

# The Testimony of Nigel Kenny & An Update On The Work Of The Christian Institute

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Preacher: Mr Nigel Kenny

[ 0 : 00 ]     Okay, so I've been calling my recent presentation Strength in the Day of Adversity, but in many ways, really, my life's testimony over these past 40 years has had a lot of that really kind of built into it, our weakness as well in the Day of Adversity.

So I thought of maybe just bringing that in just as we kind of go through things. And in particular, I think the Lord has used all that adversity to build resilience in my own life, which has equipped me for the work that I've been doing for these past 11 years with the Institute.

So hopefully it'll all kind of tie in together. Next slide, please, Stephen. I was doing a Zoom series of webinars back in the autumn with my good friend and colleague, Gordon MacDonald.

Who was with CARE for many years and he's now heading up the CARE Not Killing Alliance. So we were doing a tremendous number of webinars.

Not a tremendous number of webinars, but it was tremendous to work with him, really. That's why the word tremendous kind of came to mind. I've worked informally with Gordon over many, many years, going back to Scotland for Marriage, no-to-name person.

[ 1 : 19 ]     And now working closely with him. The Institute's been working very closely with Gordon with the current proposals, both in Westminster and Holyrood, for introducing assisted suicide into law.

This is the first time we've actually had, even though it was a Zoom meeting, a series of Zoom webinars with a guest speaker, which I think has just been a tremendous step forward, really, to acknowledge Gordon's expertise in the issue and to be working with him.

So I put together an apologetic for why it is so important for us as Christians to be concerned about these proposals. So that was a very useful exercise in and of itself.

And one of the verses that I've been able to find that really speaks about the importance of us doing what we can to help those who are being put under pressure to end their lives.

And, of course, this verse would also apply to abortion, perhaps in some ways even more clearly. And it was Proverbs 24, 11. Rescue those who are being taken away to death. Hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.

[ 2 : 33 ]     But when I looked at the verses surrounding it, I thought, you know, there's a lot of really, really good stuff here in terms of a fuller talk on the passage itself.

So that's something that's really developed over the past few months. So these verses, Proverbs 24, 10 to 12. If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.

Rescue those who are being taken away to death. Hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, behold, we did not know this. Does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?

Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it? And will he not repay man according to his work? So, in a nutshell, I guess my testimony is I was raised in, I suppose you could say, a nominally Christian home, church on Sundays, given the summer off once I was a bit older.

So not really a particularly serious commitment. Really a kind of Sunday morning only sort of faith was what I was raised with.

[ 3 : 50 ] But towards the end of my school days, there were three teachers in particular, all Christians, that all had a significant influence on me in very different ways.

My Latin teacher pulled me up about my profane language. And I guess that was, Paul says, through the law, I gained knowledge of sin well through Mr. Cannon.

I gained knowledge of sin at school. And, you know, he really pulled me up for that. And my history teacher, who actually went on to go into the ministry himself and has recently retired as professor of church history at Edinburgh Theological Seminary, he became a free church minister.

I would discuss all sorts of metaphysical and philosophical questions with him. I was something of a thinker. And I was always amazed at how he was at peace with reconciling God's sovereignty with human responsibility.

So that was, in itself, a very powerful witness. But the Christian teacher that impressed me most and really drew me to the Lord was a man called Bill McFarlane, who was, I don't know what they call them nowadays, but in my day, it was called the form teacher.

[ 5 : 13 ] You'd have a teacher at each of the years you'd have at school. This was a little like a guidance teacher. They would ask you what you were hoping to do with your life. And he was just so different from the other teachers.

I think it was, I started my fifth year. He'd not long come to the school. And he set up a scripture union group there. And just, I didn't realize it at the time, but looking back on it, it was, he just exuded the love of Christ, the peace of Christ, the grace of Christ.

And I wanted what he had. So I started going along to the scripture union group. And about a year and a half later, there was an outreach event in my hometown of Stirling, that's the home city of Stirling, we can say.

And it was a Baptist church that was organized at Stirling Baptist. And they had folks from the Queen's Park Baptist Praise Band. Some of you may remember them from the late 70s and early 80s.

They did a very, very fruitful itinerant ministry around the west of Scotland and the central belt. And it was a well-publicized event. I'd heard about it in my own church.

[ 6 : 25 ] I'd heard about it through the scripture union group. I heard about it through a friend of mine, who I knew a little bit, who invited me personally. A fine young Christian man who's now a GP in Dunfermline.

So 30th of May, 1982, I go along to the Albert Halls, which is at the town hall in Stirling. And just everything came together at that time.

And the gospel became very, very real to me. Indeed, I was very conscious of it no longer being something that I was thinking about in terms of trying to reconcile in my own mind.

But it was a very profound spiritual encounter with the risen Lord himself. And I spoke with those in the band afterwards that were leading the worship.

And there'd been an epilogue, I think. I've been trying to find out over the years. I think it was probably Alistair Begg that gave it. He was still in Scotland in those days, 1982, before he went to the States.

[ 7 : 24 ] And just shared with me 1 John 1.9, and it really jumped out of the page at me.

Really, I was very convicted of my sin and was very clear from that wonderful verse that simply taking our sin to the Lord, and we experience the cleansing and the forgiveness that only he can give.

So some of you may be familiar with Norman Warren's The Journey Into Life Gospel tract. And that was going even back 40 years ago and still going strong.

And the folks took me through that. And I committed my life to the Lord, trusted Christ for salvation. So that was the end of May 1982. So that autumn, I went up to Glasgow University to study law.

And I started attending Queensborough Baptist Church. And as you're familiar, as with here, as with Airdrie, as with Hamilton, same architects.

[ 8 : 33 ] So being in a building like this brings back those very fond memories because the architecture is so similar to what they had. Obviously, they've moved on to the much bigger building now, but it was in Queen's Drive back in the early 80s.

So that was a very, very special time altogether. I guess the first adversity that I faced really was struggling to pass exams as a law student.

They were a lot tougher than I'd thought. So I had plenty of resets over the first three years I was a student, in particular in my third year. I had so many resets that year, unfortunately, and I failed all of them.

I wasn't allowed to continue into fourth year. I was doing European Law Honours, hoping to maybe use my language ability from school days in Brussels or Luxembourg.

But all that came crashing down. And indeed, perhaps even my ability to finish my law degree was in jeopardy as well. So I had to appeal to be allowed to repeat my final year, to repeat my third year at university, to have an ordinary law degree.

[ 9 : 49 ] Thankfully, I was allowed to do that by the skin of my teeth, so to speak, and was able to graduate in 1986. So from there on, I trained as a lawyer in the East Coast with one of the bigger law firms there in Angus, based in Dundee.

And things were going quite well then. And I got qualified as a solicitor. Then I took a job after that, even though some of my fellow trainees were saying, hmm, you've got to think twice about working for that particular solicitor.

And I was, oh, I'll be fine. She grew up across the road from me. No problem. I'm sure there'll be no difficulty. Not so at all. Unfortunately, her husband got involved on the wrong side of the law.

I had a bit of a drink problem. It was all over the newspapers. So as you can imagine, the business for the firm plummeted. And there was no new stuff coming in. So since I'd been there a few months, I was out the door.

So there was another bit of adversity that I faced then. But thankfully, the Lord provided new work in Dundee. So I was there for the next couple of years.

[ 11 : 10 ] And in the ensuing period, I had already met my future wife through Stirling Baptist Church, actually.

Another Baptist church connection in late 1987. We'd kept in touch just as friends. But that moved on to romance in 1990.

And then we got married in 1992. Moved down to Stronar and set up home there. I was with a smaller law firm there with a strong Christian heritage to it, which was something I was very keen to be involved with that.

And to be the next. In fact, again, a further Baptist connection. Went along to Stronar Baptist and Winston Jordan. Some of you may remember Winston. It's a little bit of pressure put on me.

Because there was a very fine Christian solicitor who had actually died a couple of years earlier with the firm. And this had, in a roundabout way, kind of created the vacancy a couple of years later for me to go and work there.

[ 12 : 23 ] And he was referred to as the kind of Moses that had moved on. And here was Joshua coming to replace him. So a bit of pressure put on me there. But that was a great time in many ways.

But through various other series of circumstances and situations, some of which really were out with my control, that work came to an end after just about only 18 months.

So there was more adversity there. But the Lord and his goodness brought an opportunity in Dumfries. So it went through there.

And very difficult at an early stage in life. I was just starting to establish life in Stronar. And then having to move to Dumfries. That was particularly difficult for my wife to accept.

But Dumfries proved to be a place of great blessing for us for many, many years, some 19 years that we were there. But my time there within law was not an easy time in many, many ways.

[ 13 : 33 ] The first job that I'd taken, again, the firm basically was split up just shortly before I took the job. And it turned out that a whole lot of business had gone with the partner that had left.

So once again, I was left out of work at the beginning of 1994. At the same time, my mother was terminally ill with breast cancer.

So I've been thinking a lot about her today being Mother's Day. And it was one of the hardest things as well as her, you know, this time in 1994 going through that. I didn't want her to have the additional burden of knowing that I was out of work.

So while we could have gone to visit her through the week, sadly, I suppose, to keep up the pretense that I still had work, I only came at weekends to visit her.

Up from Dumfries to Stirling. But she was a smart lady. And she guessed that I perhaps didn't have any work because I was never talking about work when I saw her.

[ 14 : 35 ] I was always changing the subject. But that was a very difficult time. She was only 68. She passed away just shortly after my 30th birthday in April.

And that was a time of particular adversity. Obviously, we hadn't even been two years married. No grandchildren for her at that stage.

And she just loved children. And just to lose her at such a young age was extremely hard for myself. And obviously, for my dad and my sister as well.

But the thing is that while so often we faint in the day of adversity, I think this verse shows us that that's not something that's inevitable.

And it's certainly not something that is desirable. What Solomon here seems to be saying is that there's an element of rebuke there, isn't there?

[ 15 : 37 ] That if we faint in the day of adversity, well, that shows that our strength is small. And really, our strength should not be small because the resources that we have in the Lord are intended to make us strong.

So let's come on to the first point. Next slide, please, Stephen. There's a great need for spiritual strength, isn't there? Because I've just listed there a few of the areas of adversity that I've experienced.

And there was much, much worse to come, in particular, in relation to my legal career, which really threatened all sorts of difficulty. And there was difficulties in the church that we were in as well.

Not the Baptist church this time. You'll be pleased to hear. But the church we were involved in had all sorts of problems over a number of years. And different problems as well that I, as the church secretary, had to deal with head on.

And the final one was the most painful because it led to us actually having to leave the church. Irreconcilable differences with the pastor that we called.

[ 16 : 49 ] But praise God. He and I are now completely reconciled. He's hugely supportive of the work of the CI. And I was just preaching back in my old church in Dumptreeth just a few weeks ago.

So praise God for his grace that enables us to reconcile with one another. I'll not go into any more detail about the difficulties that they had.

But certainly, I've had my own fair share of adversity, in particular, during those times. But there's a happy ending, if ending's the right word, certainly a happy resolution to all of them, which I'll come to just in a wee minute.

But the need for spiritual strength, I'm sure, is there for all of us. I'm sure that most of not all of us here will have known the adversity and the pain of bereavement in particular.

I guess that comes to pretty well. All of us, if we live any kind of number of years, we will experience the heartache of bereavement. Others may have also, like myself, known the adversity of unemployment, the adversity of difficult relations, sometimes with family members or, indeed, even other Christians, which can be very difficult to deal with.

[ 18 : 05 ] But what this passage and so many others in Scripture, I think, really exhorts us to do is not to just think that somehow fainting in adversity is inevitable or somehow even a good thing.

Now, obviously, the Lord's able to work all things together for good. But I think there are so many passages in Scripture that exhort us and encourage us to be strong, to be strong in the Lord, that we should avail ourselves of the great resources to make us strong in the Lord that are available.

So the next point, please, Stephen. The source of spiritual strength is just a few verses earlier in Proverbs 24. Next slide, please. These lovely verses in verses 5 and 6.

A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might. For by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.

So if we are to be wise, if we are to be those that are able to be strong, we need to know where that strength comes from.

[ 19 : 21 ] We need to grow in our knowledge of the great things that God tells us in his Word about where strength is to be found. Next slide, please.

One of my favorite verses is buried there in Daniel chapter 11. I've had to go to the New King James to get it, but this particular translation, I think, is so apt.

The people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits. And I think that that is undoubtedly the secret of spiritual strength for each one of us is in our knowing God.

In Nehemiah we read, don't we, that the joy of the Lord is our strength. And then next slide, Paul urges us in Ephesians 6 verse 10, I'm finally getting around to doing the McShane Bible reading plan.

Four chapters a day, four or five chapters a day sometimes. It's been such a blessing over these past few months. And Ephesians 6 was just this week. So how timely, finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

[ 20 : 30 ] And that's an exhortation for all of us. That section of Ephesians is absolutely addressed to the whole church at Ephesus. It's not just for those in leadership.

It's for every single one of us that we are to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Back to my testimony, I ended up, my legal career had come to an end.

I'd be made redundant for my final job, which was with a housing association. And everything just seemed to be, as I were, really for quite a long period of time, almost two years.

And even though in the second year, I had done the Cornhill Scotland course at the Tron Church. And I'd attended the Tron, sitting under Eric Alexander's ministry, for most of the rest of my time as a student.

And I'd been greatly blessed, indeed, by that ministry. It really sort of set me up for the rest of my life. But even after that, finished that in 2010, pushing various doors for ministry opportunities.

[ 21 : 46 ] But nothing seemed to be happening. And again, that was further adversity, really, that summer, 2010. But I'd been on the Christian Institute's mailing list since the late 1990s.

And I'd been following with great interest all that had been happening. And one of the things I'll just kind of bring in just now, another adversity was, I guess, what you could call a failed investment.

Lawyers are often known as men of business. And that's very true, especially if we're working in a town setting, as I was in Dumfries. And you look to invest kind of wisely for your family.

And I had a good friend who was a Christian that had bought a couple of holiday properties in Turkey. And, you know, a successful financial advisor, you think, right, well, wherever he's investing his money, that's going to be a good place to invest.

So we've done the same thing. But unfortunately, with the 2008 kind of financial crash in the States that obviously affected the whole world, that meant that investment in holiday lets was kind of the bottom sort of fell out of the market there.

[ 23 : 03 ] No one was wanting to buy the properties. We'd planned to have a short-term investment there with a good return. When we sold the place once it was completed, that didn't work out.

So we had to find money from elsewhere to finish the purchase and think, right, we need to rent this property out. So I was thinking, right, well, there's a whole lot of them in the actual development.

How are we going to, you know, find people that are going to let, to use the place for a holiday let? So where it is in southwest Turkey is very close to Ephesus.

You can make a day trip from there. It's also, of course, close to Galatia, close to Miletus, close to many of the places where the Apostle Paul was.

So I was thinking, well, there may well be a number of Christians that would like to have a nice sunny holiday in southwest Turkey, go and see Ephesus, perhaps hire a car, and go and see all the places where Paul went on his missionary journey.

[ 24 : 07 ] So we advertised in a couple of Christian newspapers, including Evangelicals Now. And there are lovely folks there because what they do is if you advertise in them, they send you a free copy of the newspaper.

You're probably wondering where on earth this is going. Well, I'll tell you right now where it's going. So as I was looking through Evangelicals Now, I thought, well, it would be interesting to see since I've been pushing various doors, nothing's been happening, things were at a pretty desperate stage.

I thought, well, see there's perhaps something that's going to come up in the situations vacant at the back of that edition. You guessed it. The Christian Institute had a job going. And I can't think of any other way.

Positions at the Institute are much more widely advertised now. They weren't back in those days. But that, in the Lord's providence, was how I heard about the Christian Institute job.

And while I didn't think I would get it, and I needed a lot of encouragement from my wife to even apply, in the providence of God, I did get an interview. And no one was more surprised than myself.

[ 25 : 13 ] Because the initial job that I had was really a journalist job, and I didn't have any kind of background there at all. But they took me on. I was in the newsroom, in the communications team, for the first six months.

And then the director, Colin Hart, called me through just in April 2011 and said, how would you like to be the Institute's first Scotland officer?

So the rest, as they say, is history. So that really is not only my own testimony of how I became a Christian and how the Lord has strengthened me and brought me through much adversity, but through even the adversity of my legal career coming to an end, being out of work for a good couple of years, the failed investment in Turkey.

The Lord used all of that to bring me to the point of knowing about the Christian Institute's position that they had there and bringing my life in that direction.

And it has been such an honour and a privilege and really a joy as well to serve the Lord through this hugely important ministry, as has been mentioned by Bill already in prayer.

[ 26 : 27 ] So that's how I ended up working for the Christian Institute. And let's continue with going through these verses just now, next point. So there's the source of our spiritual strength in our knowledge of God and being wise through that knowledge, not only for salvation, but indeed for everything that comes with the Christian life as well.

We have the true spiritual wisdom. Next slide, please. So that the fruit of spiritual strength there in verse 11, that in particular in this instance, Solomon says that we are to rescue those who are heading off to death, to the slaughter.

Now, clearly we can see that ultimately in spiritual death, in spiritual slaughter, so to speak, heading for judgment, heading for judgment day, that clearly we are to snatch those who are heading for a lost eternity.

But I think also we can see that in terms of physical death, rescuing those who are in all sorts of danger, and in our own day and age in particular, I think abortion and assisted suicide are the two great issues in terms of untimely death for humans.

Although, obviously, there is the threat of the war in Ukraine escalating to a global scale, thankfully we have had over 75 years of peace in Europe, which has been, I think, almost unique in European history.

[ 28 : 11 ] That length of time, without there being any Europe-wide conflict, obviously there was 25 years ago there was the Balkan conflict, but in terms of many countries in Europe being involved, it's been an incredibly long time of peace.

And I guess it's always kind of lulled us a little bit into a kind of false sense of security. But in terms of death, untimely death, often there's been through lack of medical care and infant mortality that was rife in the Victorian era, for example, with the massive improvements there's been in medical care.

Again, death is seen as something almost the people don't talk about anymore. And, of course, we've found with the last two years, haven't we, with the pandemic, that it has come really back onto sort of the forefront of our thinking.

But in terms of things that we can each do, one of the things the Christian Institute is very passionate about is the sanctity of human life, whether it be at the start of life or at the end of life.

The end of life, in particular, is the issue just now. Consciousness at times is moving on. So can we go over to the next slide, please, Stephen. Of course, the rest of this passage in verse 12 challenges us with the folly of excusing our own spiritual weakness, excusing in particular our inactivity.

[ 29 : 39 ] I think that's there, isn't it, which says, you know, but the individual kind of rhetorically saying, but we didn't know about this. And then Solomon's saying, well, it's the Lord knows your thoughts.

He knows whether you're telling the truth, that you didn't know about something. You can't plead ignorance before him. And he's the one that guards your soul. Does he not perceive what is really going on in your mind, whether you're just turning a blind eye to the needs of society, turning a blind eye to things that you could do yourself to help things.

And then there's the most sobering of challenges there at the end, saying that there is a day of reckoning coming, a day of judgment, when God will repay each according to what he's done.

And that's there, Psalm 62, Ecclesiastes 12, Romans 2. The day of judgment is not going to be all singing and dancing, even for those who profess the name of Christ.

I was just preaching last week in Greenvew, our home church, on 1 Corinthians 3, about the work being tested by fire and some work being burnt up.

[ 30 : 51 ] The day of the Lord is going to be a solemn, solemn time for each one of us. And we need to prepare ourselves to be ready to make sure that we are seeking to serve the Lord in whichever way he would call us to.

As we have opportunity to do good, as Paul says in Galatians 6, we ought to do so, not only to those of the household of faith, but indeed to all men. Let's move on quickly.

So several things happening just now. There's the proposed conversion therapy ban, which was just debated on a little less than two weeks ago in the Scottish Parliament.

Next slide, please, Stephen. Thank you. What we have done is to set up our latest campaign at the Christian Institute called Let Us Pray, and it's a deliberate play on words because if activists have their way with a ban in particular in Scotland, possibly in Westminster as well, then we would not be permitted to pray as freely as we might want to, as we would want to indeed.

Next slide. So if you want to sign up to get emails from us in relation to that, that's over and above what comes through the Christian Institute mailing list, then letuspray.uk is the website to go on to.

[ 32 : 16 ] Next slide. Just a couple of things from the debate. Really quite chilling. Some of the new MSPs, hugely anti-Christian.

The tragedy with this young lady, Emma Roddick, was actually she had something of a Christian upbringing. She attended a scripture union group herself in her teens, but she identifies as bisexual.

It's basically saying there that she does not believe that Christians should be allowed to hold biblical beliefs on sexuality and sexual ethics.

That's what she was basically saying in the debate. Next slide, please. This is a very interesting lady, Pam Duncan Glancy. She's absolutely fantastic on assisted suicide.

When that comes to be debated, she is going to be one of the key politicians on our side. She's wheelchair-bound herself, coming from a disability rights perspective.

[ 33 : 14 ] So, incredibly powerful politician on that front. But as is so often the case, we find that politicians may be with us on one matter and massively against us on another.



For Pam Duncan Glancy, that's the case here. She, again, very much in favour of as strong a ban as possible, basically says that it's only if this comes in that religion will be a force for good.

Because she knows that such a ban will force many churches either to be completely silent about biblical ethics or even to change their thinking, which, of course, is exactly what these activists want the churches to be doing.

So, it's a very serious matter. It's not even at the bill stage yet, but it's likely to be in the Parliament 2022-23, so after the summer or maybe even into next year.

But it's a matter of great concern for us. Next slide, please. Because Nicola Sturgeon and Patrick Harvey have said that they want to bring in as comprehensive a ban as possible by the end of 2023.

[ 34 : 26 ] Now, we have obtained an excellent QC's opinion from a human rights expert who believes that absolutely such a law could very, very successfully be challenged in the courts.

So, there's some hope for you that if the law is passed, in many ways, the worse the law is, the easier it will be for us to challenge it through the courts.

But, of course, nothing is guaranteed. So, we do covet your prayers and do pray for the politicians in relation to this as well. Next slide, please, Stephen. Thanks. Education is another issue that weighs heavily on my heart and, indeed, all of us at the Institute.

Next slide, please. This campaign group that I'm sure I've mentioned before when I've spoken here, the Time for Inclusive Education, really have a stranglehold, similar to Stonewall, on the Scottish Government and, indeed, the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Government in particular.

Unbelievably, they actually now have the Scottish Government bankrolling them. You know, this is a lobby group that have been paid by the government to lobby the government.

[ 35 : 36 ] I mean, unbelievable, but that's what's actually happening. And beyond that, they actually now have been given complete access to every school in Scotland, secondary schools in particular, not only paid for by the Scottish Government, but the materials that they're making available are on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Now, historically, the state has stayed out of education in Scotland, but not anymore. So there is this... Now, it's not even a website. It's called a platform, which means that it's password protected, and the only people that can access to the full materials are teachers, not the pupils, not the parents.

And my own view is that that is completely illegal, but we need, basically, a brave parent or a brave teacher to come to us to say, I want to challenge this.

And if that happens, then we will be able to launch a legal challenge against that being used. The problem with this is that, especially after our success to name person in the Supreme Court, the Scottish Government have got very wise to things.

So there's not even non-statutory guidance. So there's nothing that we can actually attack. There's no law that says the schools must use this. But, of course, if it comes with the brand on behalf of the Scottish Government, you know that the vast majority of schools are going to feel, well, we'd better go along with it then if the government says we should.

[ 37 : 01 ] Well, that is the way, sadly, that so many schools are thinking these days. Next slide. Also of great concern last summer, further state intrusion in education.

This is guidance, but it's non-statutory guidance. So, again, harder for us to review judicially through the courts, again. But if a school or a local authority is saying, basically, there's no opt-out, you have to do this, the kids have to hear this, the government's told us to use this, therefore we must do so.

So if a school or a local authority treats it as if it's binding law, again, that can be challenged, but it has to be a brave parent, a brave pupil, a brave teacher. That comes forward to seek our help with that.

But this is the transgender guidance where the children as young as four are encouraged to explore their gender identity. Parents are not to be told if the child is struggling with their identity.

And controversial groups like Stonewall and Mermaids are suggested for further, in quotes, support. Next slide, please. The material on sex ed is shocking as well.

[ 38 : 07 ] rshp.scot is the website if you want to do it, but it's kind of advisory to, you know, what you will find there will shock you, but I think it's important we're aware of what our children and our grandchildren are being taught.

Next slide, please. So I've got lots of free literature over there and including copies of this Leap Leap Leap Equipped for Equality. So if you have children or grandchildren of school age, please do take a copy of that.

It's a really helpful layout Q&A; for what schools can and cannot and should and should not be teaching on all these subjects. Next slide, please. John Denning.

I'm sure I've mentioned John before. If you have a specific question, he's the man to go to and is absolutely excellent, particularly as a former teacher, how to deal with schools in a non-confrontational way.

He's absolutely a master of diplomacy. Next slide, please. I've mentioned about, obviously, from Proverbs 24, sanctity of life, so important, just a shocking statistic.

[ 39 : 12 ] Next slide. Nine and a half million abortions in Great Britain since 1968 and yet still they're not satisfied. They want a complete abortion on demand and get rid of the conscience clause for midwives and doctors and other health professionals.

There's that push for that that is still happening with activists. Next slide, please. Assisted suicide as well. Now, a bit of good news.

from six years ago, nearly seven years ago, actually, Patrick Harvey's attempt to bring it into law. Next slide. It was heavily defeated, 82 votes to 36. Next slide.

But Liam MacArthur is pushing ahead with his own proposals. Now, he's a much more plausible, a much more effective communicator, shall we say. So they're using him this time round to try and get the law changed.

Next slide. It was a big public consultation just before Christmas there and a bill is expected later this year.

[ 40 : 19 ] But we're thankful that, now this is interesting, Jim Wallace was actually Liam MacArthur's mentor. Both Orkney men, both Orkadians, and yet he's completely against his prodigy, his protégé rather, and has come out very, very strongly against assisted suicide.

So he's probably one of the most respected retired politicians in Scotland. So carries a great deal of weight where he said there that to introduce assisted suicide would be the crossing of the Rubicon from which there would be no return.

Next slide, please. Another encouragement this week, my family's own former MP in Stirling, Michael Forsyth, been a peer for many years.

He was very sneakily trying to force the House of Commons, next slide, to introduce assisted suicide over the next 12 months, but just a couple of weeks ago, next slide, a late night vote when a lot of people just get fed up and go home.

Sorry, back a slide again. Thanks. has defeated 179 votes to 145. So, home straight, final point on, next slide, thanks, on the work of our Legal Defence Fund.

[ 41 : 32 ] Now, we've got a really, really encouraging story here. Getting back to Stirling, which is where I, as I said, I was born and raised. Kenneth Ferguson is an elder in Stirling Free Church and he was the chief executive of the Robertson Trust, but he was unfairly dismissed for his beliefs on marriage.

So, we're going to watch a little video now, next slide, next couple of, next slide again. This one has the own experience. I was the chief executive of the Robertson Trust, the largest charitable funder in Scotland.

I'd been with them nearly 10 years and in that 10 years we really were creating a huge impact in terms of support of the charity sector in Scotland. I was discriminated against by the Trust and I was discriminated against personally by the chair of the Trust.

I didn't know how I was going to try and deal with this, but the CI said, yeah, let's have a look at it and see what they could do to help. We were totally vindicated in court.

I'm an elder and the treasurer at Stirling Free Church. The church is growing and the minister came to me and said, look, the church is really outgrown the premises that we were renting.

[ 42 : 44 ] Is there any chance of us being able to rent the space which you're about to open in Stirling for charities? And I said, well, I'm obviously conflicted but speak to my team and see if we can do it because you are a charity.

It's exactly what this space is to be used for. And so they agreed terms and they signed a licence to occupy and off we set.

And then on the Friday before the barracks were due to formally open my chair, Shonad McPherson, she came to visit it and at that point the staff team were putting out the chairs for the church on the Sunday and she said, what's this for?

And they explained, they said, oh, it's for Ken's Church and she said, which church? And they said, Stirling Free Church and she said, they don't believe in same-sex marriage, not the free church.

And so I went in on Monday morning to find her sitting in my office and she looked at me and said, are you an elder in the free church? And I said, yes. And she said, are you aware that they've rented space?

[ 43 : 57 ] I said, yes, of course, but I've had nothing to do with it because I've absent myself from it. and she said, there's got to be a formal investigation. I was then issued a letter to say, you have to appear at the lawyer's office on the Monday.

I was given this on the Thursday night at six o'clock and an outcome of this will be that potentially you'll be sacked. And as you can imagine, that was horrendous. But interestingly, one of the emails that came into my inbox absolutely struck me as if God was speaking to me directly there and it said, do not be afraid of this vast army.

Stand still and watch the deliverance of the Lord. And it's from 2 Chronicles 20 verses 15 to 17. And I read it and re-read it. I just couldn't believe it. It just felt as if God was really speaking to me at this incredibly difficult time.

On the Monday at 4.30 I get this email through saying, you are dismissed with immediate effect. And ten minutes later there's a ring at the doorbell and it's a courier.

And he said, I have this dismissal letter for you and I also have this offer letter to settle. The press statement went out and they said that I had stepped down as chief executive.

[ 45 : 14 ] You know, just lies. It wasn't true. And the trust were very keen for me to settle, to sign a non-disclosure agreement. And to be honest, without the Christian Institute I would have had to sign that because I could not have taken on that battle.

The CI were fantastic. An absolute godsend to me. I didn't know how I was going to try and deal with this but the CI just brought a whole confidence, a whole calmness to the situation and said, yeah, let's have a look at it and see what they could do to help.

My family obviously felt my stress. We were in a situation where with lockdown my daughter lost her job my wife's business had to close and I was unemployed.

But God is good and God provided and God provided a way through. And each of us came back and each of us can say yes, God has proven himself to be faithful and true.

Every morning before we went in to court the church met for an early morning prayer meeting and on the second day the minister said I really want to pray today that something will happen in court which will not be of man but will be clearly of God and this will change the whole direction of the case.

[ 46 : 31 ] What also happened was one of the ladies said the Lord really has spoken to me and I feel I should share a verse with you just stand the battle is not yours stand and see the deliverance.

So what happened was we went into court and Shonag MacPherson the chair was being cross-examined by our barrister and he said to her how do you know this?

How can you be certain of what you've just said? And she said I wrote it in a notebook and he turned to the judge and said I would petition the court that this notebook be released because it hadn't been released to us and the judge said yes it should be released and this notebook was basically verbatim her conversations with all the other trustees saying he's got to go we've got to sack him and this is before they'd even met me before they'd even started anything of the investigation or any of the process and my barrister after it said I've been in court a long time and he said I wouldn't use this phrase lightly but that was miraculous he said I have never seen something come from nowhere which has had such a profound impact on the case and I said well people have been praying and he said well whoever it was those were powerful prayers I've got something in my pocket here and in my bible readings one of the stories that I read was David and Goliath and how David went and he picked up five smooth stones and he only used one and he launched this against Goliath and it killed Goliath

I was out fighting my Goliath and the Christian Institute this is for me this was the Christian Institute and what it was was in God's hands this smooth pebble then flew and killed the giant that was trying to battle me and each day I was in court I had this with me and I would just pray Lord I pray that the Christian Institute that they will be like this smooth pebble and that they will land and they will land with effectiveness in your hands the day before the result came out both my wife and I read the bible in a year and we just keep reading through it and the reading that day was tomorrow go out tomorrow for tomorrow you will see the deliverance of the Lord and then the next day out of the blue the judgment came God was saying to me tomorrow you will see you will see the deliverance and it was and it was a clear vindication of our position we won on the unfair dismissal and the judgment was really damning praise God for the way that he has enabled me to really hold fast to the truth that is in his scriptures to say don't worry this battle is not yours stand and you will see the deliverance of the Lord and that has been my lasting impression of this

I have been able to stand and see the deliverance of the Lord well it's been an incredible honour for us to help Kenneth achieve secure justice and indeed not just for himself but for every Christian that holds to the biblical beliefs on marriage should never be fired from their job for belonging to a church that holds to these biblical beliefs also in relation to the case the free church is own case in many ways even more significant because although you're blessed to own your own building here probably the vast majority of especially the newer churches in Scotland rent premises or the various church plants that are springing up all over the country seek to have rented premises if the free church in Stirling had lost this case then that would have put a lot of that work in jeopardy and Jason knows

[ 50 : 47 ] Jason knows all about that with his previous charge in Alawa where a church plant there he kindly made his own building available for them when community association there had said no to a new church plant in Alawa because of their biblical beliefs on marriage but the fact that this case settled is a kind of informal precedent because the Robertson Trust were forced to admit that they had broken the law in terms of refusing indeed ending the lease ending the license agreement for using their premises next slide please next slide so if you feel that you might need some help in terms of any religious liberty issues there's the team there next slide please and please do either online or I should have actually had the slide with this particular image on it we've got a little blue basket there if you're not already on our mail list

I hope the presentation this afternoon has persuaded you that really it's a very exciting ministry that's having a real help under God it's simply we believe that he has called the institute into being and he is pleased to use it in all sorts of ways and I think Kenneth's case is a very tangible way in which he's used the legal expertise of Sam Webster and the legal team that we were using to bring about great justice not only for him but for his congregation in those two separate cases just to say as well you will be probably the first people in Scotland to have access to our brand new newsletter it was only posted out I think second class on Friday but I've got some advanced copies here please do take that away and also we've got in April our week of prayer starting as well so we've got flyers there for that on the table so please do avail yourselves of them now

I'm sorry that I've overrun a little bit but thank you for your patience when I came to know the Lord back in May 1982 it was a musical event the folks at the Queen's Park Praise Band were introducing the folks there to a number of new praise songs but there were some great traditional hymns as well and one of them was the one that they closed the event with which was Isaac Watts wonderful hymn when I survey the wondrous cross so just as we go into our time of communion shortly we're going to sing this lovely hymn together thank you Cowie