don't have to answer any questions.

[13:17] It's just you and I who have to explain why we believe the kind of things we do, which is clearly not right. So I think it's really helpful as we talk to our friends, our neighbors, our colleagues, our classmates about life's big questions that we force them to do some thinking too.

And over the years, I found it interesting, for example, if you meet someone who says to you, I'm an atheist, not to get defensive, just look at them and say, well, that's fun. Atheism tells me what you don't believe, but what do you believe?

Tell me about the things you do believe because I don't believe in a tooth fairy, but I don't call myself an a-tooth-farian. So tell me what you do believe. And those are often interesting conversations. Questions force other people to think. And then lastly, questions take the pressure off you.

I think if as we think about talking to our friends, neighbors, colleagues, classmates about Christ, if we somehow get it into our heads that it's a hard job to do all of the work, all of the effort, all of the thinking in the conversation, that's a lot of pressure.

And conversations take the pressure off you. But above all, the reason why I think questions are such an important tool when it comes to evangelism is because Jesus used them all the time.

[14:24] If you read the Gospels through and count up the number of times that Jesus either asked a question or responded to a question with a question, I think it's been calculated that Jesus asks something like 300 questions across the four Gospels.

And looking at how he did that and how he used questions to guide conversations about faith, there's a lot for us to learn. And what I'd like to do over the next 15 minutes or so is just show you two examples from the Gospels of how Jesus did this really, really effectively.

And then what I want to do in the kind of second part of this talk, this first talk, is teach you three really powerful questions that you can use in a vast number of different conversations and contexts to help have gospel-orientated conversations.

But let's start with the Gospels and start with a very famous story that occurs in several of the Gospels. It's known as the story of the rich young ruler. And let me just read you a couple of verses from this version of the story found in Mark's Gospel.

So Mark chapter 10, verses 17 through 18, we read of this encounter. Mark tells us, as Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him.

[15 : 37] Good teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Why do you call me good? Jesus replied, nobody is good except God alone. Now you've probably heard that story many times, but I wonder how often as you've heard that story, read that story, reflected on that story, you've ever found yourself thinking, what a strange answer to a question.

You know, what exactly is Jesus doing here? And we need to give ourselves permission to, you know, ask questions of the Gospels they're designed to actually. Jesus loved to provoke people to think, and that's what he's doing here.

And a sign that this is a very strange answer to a question can be illustrated by the fact, if you were to go home from this seminar this afternoon, and maybe you're sitting at home this evening, 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, relaxing at home, watching TV or something, and suddenly there's a knock on your door.

And you go, you open your door, and it's your next door neighbor. And your next door neighbor looks at you and says, good Christian, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Who here is going to give this answer?

What are you going to say? Most of you are probably going to say, if you're thinking quickly, come on in, I'll put the kettle on, and I'd love to sort of, you know, share with you some thoughts on that question. Or if you're a bit more nervous, maybe you'll say, hey, I've got a book or a tract I can give you, and if you're really going to love all it, you might say, I'll tell you what, I'll take you to church next Sunday, and Martin can answer the question in his sermon on Sunday.

[16 : 59] No pressure. But no one, not one of us is going to look at your neighbor and say, why do you call me good? Only God is good. So why does Jesus do this? Why doesn't Jesus say, follow me, I'm the son of God?

Why doesn't Jesus say, come to the Alpha Course that Peter, James, and John are leading at the Sea of Galilee next Thursday, loaves and fishes for everybody? Why does he give this very strange, enigmatic answer?

Well, think about this for a moment. If you were to grab your average, you know, non-Christian friend for a moment, think about perhaps a colleague, a classmate, a neighbor, maybe if you don't go to this church, but to one of those very liberal churches, your minister, and you grab your non-Christian, never do that joke again, you grab your non-Christian friend and you say to them, look, just imagine with me for a moment, don't argue, just imagine, pretend there's a God, I know you don't believe in God, but just give me a free pass for a moment, there's a God, also imagine there's a heaven, okay, so God exists, heaven exists, what do you think you need to do to get there?

What does your average kind of secular Scottish person think is the answer to that question? If there happened to be a God and it turned out there was a heaven, how do you get there? What do most people think?

Thank you, yes, not a trick question, yeah, live a good life, absolutely, the most common answer, and in fact, somebody once said that the most common religion on the planet is good personism, most people think if there's a God, then God is obviously an equal opportunity employer and he or she just expects you to live a good life, you know, be a decent citizen, don't vote the wrong way in major referendums, you know, all this kind of stuff, and then you'll get into heaven, it's the Disney version of heaven, all good dogs go to heaven, and this is what Jesus is facing here from this rich young man, he's basically saying to Jesus, well, you know, you look like a good man, you're a Jewish rabbi, and got quite a following and reputation, so you're clearly a good man, so you're clearly going to heaven, Jesus, so tell me how do I get there?

[18 : 58] So this is the whole theological mess that Jesus is faced with in front of him, and of course, there's a crowd watching as well. So Jesus could try and respond with a sermon, or a lecture, or a parable, but he actually gets to the heart of the issue with one simple question,

because this question, why do you call me good, only God is good, is brilliantly clever in terms of untangling this whole mess, because basically it says to the young man, you know what, you're absolutely right, you're absolutely right, all good people do go to heaven, correct, but there's a problem, only God is good.

So follow the logic, all good people go to heaven, only God is good, so who gets to go to heaven? Only God, I'm afraid. And by the way, your application to join the Trinity has been turned down this morning.

Of course, it also raises the question, if only God is good, but the young man has recognized that Jesus is good, who does that make Jesus? Jesus.

Interesting question. And actually, an interesting contemporary illustration of that very point, I occasionally get enthusiastic Muslim friends, I do a lot of outreach with Muslims, kind of waving this passage at me to say, look, look, here's Jesus denying that he's God, this is Jesus denying the Trinity.

And I always say to them, tell me, do you believe that Jesus was a good man? Oh yes, he was a good man. Aha, have you seen what he says in this paragraph? That's for another time. Well, that's an example of how you could use a question to expose motives, assumptions, reorientate the whole conversation.

[20 : 28] And of course, if you read on in Mark chapter 10, you see what happens next is the real issue in this young man's life, which is not moral behavior, but wealth and money, come out.

But Jesus exposes it with this simple question. I want to show you another example now from another of the Gospels, this time from Matthew's Gospel, chapter 22, where this time Jesus is going to do something a little bit different.

He's going to use a question, a very innocent-looking question, to actually reorientate the entire conversation and talk about something far more important than what he's actually been asked. And again, a very famous story. I'm going to read the first half, make a couple of comments, then we'll read the second half. And then what we'll do, in terms of applying this to our contemporary lives and evangelism, we're then going to take what Jesus has done here and apply it to a real-world situation to see how we might use the same thing right here in Glasgow next week, for example.

So Matthew chapter 22, the first three verses from, reading the first three verses of the story, reading from verse 15. Matthew tells us the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap Jesus in his words.

[21 : 33] They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. Teacher, they said, we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others because you pay no attention to who they are.

So tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? Now we'll just pause there for a moment. Many of you here probably know the background to this story.

First century Israel was an occupied land, had been occupied for some time now by the Romans, and to pious religious Jews, the Romans were considered to be evil occupying oppressors.

And so if you paid your tax to the Romans, you were considered by most of your fellow Jews to be collaborating with the enemy if you paid your tax. On the other hand, if you didn't pay your tax, you were considered by the Romans to be guilty of rebellion, sedition, and all of these kind of things, and that would often lead to arrest, torture, and possible execution.

So the Pharisees are obviously thinking to themselves that this is a brilliant trap they are springing on this rebellious preacher from Galilee. You know, if he says, yes, pay your tax, then he's compromised in the eyes of the crowd, he's lost all of his authority, and if he says, no, you shouldn't pay your tax, then at that point the Romans can be called, they can call the Romans and say, hey, come arrest Jesus because this is what he said.

[22 : 57] Interestingly, this is such a politically dangerous question, even more controversial than Brexit were such a thing possible. Have you ever noticed, if you've seen this, read the story before, the Pharisees don't dare ask the question themselves?

Have you noticed? They send the Herodians and their disciples who in the culture would have been the young boys aged maybe 13 or 14. The Pharisees are too scared to ask this question themselves.

They're probably a mile away in a tavern around the corner, so if a riot breaks out over this issue, they can say to the authorities, well, it wasn't us. I don't know what happened. We weren't there. So they send the young men off to ask the question.

So what does Jesus say? You know, every time I read this story, I find myself thinking, I wish that Jesus had categorically come out and said, thou shalt not pay tax.

Because around about April every year, it'd be wonderful, wouldn't it? You could write to Mr. Hammond and say, can you send me back all that tax I paid in the last year? Because Jesus said, and I'm sure the Chancellor would send you a large check in recognition of what Jesus said.

[23 : 59] But of course, if Jesus had said no, he'd have been arrested. If he'd said yes, he'd have been morally compromised. And of course, this is the heart of the question here. This is not a question about finances or taxation.

The Pharisees are not interested in economic policy. They're interested in the whole issue of compromise. They're trying to make Jesus compromise morally. So in that light, Jesus' answer is brilliant.

Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, you hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax. And they showed him a denarius, and now comes the question.

He said to them, whose image is on this coin? And whose inscription? Caesar's, they replied. Then Jesus said to them, well, give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's.

With that innocent little question about whose inscription, whose image is on this coin, Jesus redefines the question he's been asked in such a way as to effectively be able to say, look, it's okay to pay taxes when they're appropriate, but you know, that's not the real issue.

[25 : 05] That is light years away from being the real issue. The real issue we need to address is what's due to God. What do we give to God? That's the real issue, not, you know, ridiculous side discussions about taxation.

Every time I read this answer of Jesus, I find myself thinking, I just wish one of those Herodians, one of the disciples of the Pharisees, one of the crowds who were gathered had looked at Jesus and gone, well, okay, Rabbi, what's due to God?

What belongs to God? Because I wonder if Jesus might have replied, whose image is on you? Just a thought. Now, using a question like Jesus did there to clarify an issue, to redefine an issue, to get to the question at hand has lots of contemporary applications.

Let me give you an illustration of how you might use it. Let's imagine that sometime in the next week or two you're sitting drinking coffee in McDonald's or if you're very rich you're sitting in Starbucks or ten bucks we used to call it when I lived in Toronto and there you are sitting in your favourite coffee shop and drinking coffee with an old school friend who's visiting, who's in town. You haven't seen them for ten years and you're sitting there having an innocent conversation and there's about another dozen or so people in the coffee shop and suddenly your friend looks at you across the lattes and says, oh, you're still into that Christianity thing, aren't you?

[26 : 28] Tell me, do you think abortion is wrong? And you can hear the sound of a dozen other conversations around the coffee shop sort of die away actually and you can hear the sort of squeaking sound of a dozen pairs of eyes sort of swiveling on gimbals as other people in the coffee shop sort of lean into the conversation to see what you're going to say and of course your heart is pacing, the adrenaline's racing and you find yourself thinking, what do you say?

Because if you just come out and say the obvious answer from Christian ethics, yes, I think it's wrong, what is your friend and everyone else in the coffee shop going to think? If you just say, yes, it's wrong, are they going to think, my word, this is the wisest, most informed, most reflective, most thoughtful answer on a tricky ethical issue I've ever heard and it's come from the mouth of a Christian who must have got it from Jesus.

Pray tell me, who is this Jesus that you follow and who dispenses such incredible ethical wisdom so I too can follow him? I think you're looking nervous at each other. That is not what they're going to think, are they? They're going to probably think words like, I don't know, narrow-minded, bigot, simplistic, all of those kind of words are going to go through their minds.

Why? Well, because of course in the eyes of, in the mind of your friend and in the mind of most people in the world who are not inside the Christian community, what is that issue, that particular issue of abortion that I just randomly picked on there, what's it all about?

Well, in the eyes of their, in their minds, it's all about choice, right? It's framed in terms of a woman's right to choose. And what do we call people who restrict other people's choice?

[28 : 01] Well, we have words for them. We call them fascists, we call them dictators, we call them oppressors, and so on. Not, not a particularly nice or helpful set of adjectives.

Well, here's a thought. If answering the question that you've been asked about your faith and about, about the gospel, about Christianity, if answering the question you've been asked is going to make you look bad, the gospel look bad, and Jesus look bad, there is possibly something wrong with the question.

So don't answer it. Turn it into a more helpful question. Because the right answer to the wrong question is not often helpful. And you can do, in fact, just what Jesus did.

You can clarify the issue by asking a question. What if you looked at your friend and said, thank you for asking me about such an important issue? The issue of abortion is an incredibly complex, important issue.

I'm glad you've given me time to share what I think about it. But before I do share what I think about it, and I'm not really a thinker, so I'll do my very best, but before I tell you what I think, may I ask you a question first?

[29 : 06] Because it would be helpful to clarify in my mind where you're coming from as I try and tell you what I think on this issue. Here's the question I have for you. Tell me, when do you think it's okay to take the life of an innocent person?

When do you think it's okay to take the life of a wholly innocent person? Now, unless you're having coffee with a psychopath, in which case, just leave, because it's not going to end well. Unless you're having coffee with a psychopath, your friend is probably going to look at you and say, well, it's never okay to take the life of an innocent person.

Of course, it's always wrong. Well, that's helpful, because then you can say, well, thank you for that, because now we can talk about, I think, what really matters, what's actually in the womb? Is it just a collection of atoms and particles?

Or is it actually a person, a life, with value and significance and worth and dignity? Because if it is, as you've just said, we can't just extinguish it, and of course, if it is just a collection of atoms and particles, there's no issue anyway.

We can do what we want whenever we want. That's the real issue. Now, that doesn't mean you're going to have a conversation that's going to end up with them agreeing with everything that you've said, but from experience of trying this and having friends who've taken the same kind of route in some of these tricky conversations, you are far more likely to have a conversation that's helpful, that's thoughtful, that doesn't end in, you know, people screaming at each other than if you launch straight in to a simplistic answer.

[30 : 24] If you take the Jesus approach and reframe the question, and questions enable us to do this. And what I'd like to suggest to you, and I'm going to, in a moment, just share three questions that I think we can use in a whole variety of context to do this.

I think, you know, one of the things I find about being a Christian in today's age, and maybe you find this too, is we live in a secular age where, you know, fewer and fewer people take faith seriously. There are some big questions out there in our culture.

There are big challenges to our faith, and we're probably going to cover some of them in the Q&A; this afternoon. We're going to cover one of the big ones in my second talk this afternoon. But I think very often, sometimes when we're faced with the questions and challenges to our faith, sometimes fear is the most natural response.

I think many of us, when we think about evangelism, if we're honest, fear is the most common response. And the idea of talking about our faith at work, at university, at home, with our neighbors, or whatever, can actually fill us with fear sometimes.

And then what sometimes happens, and it happens for me sometimes, and maybe happens for some of you, is that when we get afraid of evangelism, then what happens is we feel guilty about feeling afraid about evangelism.

[31 : 34] Because we think, look, evangelism should be wonderful, and fantastic, and easy, because Jesus is amazing, but we feel afraid, and so we feel guilty. And I have to confess, when I first started doing seminars like this on how we can share our faith more naturally, I used to begin by sort of, you know, almost berating people and trying to motivate people and talk them out of fear.

I'd start by doing a whole thing here saying, you know, almost asking people to stick their hands up and go, who's afraid of evangelism? Right, let's just get some, you know, iron into your backbone

and so forth. And people would throw things at me, and not often money or chocolate. And then I began realizing, look, it's okay to be afraid when we think about sharing our faith, the neighbors, or our friends, or our colleagues. It's okay to be afraid, because, you know, fear in many situations is perfectly natural.

The question is, what we do with that fear? And you see, it occurred to me that, you know, one of my hobbies for many years has been mountaineering. It's one of the things I love about living in this part of Scotland, where I lived in Ontario in Canada.

It was flat as a pancake. When I moved to Canada, I got excited, because I thought Rocky Mountains, and they're 3,000 miles away in Vancouver. That was very depressing. And Ontario was flat as anything. And moving back here, moving here to Scotland two and a half years ago is phenomenal, because you have vertical geography, and it's very exciting.

[32 : 42] And, although I've been climbing mountains for 30 years, every time I abseil off a rock face, I get scared. Because it's not natural to hang off a piece of rope off a piece of granite that might kill you. It's not a natural, you know, place for human beings to find oneself.

But I still do it every time. Why? Because I've had just enough training to know what I'm doing and know that it'll be okay. And I also trust the person on the end of the rope.

When I go climbing, I usually go climbing with people who are trustworthy and reliable, because they're good climbing partners. And I'm like, okay, they've got the rope. I know what I'm doing. It's okay. And I think something similar happens with evangelism.

You know, the more that we learn to trust Christ and go, ultimately, evangelism is his job. I can do the best that I can, but making people Christians is not about the power of our words. It's about the power of the spirit and the power of Jesus as he works through us.

But also, at the same time, with just a tiny little bit of training and practice, it's actually possible to be able to share our faith in a huge variety of contexts, even if our hearts are racing and the adrenaline needle is in the red zone, because we kind of know what we're doing and we know some ways to have gospel-orientated conversations that often go places.

[33 : 54] And questions help us get there. And so, in terms of practical tools we can use in evangelism, I want to, in my last kind of 15 minutes of this talk, just share with you three powerful questions that you can learn to ask.

And when you sort of practice these a little bit and almost keep them, as it were, in your back pocket as an evangelistic toolkit, they can help you in a whole variety of situations have conversations about the gospel, even with people who are quite hostile.

So these are the three questions I want to walk us through this afternoon. What do you mean by that? Why do you think that? And have you ever wondered?

What do you mean by that? Why do you think that? And have you ever wondered? And let me illustrate how each of them work with a little sort of story or a thought experiment.

Let's take this first one. What do you mean by that? To illustrate how this works, let's imagine a scenario. Let's imagine that in a few days' time you're riding the bus in a downtown in Glasgow city centre somewhere, on the bus going to work or school or shopping or something, and you're sitting there on the bus minding your own business, of course reading your big black Bible that all of us as Christians read on public transport, right?

[35 : 06] The really biggest, blackest, leather-bound one you can find so that everyone knows you're a Christian. And probably you also have your I'm a Christian, ask me any questions hat on that presumably you wear in these situations. And who should get on at the next bus stop but an old school friend that you haven't seen for 20 years?

And they get on at the bus stop, they sit down next to you on the bus, they look at you, they look at the big black Bible, they look at the hat, and without so much as a hello, they launch into, oh, you are not still into that religion rubbish, are you?

Nobody believes in God these days, there is no evidence that God exists, science has buried God, religion is just a psychological crutch for people who are too weak to get through life on their own, it's all a load of rubbish.

And you think to yourself, this is why they're an old friend because they did this 20 years ago and I got sick of it then. But you also notice that everyone else on the bus has finished their conversations and is looking at you. There are people getting popcorn out from under the seats, this is Christians versus Lions round, where are we?

Round three. And you also realise you've got three minutes to your bus stop, what are you going to say? Because you want to give some kind of account of yourself, you want to push back slightly, but you're not a particularly confident person and there was a lot of accusations in there.

[36 : 19] What do you do other than just run out the bus stop and screaming and never go again? Well, what about if you use the, you know, what do you mean by that question? What if you said to your friend, well, thank you for that.

I just have a couple of questions. You said that you believe that religion is a psychological crutch. What do you mean by that? Because I actually find religion is hard work. I sit on the bus minding my business and angry atheists get on and launch a tax at me and it's not even nine o'clock in the morning.

Much easier to be an atheist. Or you said, or you also said that science has buried God. What do you mean by that? What particular aspect of science were you thinking of?

You might pick up on the evidence words. You might say to your friend, you know, I noticed you said there's no evidence that God exists. What do you mean by that? In particular, what kind of evidence would you need to see to maybe convince you there was a God?

And if you're feeling particularly adventurous, you might say, look, you used the word God two or three times in what you just said. What do you mean by that? When you say God, what do you mean? Because Richard Dawkins, one of the most well-known atheist writing today, in his book *The God Delusion*, which has sold about eight million copies, Richard says he doesn't believe in a, you know, genocidal, psychopathic, megalomaniacal, misogynistic, you know, bully who lives in the sky.

[37 : 40] And I remember when I read *The God Delusion*, I found myself thinking, well, I don't believe in that kind of God either, Richard, so I guess I'm an atheist with regard to that God, but I do believe in the God of the Bible. And it might be interesting to ask your friend, when you say you don't believe in God, what kind of God do you not believe in?

Because that might just open up the opportunity for you to briefly say the kind of God that you do believe in. And look, in three minutes on the bus, you're not going to answer every accusation. You're not going to be able to, you know, present Christianity in such a way that your friend's going to find it entirely compelling.

But just by asking some intelligent questions, some gentle questions, success for me would look like, when it comes to your bus stop, you can turn to your friend and say, look, thank you again for what you shared very honestly.

I hope, you know, some of the questions I've asked you began to make you think there may be more to this than you've realized. Why don't we meet for coffee? Why don't we meet for coffee in a couple of weeks' time? I'm going to ask you McDonald's if I'm paying, Starbucks if you're paying, and we could press deeper into this.

And to me, success might look like a follow-up opportunity to go a bit deeper than just, you know, angry atheist zingers at 8.30 a.m. on a Monday morning on a bus. And you'd be surprised, you know, having had lots of these kind of conversations over the years with friends in different settings, that actually, sometimes all it takes is the right question and you crack open a conversation rather than what would otherwise be an argument.

[38 : 58] So what do you mean by that? It can be a very powerful way in to a conversation. But there's a second question that's also very helpful to have in our talk here, and that's the why do you think that question?

And it works in a similar kind of way, and again, let's illustrate it with an example. If you're a university student, this is pretty easy to imagine. If not, think back to when you were at university or perhaps imagine you might have been at university. And the scenario is you're at university, it's Monday morning, you're sitting there at the back of the lecture theater, there are 300 other students, and you're sitting there in the back row of the lecture theater, and on the desk in front of you, you have, you know, your cup of coffee and your notepad and your pen and your iPad and your big black Bible because every Christian university student makes sure that he or she takes the biggest Bible they can find on these university campuses.

I see this every campus I go to, it amazes me the size of some of the Bibles that Christian students carry around. Never do that joke ever again. And anyway, there you are in the lecture theater with your Bible.

And who should walk into the lecture theater of course but your professor. She walks to the podium at the front, a bit like this one, and she begins her lecture on quantum physics and penguin

management or something, whatever they teach at University of Glasgow these days. And she's about two minutes, three minutes into quarks and penguin eggs or something. And she glances up towards the back of the lecture theater and she sees you and she sees your Bible because she couldn't possibly miss it.

[40 : 22] That's why you take such a massive, great, big Victorian Bible around with you. You want people to notice it and boy has she noticed it. And she stops mid-lecture, looks at you and says, how dare you bring that book of superstitious fairy tales into a place of learning.

The Bible is nothing more than a collection of legends and myths and Iron Age superstition. It's riddled with contradictions. Nobody takes it seriously. Never bring it into one of my lectures ever again.

And then her tones die away and the silence and of course all the other students in the lecture theater are looking at her, turning around, looking at you. They were expecting quantum physics and penguins. They're getting entertainment.

There are people getting popcorn out from under their seats. Christians versus lions round, where are we? Round four. And you know, your heart is racing and you're thinking to yourself, what do I say? I've got maybe a minute to say something. Not a lot, of course, because the lecture is about to continue and you want to say something to give some defense of what you believe.

But of course, you don't want to get too clever because she's your professor. And if you get too lippy, you know, 10 out of 10 for evangelism, but you might fail your course on quantum physics and penguin management or something and that could be the end of your academic career.

[41 : 30] And of course, she's got the microphone and the woman with the microphone always wins. So what do you do? Well, this is where the why do you think that question rides to your rescue. What about if you simply said loudly and clearly from the back?

Professor, thank you for what you just shared. That's really made me think and that's what universities are all about. But I just have a question for you, if I may. Why do you think that? What's led you to the conclusion that the Bible is, you know, full of contradictions? What's your evidence for that, in other words? Now, from experience of actually having done this kind of thing foolishly over the years, one of two things will happen.

Either your professor will give you a piece of evidence. She'll say, well, the reason I think the Bible is full of contradictions is and maybe she'll quote you in some Bible verse that she's found some difficulty with that she's read at some point in her life.

And that's great, actually. That's really helpful because then you can say, thank you, professor. I'll tell you what, I'll find the answers to that for you later in the week and I'll bring it to you. How about that? And then sit down and shut up.

[42 : 34] And then what you can do is later in the week, if you know the answer, you can go and find her and knock on her door. If you don't know the answer, you come to church on Sunday, you go to Martin and you say, Martin, I need an answer to a question. And he's trained. He's a theologian. He'll give you the answer to the question or if not a good book to read and you can then go and knock on your professor's door during the week and you can say, professor, that wonderful question that you raised in Monday morning's lecture, good news, professor.

There is an answer. And I found you the answer. I thought you'd like it. Now you might get a door slammed in your face but you might have the ability to share your answer.

She might be surprisingly impressed by a student who's had the courage to come back and actually follow up and find the answer and take the time to the specific issue that she raised. That might happen.

More likely what will happen is when you say, professor, what's your evidence for believing that the Bible is full of contradictions, the greater possibility is your professor will say something like, well, everybody knows, which is academic shorthand for I don't have a flying monkey as of a clue.

I have no idea. I heard Richard Dawkins say it on YouTube and it sounded really impressive but I don't know. And of course, what's happened now is 400 other students in the room, all of your classmates and peers and year group have seen what's happened.

[43 : 44] She made an accusation, you asked for evidence and there was none. And to go, when that's been done, when I've done that, when I've had friends who have sort of fellow students who've done the same kind of thing, you'd be amazed sometimes actually the conversations that leads to with other students because they've seen that you had the courage to stand up for what you believed, you raised a perfectly good question and this well-known atheist professor had

absolutely nothing.

And just because someone has a PhD doesn't mean they know anything other than outside their narrow area of expertise. And that's a very common feature in the atheism we see today. People like Professor Dawkins of Oxford and so forth who may be brilliant biologists but know very, very little when it comes to other areas.

And so I think asking people what their evidence for that and what they think is a hugely helpful question actually when accusations are thrown at the Christian faith. So we looked at two questions. Why do you think that and what do you mean by that?

The last question I wanted to share with you this afternoon and then we'll begin drawing the threads together of this session is when I first used to do this session I'm doing with you this afternoon, I must have done this now in hundreds of kind of settings around the world, I just taught two questions.

We just did the two we've just done. What do you mean by that and why do you think that? And I began to have people coming up to me, maybe this is where some of you are up this afternoon, who would say to me things like, you know Andy, I can see how those are great questions if you've got friends, colleagues, neighbours, classmates who are raising objections.

[45 : 11] You know, if you've got angry atheist friends who are objecting to your faith, those are great questions, I can see that. But all of my friends are apathetic. You know, I had somebody once say to me, this was back in Canada, a Canadian friend said to me, he said, I would pay hundreds of dollars for just one angry atheist among my colleagues because at least I would have something to work with.

But they're like jello, they're like jelly. They just don't have any, you know, thinking at all. I can't even get the slightest God conversation going. How do we change this?

How can I start a spiritual conversation with my friends who apparently are not even remotely interested in any of these kind of things? And that's where the final question I want to teach you in this first session can be really helpful.

The have you ever wondered question. And let me illustrate how it works. This time, not with a thought experiment, but actually a real world example. A few weeks ago now, a few months ago rather, I was in Plymouth, the other end of the country, and I was there for a mission week.

And during the week, one of the things that we did, myself and the church that were organizing the week of events, we spent quite a lot of time in high schools, secondary schools, and had lots of opportunities to do religious studies lessons because the vicar of the church had really good connections in all the local schools.

[46 : 27] But there was one RS teacher, one religious studies teacher who was very friendly, had us in lots of times, but was self-described agnostic, not really interested. And over the first three or four days of the mission week, I tried every trick I thought I had in my book to try and start conversations that went a little bit deeper, and nothing, absolutely nothing.

It was, you know, total water up a duck's pack, nothing, wouldn't shift, would instantly change the conversation to the football or whatever, and just wouldn't even go there. And I confess, I sort of began to write this off and think, well, okay, clearly, I'm praying for opportunities with this guy, nothing's happening, so I'll concentrate on the students.

Well, on I think the fourth day of the week, we did a series of lessons in the school where we looked at human rights. And we actually covered some of the ground we were covering in the second session this afternoon on what does it mean to be human.

And I got the kids thinking about the whole challenge of, you know, where do we find a basis for human rights and dignity, which all students are taught to believe in, if we are just atoms and particles and chemicals?

What's the actual basis for human rights? And I sort of gently shared the idea that certainly for Christians, the idea that the Bible teaches that we are made in the image of God, as it puts in Genesis chapter 1, gives a phenomenal basis for human value, human dignity, and human significance.

[47 : 42] And we had a great time, the kids really got into it, lots of really good questions and conversations. Then we went for lunch break in the staff room. It was absolutely fascinating. I didn't have to start the conversation. This teacher sat down opposite us.

He went, my words, he went, that was an interesting conversation you just had with the kids. He said, you know, I've wondered about that for years, actually. He said, you know, if there's one issue in my lack of belief in God that keeps me awake at night, it would be that one.

Because I'm not sure human rights works without God. Andy, what do you think? I was like, that's great, fantastic. I was like, I don't think it does. Let's go a bit deeper. And basically, what I'd basically asked him was the have you ever wondered question.

Have you ever wondered why we have human rights and dignity? Have you ever wondered why things like justice and morality matter so much to us? Have you ever wondered why human beings are so, you know, passionate about pursuing truth whether it's in the sciences or the humanities? Have you ever wondered why human beings, you know, get so excited about things like love and meaning and purpose and significance? Have you ever wondered why human beings invest so much time in art and music and poetry and all these other things that if we are nothing more than time plus chance plus natural selection look a little bit odd?

[48 : 57] And what the have you ever wondered question does is basically it lets us, encourages us to look for those areas in our friends' lives where they're really passionate about things. Maybe it's human rights.

Maybe it's art. Maybe it's beauty. Maybe it's justice. Maybe it's whatever it is. Maybe it's science. And find ways of gently saying, you know, have you ever wondered why that particular issue is so important?

Have you ever wondered why human beings get so excited about some of this kind of stuff?

Actually, for those of you who are into things like movies and film, learning to do this with movies is amazing because almost every movie I've ever watched, if you learn to watch it carefully, asks actually philosophical questions.

Learn to ask them. Learn to look at your friend and go, hey, you know, that movie raised some really interesting issues. What do you think? And what you're trying to do with the have you ever wondered question is basically use it to raise questions to which God is the answer.

You don't leap to God straight away. You raise the questions and walk around them with your friend before you're able to say, look, you know, have you ever wondered why we get so excited about beauty and meaning and truth and human rights and so forth?

[50 : 04] You know, the interesting thing is as a Christian, the answer is because of what God made us for something much more than just physics and chemistry and biology. So the have you ever wondered question would be incredibly helpful in sometimes just beginning to generate spiritual conversations with people otherwise we might have written off as completely apathetic, completely agnostic.

So we looked at three questions over the last 15 minutes or so and hopefully I've sort of, you know, given you some food for thought, hopefully given you some tools that you can try out in conversations with friends and neighbours and classmates and of course, you know, as I said at the start, why is learning to ask questions so helpful, so powerful, so effective?

Well, primarily because Jesus did it and he asks questions all the time. But also, I think the reason why questions are so powerful is not just because Jesus did it but also ultimately because the gospel itself is a question.

I wonder if you've ever thought about this. The gospel itself is actually all wrapped up in a question and our answer to it. What do I mean? One last Bible passage as we wrap this session up.

In Mark chapter 8 verses 27 and following we read this very famous little encounter where Mark tells us how Jesus and his disciples were on their way to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.

[51 : 24] And on the way Jesus asked them who do people say that I am? And they replied some say John the Baptist others say Elijah and still others one of the prophets. Now we're going to finish that story in a moment but just a comment at this point.

One of the things I love about this portion of scripture is I have a quite a sort of cinematographic mind and there are certain stories in the gospels I find that if I close my eyes I could almost imagine the scene or at least how I would film it if I was lucky enough to be a Hollywood director.

And this is one of the scenes I can imagine in my mind. You know Jesus and the disciples walking along the road it's been a sort of tiring day they're talking a little bit and I like to imagine Jesus having a bit of fun with the disciples here actually.

I like to imagine he has a slight twinkle in his eye as he asks this question and he looks at his disciples and with a slight twinkle in his eye he says who do the crowds say that I am lads? And the

disciples sort of begin having a bit of fun themselves actually because they've heard some pretty foolish answers around the villages.

You know the disciples start saying oh you know Jesus some of them think you're John the Baptist. Some of these crowds man some of them think you're Elijah. We've met this very strange guy in Cana of Galilee who thinks you're Donald Trump.

[52 : 29] Donald who? That's 2,000 years too early. I'm not orange. And on and on the list goes and I think I like to imagine Jesus having some fun actually letting the disciples share their answers and imagine Jesus going oh yeah boys those crowds eh those crowds.

crowds but then suddenly suddenly with that warning he looks at them and says well that's the crowds what about you? Who do you say that I am?

And I guess in the sort of cinema screen of my mind I imagine all the disciples at that point falling sort of silent embarrassed silence really. I like to imagine disciples nudging each other actually and saying you know you you tell him you tell him Thaddeus you tell him you never speak up about anything you tell him who do you think he is?

Thomas Thomas you tell him and Thomas going I'm doubting Thomas man I know nothing. And finally finally of course Peter who's always the first to speak up always bold brave Peter often the first to rush in leap out of the boat often gets it wrong but has the courage to at least say what he thinks when the others are silent it's Peter who speaks up right and says you are the Messiah the Son of God the Christ and that question who do you say that I am that Jesus either asked directly or just generated by his ministry by his teaching by the things that he said and did and claimed that was the question that Jesus asked the disciples asked the crowds asked the Pharisees asked the authorities and of course it's the question that he asks every human being who do you say that I am and that's the gospel invitation isn't it in a nutshell this is what Jesus looks like now who do you say that he is so often that's how I end conversations with sceptical friends I say look go and read the gospels and as you do ask yourself the question who is Jesus and because the gospel is a question who do you say he is

I think that's one final reason why asking questions in evangelism is so powerful as we point people towards Jesus as we point people towards him so they too can be forced to ask that question who do you say that I am and decide whether they will bow the knee and say with Peter you are the Christ and of course as Romans 10 verse 9 tells us of course that's the that's the deciding point right if you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved and using questions in evangelism have you ever wondered what do you mean by that why do you think that who do you think that Jesus is are powerful questions that can point towards the great question asker himself and hopefully lead people to that encounter with realising who Jesus is and how they need to respond well I hope these questions I've shared over the last 40 minutes or so have you ever wondered why do you think that and what do you mean by that that you too will find them helpful try them out experiment with your own questions

[55 : 21] I hope you have a go at seeing how powerful questions can be as you seek to share Christ effectively with friends neighbours colleagues and classmates thank you for listening now in a moment we're going to take a quick refreshment break for about sort of 10-15 minutes Martin is that right but before that I just want to take you a very brief moment just to tell you a little bit about Solas and that sets up the context for over the refreshment break we'd love to encourage you to take a look at the Solas stand that we brought there's my colleague David over there we'd love to talk with you and as you heard in the introduction Martin said that I come from Dundee and I head up the Solas Centre for Public Christianity and I find as I travel across Scotland some people have heard of us and some haven't so what I'd like to do is just take a few minutes to sort of share with you who we are and why we do the kind of stuff that we do and Solas at its heart really there's two things that we get very excited about we get very excited about persuasive evangelism evangelism that gets outside the four walls of the churches here we are on the four walls there's a wonderful church here in Glasgow but we love getting outside the four walls of the churches onto places like university campuses bars clubs restaurants pubs you name it the kind of places the Lord leads us and then also we love doing sessions like today and we do things like today for smaller audiences like you guys this afternoon we do it to larger audiences and we love seeing Christians get excited about evangelism and feeling a little bit more empowered that maybe we can actually share Christ with our friends our neighbours and colleagues that we can actually do it that evangelism is possible and the reason we love to connect those two things is that we're often told we live in a

secular age and that's true to a degree but one of the things

I find as I travel and speak in context outside the church is that actually people are incredibly hungry and in some ways in some senses I'd say there's almost a deeper hunger out there for meaning and significance for answering some of life's big questions than I've seen in a long time actually I think particularly among some of the younger generations that we encounter particularly on campuses I think I meet many many many students who feel the implications of living a godless life and just living for pleasure and career and success and so forth that's been tried and it's failed and people are looking for something more but at the same time the churches are even less equipped than perhaps they've ever been to answer people's questions and what we love to do is try and connect those two things and as we do that God leads us into some amazing places just to share with you some stories of where we've been of late a couple of weeks ago I was just around the corner from here at Strathclyde University and one of the privileges we have at Solas is to come alongside Christian unions and student groups to help them with their university missions and actually on the Strathclyde mission

I think Martin you were speaking at that as well were you not I seem to believe is that right not as much as me but he was there as well so we were both working hard on that and what amazed me about that week at Strathclyde was just the number of really good conversations with non-Christians the CU they did an amazing job at inviting friends getting people through the doors and some fantastic conversations two that stand out for me one night was a group of Muslims who'd come along to a games night in the middle of the week and had lots of questions about who Jesus was and then also in the middle of the week after I'd just done a lunch bar it was a group of quite feisty atheists who again had come along and sat very politely through everything and had all kinds of questions I think the opening question from one of the atheists who came to cost me at the end was how can you be a Christian when there's no evidence and I smiled sweetly and said how long have you got because I think there is actually quite a lot and we were still there 25 minutes later which was interesting and just hugely encouraged to see the kind of numbers these kind of events attract similarly we had a great experience at the other major university in this city of Wales Glasgow University just before term finished back in December it was interesting a colleague and I from Dundee were invited over to come and do a Q&A; evening that the CU at Glasgow University had put on and I confess actually it was a rather wet Tuesday evening and as my colleague and I my friend and I drove over from Dundee to Glasgow on a wet Tuesday dark evening we didn't think many students would come on such an evening and I confess we kind of grumbled most of the way down the M90 going why do we have to go all the way to Glasgow on a Tuesday night there'll be seven people and a dog and whatever well we got there with 200 people actually Glasgow the GUCU building the Glasgow Union building there was full to bursting the students had put on this kind of coffee and dessert evening and it's amazing actually when you offer people free food people do come and my friend Mark and I answered people's questions for about 90 minutes that evening phenomenal questions from an audience with lots of visitors the CU had done an incredible job but my highlight of the evening actually wasn't me it was my friend Mark because afterwards at the end of the evening we had lines of students coming up to talk to us and he had the privilege of talking to a

Muslim student who'd come that evening and this Muslim student got to the front of the line and looked at my friend and said here's my question Mark he said I have figured out that Islam's not true I've come to the conclusion over the last few months that it isn't true I've finally begun to look at the you know some of the big questions around the origins of Islam and I've become convinced Islam's not true I find Jesus deeply attractive but I'm not yet convinced Christianity is true would you pray with me would you pray with me that God would lead me into all truth what an incredible opportunity and my friend Mark went I would love to pray that prayer that prayer with you some of the opportunities we get on campuses are amazing another recent university story that hugely encourages actually was this was this gentleman I was doing a university mission at another university a few months ago and this gentleman Ashwant came on the Tuesday of the mission week and as he tells the story he you know he walked into the kind of sort of a sort of a food court area where we were doing the university lunch bars and he saw lots of people wearing yellow fluorescent jackets because the CU had the bright idea of being as bright and visible as possible they were wearing luminous yellow jackets and he sort of asked them what was going on and they told him and they offered him free food free food is a great winner and so

[61 : 37] Ashwant decided he would take the offer of a free sandwich and sat down and heard the first talk and he came back in the evening and he came on the Wednesday lunchtime and evening he came Thursday lunchtime and evening he came Friday lunchtime and evening afterwards on the Friday evening after the last event my colleague and I were talking with him and he said to he said to us he said this has been amazing he said I hadn't even heard of Jesus really until I until this week he said I only arrived in this country at the start of term I you know I've moved here from India he said I knew about Christians but not what you believed he said it's been amazing he said I can imagine how actually in a year is time I might be a Christian and we looked at him and went just out of interest Ashwant why why a year's time you know what is it you know what is it you feel you need to believe and Ashwant went on he said I don't know well you you tell me everything you've said this week has been very compelling so my colleague said well do you believe that Jesus is the is is the son of God and he went I do I do I said very much so he said the kind of claims he made he couldn't be anything else could he interesting we said do you know do you believe that you're a you know you're a sinner that your life is broken that you need

God's grace and rescue and forgiveness and Ashwant looked at the floor he went I know what my life is like I very much have no doubt that I need God's God's forgiveness okay you know do you think do you believe that Jesus died for your sins on the cross and rose from the grave three days later and he went well Andy you spoke on that at lunchtime the historical evidence is overwhelming yes I do so we just read in Romans 10 verse 9 he went I believe all of that went well well we can pray with you now to become a Christian if you'd like he went yes please and so he went from I'm going to be a Christian in a year to I'm now a Christian within the space of six and a half minutes it was actually quite amazing story and he's now being disciplined there by the students on that campus so amazing things happen we find when we get out the four walls of the church into the public square we also do events in pubs and cafes and restaurants we did a wonderful event in a curry house in Kilmarnock not far from here a few months ago where one of the churches we were working with rang us up and said hey we've got a great idea for an evangelistic event we're thinking of renting a local Indian restaurant if we did that and filled it with non-Christians would you come and we said yes and there were 55 seats in the restaurant and they managed to get 75 people which made for a slightly friendly evening but it was incredible actually to have again the opportunity to share the gospel in between the chicken korma and the vindaloo but people hungry not just for curry but hungry for answers and then we do this kind of stuff online as well increasing in this digital age that we live in and if you haven't come across our short answers videos do go to the so last website and we've got now about 50 of these three to four minute videos free to download share on facebook carry around on your phone if someone asks you a tough question you can just show them an answer and we've been hugely excited actually half a million downloads on these in the last year or so and then we do other kind of bits and pieces online as well if you've ever come across the premiere unbelievable show amazing evangelistic resource if you never discovered this put the words premiere and unbelievable into google you'll find it and they get christians and atheists debating on all kinds of topics and so i had the privilege of debating one of the world's most famous atheist ethicist peter singer lovely australian guy a few months ago and we've been hugely encouraged by their response to that an atheist writing in saying they've been really provoked to look more seriously at christianity because of the conversation that peter and i were able to have so just as we wrap this up and head into the coffee break you know the thing that excites me about so last we know the reason i people often say andy why did you come here to scotland from toronto i mean toronto dundee dundee toronto dundee is you know it's it's it's significant but it's not really up there with toronto people often say why did you come here and i say well because solace is so exciting it's unique it's unique in scotland it's unique in the north of england actually you have to go as far south as oxford to find anything uh i think like uh like solace and we've got huge plans uh for the next uh the next few years we want to grow the team here in scotland obviously you've got one english guy right now speaking but we're looking to raise up the next generation of young scottish uh evangelists and really grow uh the reach and reach more non-christians train more christians we're looking to expand our digital media presence that we think we can do a lot more online we've got some hugely exciting plans uh for the next couple of years and uh likewise our evangelism training we're working on an e-learning course uh that we're going to be launching in the next 18 months to really help churches across the country uh take the kind of stuff you've heard this afternoon but get it into small groups and and get more people sharing their faith naturally with their

friends at work and school at university and uh and so on we do an incredible amount at solace uh with a very very tiny uh amount of money uh which is the wonderful thing i've never seen an organization actually do quite so much uh on so little um but we can't do without help and so the kind of plea for help as we go into the uh the coffee break is if you if you've enjoyed the last session even the bad jokes um if you get excited about stories like us once and excited about stories of god working on campus and it just you know it gets you a thrill in you hearing that you know evangelism happens that people are becoming christians and if you get excited about what it would look like if more christians uh got motivated and equipped and trained up to reach our friends and our neighbors and our peers we would love you to help us do more of that and you can do that by becoming a solar supporter for as little as three pound a month there's a little form uh on your seats like uh like this one three pound a month that's the price of a coffee at starbucks okay i grant jim mcdonald's at the price of one and a half coffees and as a thank you uh we will give you a a free book uh a very kind donor bought us a lot of these books to give away this is uh there's chapters in here by me and other solace uh speakers and writers a lot of the content we've covered this afternoon uh in here and uh we can give a copy into your hot little hands uh this afternoon if you uh fill that form out and give it to david you will he would i would be delighted to give you that book in fact we brought 18 of these i'd love to take none of them back to dundee but we shall see how that goes anyway that's who we are and uh thank you for inviting us uh to be with you this afternoon we're going to take a 15 minute tea and coffee break and then we'll be back here for our second session thanks for listening you