When You Believe in God but Don't Share Your Faith

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[0:00] Where are we with sharing our faith? And what do you do when you have good news to share? What's the first thing that comes in when it comes to sharing the good news of Jesus that we have with others? Which of these resonates with you? Number one, I seek every opportunity to share my faith wherever and whenever I feel led. Is that okay? Or is it two, I am a little reserved and would only share my faith if someone asked me if I was a Christian? Or is it three, I want to share my faith but when it comes to it I never quite manage it. So I give up and I leave it to others. Or is it four, I have a very private and personal faith and by the way how dare you even ask?

Which of those resonates with you? Because, and I'm not going to ask you to put your hands up, because just go with me on this, because sharing our faith is an imperative that we have to do. But for many of us don't find it easy. It's like this man at the water cooler at work. I don't know whether you feel for him. You know, we try, we try to share our faith and often we do it in quite cringey ways instead of just being ourselves. And you see, I guess we're all somewhere in those mix of questions at various times and various places, which is Craig Grishel in our book that we're following, The Christian Atheist, actually encourages us that actually we need to go and share our faith. But it's very honest about the barriers. I was taking my dog out yesterday morning and I met the lady from the chocolate shop in Hill Road. Now I don't know whether you know the lady from the chocolate shop in the hill road. She obviously knows me because I like chocolate. And she announced to me, as I was taking my dog for a walk in the morning, the good news, the good news was that there was chocolate tasting all day yesterday at the chocolate shop in Hill Road. Now I have to tell you what I was impressed with is one, because of her passion for the product, because she knows her business and wanted. But the passion was, is she knew what she was passionate about and wanted it to share with people. I am passionate about what I do and I've got no hesitation in meeting you in the street and inviting you to something that I know that you probably need. How often are we out and about when we meet people on chance encounters and say, my goodness, are you free tomorrow morning? Why don't you come to my growth group? Why don't you come to this? Why don't you come to church on Sunday morning? Why don't you come to this group? Why don't you come round for coffee? Why don't you do whatever it is, but to do something that we are passionate about and we want to share. If only more Christians were passionate about that and spontaneously invited people. I have to tell you friends, I've been around church for maybe many, many years and I sat where you were sat and I was never challenged about sharing my faith. And worse still, maybe I was never encouraged. And this morning I just really want to encourage you as part of our theme to go and share that thing which we are desperate and I hope you believe is the greatest thing that we have to share with people. You see, I probably verged dangerously at times on D, probably going into C, into 4 or into 3. Of stumbling about how do I share my faith, how do I do this?

And like the woman at the well, I had to wait for that encounter. She was searching. We knew that she was searching for something. And I hope you managed to get here back along for Bishop Mike's seminar on sharing our faith. And if you didn't, and if you're listening on the podcast, just click slightly to the left and you'll get the whole of that as well. Listen to that because that's a great hour of just Mike sharing his heart with us about how we can share our faith. But I thought about this woman at the will, what was the essence of this chance encounter, which wasn't a chance encounter at all. That this was the moment that she would know and that she would know that she was loved and acknowledged for who she is and the situation she was in. And so often we try to dress it up, don't we? We try to say, oh actually you've got to maybe just be a little bit nicer, a little

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bit more happier, a little bit more this or that in order to become a Christian. And yet Jesus nailed it. He met her exactly where she was and how she was and she knew that she had met with something different.
Now if you're listening on the podcast, these chance meetings can be very important. And anybody that's here, you will know that when you first fell in love, that chance encounter, what bliss it was when you met the love of your life. If you're listening on the podcast, people are looking lovingly now into each other's eyes, clasping hands. I'm almost verging on saying get a room. And this, that moment which we know. My chance encounter was that I was on duty as a police officer. Now for young people here, those were in the days when you'd actually see police officers walking around. [6:37] They would actually stop and talk to you and engage with you and pass the time of day. Anyway, I was on duty in the high street and I looked up and I saw this vision from a window looking down at me.

I couldn't think of a line at the time other than, do you make coffee? What a great opening line. She said, for you, for you, yes. Eleven months later we were married, 36 years of marriage, but I still go back to that chance encounter. We all need a chance encounter, but a chance encounter with Jesus because Jesus was there ready, waiting for that life-giving chance encounter with that woman. Jesus is there waiting. She's not expecting that moment. She didn't know she was going to meet with the Messiah. She didn't know because of an outcast of being the way she was and her lifestyle that the rest of the village had rejected her. That's why she was on her own. People had judged her, but she has this meeting with Jesus. And I love that line, sir, you must be a prophet. Yes, I am. I am the Messiah. Jesus actually declares who he is to her, and she goes back, the marginalized, the outside woman, the woman that's been judged, the woman that's been allowed to go on the well at midday, every day, on her own, excluded, and then brings a large proportion of her village to meet with Jesus. Do you know what? I don't know about you. I find something really energizing about people who come to meet with Jesus for the first time. There's a fresh energy. And I sensed this morning as I was in my waking hours that many of us have drawn water from the well, but we haven't refreshed it. It's just gone, a little bit stagnant in the bucket. It's not the fresh water that we can draw again and again and again. This was the water I drew at Spring Harvest in 1975 when I had my encounter with Jesus.
Now, this is the encounter that I drew five minutes ago because I know Jesus and I need more of him, and I want more of him in my life. And there's this honest conversation going on. And she didn't go home. She didn't sit down. She didn't think, well, that was a nice affirming conversation, wasn't it?
That was lovely. It's a shame he didn't sing a couple of hymns. That really would have made my day. This wasn't a consumer moment for her. This was a life-changing time for her and for the people that she would meet and that she would bring. Have you experienced that? Have you experienced that Acts 2 moment, that life-giving, changing moment when you don't care who knows that you're a Christian and you live your life?
[9:59] People don't cross the road to avoid you. People don't know that if something's gone wrong, you're the person who's going to bark at them. They just know your character is that of God, and they just want to be drawn to you and want to share that with people.

Well, Craig Groeschel and someone here changed me because, you know, we never speak about the alternative to heaven. And somebody challenged me from this congregation and said, Clive, why do you never preach on hell? Do you know what? And I think that's absolutely right. And Craig Groeschel, in this chapter, if you've read it, actually encounters that and says, the door is narrow. The gate is narrow. And not everybody who calls me Lord, Lord will encounter the kingdom of God, will enter it.
There is an urgency, people, for us to live it and to share it. I love this modern-day take of the woman at the well, a chance encounter with living water.
I'm in a convenience store, and as I was leaving, he asked me for some water. I mean, who does that? You know, I mean, let's face it, the guy was hitting on me, right? But then he said the weirdest thing.
He said to me, if you'd have asked me, I would have given you living water. Living water? What's living water? Does it have, like, special electrolytes? Or is it made out of angel wings? Like, what's living water? So he said to me, if you drink the water that I have given of you, you'll never thirst again. I'm thinking this guy's crazy, right? Never thirst again. So I said to him, okay, I'll take that

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water, hook it up. And he said, I will. Bring your husband. And I told him, I don't have a husband. I was about to get into my car. And then he said one last thing. He said, you're right. You've had five. And the one that you have now isn't even yours. I know, right?
[12:08] He was completely right. And it might sound weird, but it was almost like when he looked into my eyes, something became free.

Like I felt freedom. This guy knew everything about me. And he accepted me just the way I was. What was his name?
His name was Jesus. Please, would you just take the water? I've got to get going. One of the most privileged moments of my life was to speak to a 15-year-old who was dying of leukemia.
She had an amazing thing. She never stopped sharing it with the staff and others on the ward, even to the end when she went home to be with the Lord. But she said to me one day, when she asked me, and she said, what does heaven look like for you? And she told me what it looked like for her. And she said, do you know what? Being a Christian has saved me thousands of pounds on my bucket list. Because the things come, the things that some people, especially Christians, feel that they have to cram in to do before they die. It's a shame they don't spend more that time talking about Jesus than living like there is no eternity. Because I know what heaven's like.
She said, I'm going to walk in the Himalayas. I'm going to swim with dolphins. I'm going to sit on the barrier reef. It's a new heaven. And I get to worship God every day. And that's going to be awesome. But I want people I know and love to be there too. And no one tells them how they will know.
[14:17] Why don't more Christians get that, Clive? From a 15-year-old girl who knew that she was about to be with the Lord, there was a sense of urgency. And my belief, and in Craig's book, is that I believe the church has lost its sense of urgency. Of telling people and bringing people into that encounter with God before, before, before. I pray and give thanks that this church is changing.

The people are more interested in seeing people encounter the love of God than they do about the stuff that we do. You see, that encounter was intimate, it was passionate, and it was loving.
And that's what will bring people to know Jesus. To be known is to be loved, and to be loved is to be known. We're going to end with a poem by a woman at the well. To be loved is to be known, and to be known is to be loved.
I am a woman of no distinction, of little importance. I am a woman of no reputation, save that which is bad. You whisper as I pass by and cast judgmental glances, though you don't really take the time to look at me, or even get to know me. For to be known is to be loved, and to be loved is to be known.
And otherwise, what's the point in doing either one of them in the first place? I want to be known. I want someone to look at my face and not just see two eyes, a nose, a mouth, and two ears.
[15:57] But to see all that I am and could be, all my hopes, loves, and fears. But that's too much to hope for, to wish for, or pray for, so I don't, not anymore. Now I keep to myself, and by that I mean the pain that keeps me in my own private jail, the pain that's brought me here at midday to this well.

To ask for a drink is no big request, but to ask it of me, a woman unclean, ashamed, used, and abused, an outcast, a failure, a disappointment, a sinner, no drink passing from these hands to your lips could ever be refreshing, only condemning, as I'm sure you condemn me now, but you don't.
You're a man of no distinction, though of the utmost importance, a man with little reputation, at least so far. You whisper and tell me to my face what all those glances have been about, and you take the time to really look at me, but don't need to get to know me, for to be known is to be loved, and to be loved is to be known.
And you know me, you actually know me, all of me and everything about me, every thought inside and hair on top of my head, every hurt stored up, every hope, every dread, my past and my future, all I am and could be.
You tell me everything, you tell me about me. And that which is spoken by another would bring hate and condemnation. Coming from you brings love, grace, mercy, hope, and salvation.
[17:09] I've heard of one to come who would save a wretch like me, and here in my presence you say I am he. To be known is to be loved, and to be loved is to be known. And I just met you, but I love you. I don't know you, but I want to get to.

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Let me run back to town. This is way too much for just me. There are others, brothers, sisters, lovers, haters, the good and the bad, sinners and saints, who should hear what you've told me, who should see what you've shown me, who should taste what you gave me, who should feel how you forgave me.
For to be known is to be loved, and to be loved is to be known. And they all need this too. We all do need it for our own.

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