

Real Lives with Yvonne Edwards

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[0 : 0 0] welcome and thanks so much for joining us my name is warren and i'm a member of the church family here at grace church dulwich now whether you're in the room on zoom or joining us via youtube we're delighted that you're here with us this evening i'm hoping this doesn't become our new normal and not just because we're all missing out on nice food um to give you a sense of what's to come this evening in a few moments i'm going to hand over to roger carswell our guest interviewer and speaker for the week and he's going to introduce yvonne who's our guest interviewee they'll chat for half an hour or so exploring yvonne's life and the difference jesus has made after that we're just going to help us a little bit more by thinking about the bible and speaking from it i'll then pop back on your screen for a few moments to close things off now we're keen to keep our time together to an hour and be done at nine sharp so if tonight raises questions for you or ideas or concerns we'd love to hear we'll share an email address in the chats and on screen at the end do get in touch and we can pass questions on to the most helpful place if that's roger yvonne or someone at grace church delish roger it's over to you great great thank you very much well it's really good to be with you nice to see some familiar faces again and some i don't yet know but um i'm really sorry i can't um i can't be with you in the flesh i i had such a super time two years ago in delish and i was looking forward to it but there we are uh so i'm speaking to you from north yorkshire rural north yorkshire i heard a lovely story this week um we get a lot of hikers and walkers and uh one of them went up to a local farmer and said um so excuse me sorry to trouble you said look if i go down that field to the bottom and then turn left do you think i could get to the railway station in time for the 9 15 the farmer said hi lad and if bull's in field you'll get there for the 3 45 anyway that's the sort of area that i live in and what we say around here believe it or not is we're to keep one cow's length distance between each other that's what we call social distancing never mind this six feet or two meters anyway it's great to be with you and uh it's the format really is i'm going to interview yvonne i know yvonne and um i know you're in for an absolute treat it's it's an amazing story and it's one of those i'd love to say if there's somebody here who is a total disbeliever you explain what happened to yvonne if there is no god just very quickly um if i mention you can probably see behind i have this banner um i have a philosophy those who don't use propaganda well such a person is a proper goose so i've got some propaganda there advertising this this book distribution place it's also hiding all the junk that there is behind but from 10 of those there are some good bargains now there is one called city lives by marcus nodder and normally i've got a few of them there but i must have got rid of them all at the moment so let me just mention it city lives you can get it from 10 of those.com and it's got yvonne's story in it and it's a good read two others if i may you might be interested in this it's by paul williams who's the vicar of christ church fullwood in sheffield written this very helpful explanation about what is the easter message and its relevance for us easter the greatest news you can get that from 10 of those and if i'm allowed to mention something i've written fairly recently um and during the lockdown anyway uh where is god in a messed up world and it's really answering the question why does god allow suffering why a pandemic etc anyway go on 10 of those and you might just be able to get some other bargains as well but yvonne i think you're there and uh it's really good to see you again um where are you speaking from at the moment yvonne um actually i've moved back in

with my parents temporarily because i sold my house at the end of last year and i haven't found anywhere to live so i'm i suppose technically i'm a homeless person but i have got somewhere to go so where are you homeless whereabouts in north london in a place called southgate which is at the end of the piccadilly line for those of you who know it well i'm sure they do down in dulwich it's uh yes indeed i haven't got a clue even what color the piccadilly line is but anyway um yvonne where where was home for you where did you grow up because it's not a yorkshire accent i can tell no it's

not no i'm a true born and bred londoner i was actually born in holloway and i always have to say oh just a moment it wasn't in the prison my mom's always really um happy to say mention that because it's obviously i think holloway has a renown for having the women's prison um so i was born in holloway and spent all my early years in in north london holloway crouch ends muswell hill which are all fantastically salubrious areas now but they weren't actually when i lived in them we tended to move further and further out until we ended up here in southgate okay and um schooling i think you went to a roman catholic school didn't you yes i did i went to saint gilda's convent and then i went to saint angela's providence convent school for young ladies but yeah there's a little little bit of that description that didn't really apply to me at the time but that was where i ended up wait so were you from a roman catholic family yeah a big strong irish roman catholic family uh yeah and what was the convent like because we do hear horror stories these days i got a very good education um and primary school was wonderful actually i really enjoyed primary school i didn't transition too well to secondary um i had a great capacity to learn and retain information so i did very well exams um but i also was a very low level disruptor at school so i spent quite a lot of time outside the mary office with the big ticking clock that you had to sit underneath and i don't think she put me there because she wanted my company it was just to keep me um away from being a disruptor there began the problems hey well indeed why a disruptor why was it was it just the love of being mischievous or i don't know were things going on in your life that that led to this sort of behavior yeah i'm not sure really i don't really know what it was i just i enjoyed making people laugh and it was that you know the class clown i wasn't uh i wasn't um i wasn't disliked by the teaching staff i don't think but you didn't really want me in your class i was just i had a very low boredom threshold i think that was a massive part of it i probably have been diagnosed with something these days and on some amazing regime of medical intervention but they didn't have that when i was young you were just you just spent time sitting under the ticking clock incredibly bored well i have to say your school experience and mine sound very very similar except i didn't go to a convent but uh anyway we were not talking about me you did incredibly well in the whole financial world the business world so how did you leap from being a disruptive pupil to a successful woman um well i i managed to pass exams because i did i so wish i had it now i had a everything was exam based in those days there was no coursework marking so i could cram and cram and cram for exams and if i had to sit the same exam a month later i would have i had a fail because i didn't retain it for a huge amount of time but i could retain masses of information um over a short period of time so i did well at exams um i didn't go on to further education or higher education which i know was such a disappointment to my parents because they were passionate about education i had every support from my home life to go on to university to go on and do really well i didn't want i just wanted to get out i just wanted to get out there i don't know where out there was but if i was over here i wanted to be over there and when i was over there i wanted to be over there somewhere um you know that restless restless restless spirit so yeah so i left school and and entered the world of work in the late pardon me in the late 70s and at that point it was actually quite easy a to secure a job and and b to to do well without having a degree basically you didn't need but you really did climb the tree tell us some of the jobs you had well i got into um initially kind of secretarial work and then i got into personal assistant work and then i got into lovingly called private office manager work so um you know i i kind of managed offices of senior people um and i'm trying to think who i'd be the equivalent of probably somebody really unpleasant but um yeah so i managed um the private office manager for the uh chief executive and the chairman of the lottery um i um worked i mean mainly at director and boardroom well always at director and boardroom level once i kind of earned my spurs um so yeah it was fascinating yeah financial services authority boss yes pa's amazing yeah that was did you have to flirt to get those positions which do you know if the workplace changed massively over the period that i was at work and work culture um changed beyond recognition really uh and you know women in the workplace have a have a um a much more dignified existence i my experiences has been um but you know that i embraced whatever was going on in the 70s and 80s you know my um my moral code was was pretty flexible shall we say so let's go back a little bit when you because when you were 15 or so this sort of not just a rebellious streak but sort of enjoying everything that the world had to offer sort of grabbed you didn't it yeah absolutely and i came from a very stable home um i was loved i was um you know if i could lay any charge at my parents though i was probably slightly spoiled um and indulged maybe um but when i reached the age of 15 i just i was always very rebellious at authority and i you know i can see now where that does come from but at the time i just thought it meant i want my freedom um and i um started i i discovered alcohol

basically was at the age of 15 i went to a party and i drank alcohol and it was just you know and it wasn't as if i drank it having been in a depressed dark mood but i drank it and the world just turned technicolor it was like it was amazing and most amazing um encounter i'd had and and it just gave me that additional freedom i felt it it wasn't i wasn't a shrinking violet i wasn't a kind of wallflower type of person i had a vivacious personality anyway so i didn't need it for the dutch courage that people often assume but it just enhanced um my sense of perception um and really i look back now and what does it do you know i've i used to say i'm teflon when i drank i felt invincible um untouchable um yeah where where does a 15 year old get the money for for alcohol oh gosh well it wasn't very glamorous drinking in those early days it would be um i mean bottles of cider on a bus at a weekend going to to some place where you had to try and look at over 18 to go and listen to music i was i really like music live music so we used to go to all these horrible grotty old pubs and and try and listen to live bands but you couldn't afford as a teenager to buy drink even then in pubs so you'd buy get someone to buy it in the off license drink it on the bus and that was it wasn't very glamorous really but it was in my head and had you shaken off any thoughts of god that you might have got from school or home yeah yeah absolutely i'd i'd had um you know a religious upbringing i'd i'd made i'd obviously been baptized as a baby which is is you know roman catholic practice i'd um made my first confession my first holy communion and my confirmation um and the real point that i the one that i do remember is as a really young child i remember being told bible stories being um told about god and about jesus and just believing it because the adults around me and the teachers told me so i had no disbelief in what i was being taught um and when it came to make my first confession we were coached in what we had to say before we got into the confessional box and we were told we had to have three sins and i didn't know what they really were and i'd love we'd learned the ten commandments off-wrote and i knew i hadn't stolen an ox and i knew i so much of the language i didn't understand i didn't know what covert was and i didn't even know what adultery was or all these words so i just and but i knew it was a sin to lie so i told three lies in the confession box um as my sin i just made them up i made three sins up three things i'd never done um trivial things and just to have those three things to tell the priest and i remember the fear that gripped me as i was exiting the confession box i honestly thought because i'd been told if you get it wrong if you you know do this sin thing you're going to be struck and i remember walking up to the rail to say my penances thinking that's me i'm toast and guess what nothing happens nothing happens and i got up there as a six-year-old child and i knelt down i remember thinking i don't think you're really there i don't think you're really there and that was where the the kind of beginning of my ardent atheism hmm Yvonne is it fair to say you became an alcoholic oh yes yeah i'm not i won't argue with you i'm not one that's absolutely fair and and what did in practice what did that mean were you you know were you hiding alcohol in your in your desk drawer were you looking for a free moment to be able to drink something and swig something yeah i i i was a very um active alcoholic but also i managed to you don't get away with it but i managed to function at a very high level um for a long long long long time um on the belief that if you drink vodka nobody can smell it you know and that's so not true um so my best friend was half a bottle of smirnoff um when i wasn't drinking in social settings and that was in i always had vodka in my desk drawer in my handbag um on on my person um and carried on functioning very well i did very well at work i um yeah i was someone described it to me once i was i was falling up the stairs you know my my trajectory at that time was upward i was up upwardly mobile fueled by smirnoff amazing and did did nobody notice was were people aware was your boss aware were your family or parents aware in any way did anybody try and help you not in the early days they didn't because i tended to mix with people who drank like i did so drinkers do not challenge fellow drinkers um and unfortunately one of the things that was part of it was that i in terms of social um interactions i did become i was a liability you really wouldn't want me as a friend or a girlfriend so i did have this capacity to i had a phoenix-like capacity to resurrect myself from the ashes of a broken romance um another failed friendship i had a real easy capacity i made friends easily but because i was unreliable and unpredictable over committed my time i'd arranged to meet four different people in four different places all at the same time and then i'd get drunk and i wouldn't even turn up for one of them and my life was i was chaotic and yet i wasn't chaotic in my work life and i began that that kind of gap of the double life had gotten wider and wider and wider now if on one of the problems there are many problems with alcoholism but it can lead to other addictions was that true for you as well oh absolutely yeah i started to use cocaine i mean that came quite soon really um by the end of my teens my early 20s i went uh i actually went

and lived in south america for a while which isn't an excuse for using cocaine but if you choose to use cocaine it's a fabulous place to go um and and that kind of generated an additional um problem for me but i didn't view that all this time if i would have said to myself if i want to stop drinking if i want to stop partying taking cocaine i'll just get up one day and decide not to do it um i didn't know that was not to be the case but yeah so cocaine was amazing because it gave me the capacity to sort of stay awake for 22 hours out of 24 and inflict myself on the poor world even more and yet in all of this the sort of chaos of this sort of life with the success you did meet a man didn't you and uh this this was going to be somebody who'd stick with you yeah well i met lots of men i was quite good at meeting men i was quite good at getting engaged as well i was a fiancee i don't know how many times did you manage to keep the rings no only the only the cheap ones i kept there was a couple i think that were probably from argos and i kept them but there was one really expensive one and he took he asked for that back and i did was he from yorkshire no he was no he's from brighton he was actually a really nice man and i look back and i think they all had such a lucky escape these poor chaps but they didn't really know that at the time but then i did i met a lovely lovely man a gentleman a real kind generous honest decent not the sort of of man that i wouldn't you know well that stage i was really attracted to i much preferred um the kind of you know the bad boys wild men yeah okay so you met him was he aware of your addictions he well it's interesting he knew he knew that i drank we met in a bar surprise surprise um he he was very clean living he liked to drink he was he played a bit of rugby and he played you know sport he was very sporty but he was a businessman he wasn't a sportsman but um he'd always kept fit and healthy and he'd never i mean he'd never actually even smoked a cigarette he'd never put one to his lips so he was he was completely ignorant of anything to do with drugs at all but he knew that i liked to drink and falling in love is a very powerful um kind of motivator and because you know he liked to drink but i just kind of my drinking calmed down um somewhat and because i'd fallen in love you know it's in top falling in love is intoxicating i was intoxicatedly in love um with this amazing man and i was just smitten and um you know it was the love was reciprocated and um you know unfortunately for me because of my grandiosity at the time he was a

[20 : 08] businessman he was successful um and he you know i was swept off to wonderful places and wonderful holidays and wonderful gifts and you know very very romantic and and yeah and i remember thinking i was 30 by now you know i'd done all my my as i called it my wild child years and i just fell in love with this man and and he asked me to marry him and your answer was rather yeah yeah and you know it was it was wonderful i was just i thought this is you know kind of this is it now i've i've done i've done it all now and i can settle down was there an expectation that maybe some of the issues that you were facing would would cease now you got married it would all i don't know alcoholism would fade etc was that your yeah i just thought you know i didn't think to top i'm going to stop drinking but i just thought that and i didn't wouldn't have certainly wouldn't have conceived of myself as an alcoholic at that point on which is quite insane really i think the consequences had never been severe enough you know the blessing of a pretty strong constitution and just a massive physical tolerance for alcohol um had kind of kept me kept me away from a lot of the consequences that i could have had and i met paul um and the drugs thing became very secret he never ever ever knew about that until much much later on but he didn't know any of that that was going on he didn't know what the signs were because it was completely out of his realm of experience um and uh and yeah we we got married and um and my drinking didn't stop but it became more manageable um for a period and you had children didn't you yeah yeah we did yeah you can have children because you want children sometimes you can have children in the hope that maybe that will iron over some of the issues that you're facing which was it for you no well actually both and because um our first son was born and that was the point i'd worked all the way um we decided we moved we were living in bermondsey at the time which was a great place to live with a um with uh he was only one week old and we moved to the suburbs and at the same time we made the and my drinking just took off like uh i can't it was it was absolutely rocket like because i started to drink and i'd i'd been a secret drinker periods i'd always top up a good bit if i was going out for the night i'd have a good few drinks just to just to kind of yeah get the feeling before i went out but this was me drinking during the day drinking earlier and earlier and earlier during the day my husband coming home from from work and saying to me when you're drunk at half past five or six o'clock and of course i deny it i'm mouthful of mouthful of fisherman's friend and gold spot and i thought i was going to get away with it but obviously i didn't um yeah so and then you had another child another i had another baby and i remember thinking i must be doing what i'm doing because

i've just got too much time on my hands and was convinced that that's probably the reason why and if i have another baby i'll be really busy so i had ended up with two babies under two there was 20 months between them and my drinking continued to get worse and worse and worse as much as it could and eventually this spiraled down to what really could have been total disaster yeah yeah it did yeah yeah tell us what happened if you can well i mean my husband tried to do everything in his power he took away all my access

to money he took away my car keys he took away my credit cards um he tried to he didn't lock me in the house but he would have you know my poor mum who lives lived here in this house in north london would have to drive all the way down to kent every day really to babysit me to stop me getting out and getting drinks because i was very resourceful um and um yeah the world became very dark you know this kind of excitable um vivacious um vivacious drinking partying um you know 24 hour a day person had had gone and i just was drinking i don't know just drinking miserably on my own seek secretly but obviously not secretly everybody was the world's world kept secret um and yeah with two very small children in my care which was not your husband paul incredibly patient by the sound of it oh immensely immensely patient you know he tried he he tried everything you know he sent me for um medical intervention i had taught every talking therapy that was available at the time um i had like reward therapy you know if you just stop drinking he would buy me gifts and um yeah you know he was at his wits end he threw everything every resource he knew and had um a a problem with drinking i mean i i'm amazed i often say to people and i really really mean this um genuinely if the if the roles had been reversed i would have opened the door and put him out i really would i don't know where his patients came from amazing now time's going but eventually ivan you did something dreadful didn't you yeah i did i made a really serious attempt on my life it wasn't a cry for help i i um i took a a an overdose i just couldn't bear the pain of being alive anymore i didn't actually want to die but i just couldn't bear my existence it was awful i'd become a person i didn't want to be and i couldn't find a way not to be that person anymore and and paul then paid for you to go into a private rehabilitation center yeah what was your reaction to that well actually because i'd kind of i'd had a i'd had what they i called in my economy detox which was a stomach pump at the local a and a it's not funny but um you know it wasn't very glamorous um and then paul in desperation found a very nice private treatment center which is really just a posh psychiatric hospital to call it what it is and and and checked me in there and i remember thinking oh it'll be nice and i'll be looked after and they might have a swimming pool and a sauna and i mean i don't think my motives were going there were entirely genuine but um off off i went to the treatment center so how long how long did you go for it was a month um right they agreed that i needed a minimum of a month my family needed a month they needed a lot a lot longer to recover from me i think now this is where everything is going to change because you go to this rehabilitation center and you just talk us through i think this is altogether wonderful but you just talk through what happened we've seen this gradual slide down over 30 odd years but then go on yeah well so i was in the rehabilitation center it was it was east um august bank holiday 1995 so a long time ago now um and i had obviously had a detox a stomach pump so i had no alcohol in my system no drugs in my system and after about three days i hadn't had that experience of being sober and clean for so many years for three or four days it was just a whole new experience um and i felt physically felt so much better um and

prior one of the things that my husband had tried was he'd sent me to alcoholics anonymous and he'd also had our neighbor come in and talk to me and he was a retired minister i mean that was really bad you know he used to come in and talk to me and bring me vegetables from his allotment and i should just be looking at my watch thinking i just want you to go away and stop talking to me about god you know you're really bothering me he was a lovely man um and i was walking around the the grounds of this beautiful beautiful um treatment center where i was and that was i was allowed to um and i did feel you know i i just was starting to think about my life a little bit but not not very you know as you may have guessed there wasn't much weight and depth to me i was pretty shallow and superficial and i i went back to my room and i thought i'll read something i actually thought i'll read something that if i open the drawer there's bound to be sort of a glossy women's magazine in there and i thought cosmopolitan and then and straight away you see very manipulative if i find some not a nice outfit in there and when i come home paul will buy me some new clothes i was like you know really full of um full of very honorable ideas not um and i opened the drawer and there was a bible in there um and i took the bible out because it was all that was

there and i'd seen a bible i'd handled a bible i knew a little bit about the bible as in there was an old bit and a new bit and there was gospels matthew mark luke and john i remembered so you know i knew some stories of of the flood and the deliverance from egypt and so on but i didn't know my the bible at all and i just sort of started to fan through the pages um opened the bible and looked just flicking pages and fanning pages and i came upon a story that i just read the opening lines to and it was in luke chapter seven and it said that jesus and i you know as i read the name jesus i just i thought jesus this man is having a food at somebody's house and a woman in the city where he is who was a sinner and as i read the words i just saw it was it was i just thought that's that's what is wrong with me because i couldn't there was nothing else wrong with me and i don't mean there was nothing else i'm i read those i've had every opportunity that the world has to offer to find out what is the problem with yvonne what is wrong with yvonne i've had every medical and psychological um tall phone at me not phone at me you know offered to me and no one could get to the bottom of why i was doing what i was doing and i just read um read those words that this woman was a sinner and i just started to read the story and as i was reading the story i was just overwhelmed and i mean genuinely overwhelmed with a sense of my own sin and i don't really don't mean just that i got drunk a lot and that i had a poor moral code before i'd married i just saw that this man jesus that i was reading about i just i knew jesus was god and i knew that my life had not glorified him i wouldn't have used those words then but i knew i had not been living my life as my creator had made me to live it and i knew that i read about jesus and i knew jesus was god and i just knew god had made me i was a a being created by god i wasn't just some random self-sufficient self-reliant i'll do it my way well i've done all those things and that's where it had got me so you read there was a sinful woman yeah it struck you yeah and and how did that impact you okay these thoughts are going through your mind but what happened then well immediately as i was reading i couldn't even get to the end of the story i actually if i actually got down on my knees by the side of the bed and i put my head down i just wept i sobbed not for myself not even for my family but just for what i'd done with the amazing gift of life god had given me i knew god life is a god-given gift and i could it was like this flashback of everything i'd done with that gift um and i was reading through the story and of course it's also a wonderful story of forgiveness um of this woman and it's you know there's so so much in in that that story that you know everybody knew what she was like everybody below you know if if you knew what she's really like you wouldn't want anything to do with her you wouldn't even let her near you um and you know i knew that jesus knew everything about me absolutely everything there was nothing he knew more about me than i knew myself but that he also loved me and forgave me um so it was kind of it was tears of of distress and tears of joy um and just a a great i suppose like an awakening to the existence of god and his son jesus so you asked him to forgive you yeah yeah and and did that change you absolutely yeah changed i mean so much i'm always i'm always a work in progress but um completely you know reorientate so the alcohol is absolutely left desire for it yeah absolutely never the drugs went never returned but absolutely by the grace of god almighty so one moment you're just living as you were okay you're in this rehabilitation center you open up the bible luke seven there was a sinful woman a few minutes later you're praying you're crying out to god and suddenly all those years of addiction and brokenness gone one yeah yeah what i was i was a chronic alcoholic by the way i had an enlarged liver and i was a very unattractive shade of yellow so um you know i was in i wasn't i was an early stage chronic but i was a chronic yeah what did they say in the rehabilitation center well the follow because this happened sort of early in the evening and i just i remember i spent the the evening in the room and i was just i mean i was praying i was just talking to god i was just talking and talking and reading this bible i didn't i mean i i just didn't know where to read i was just reading and reading and reading um things and then i was reading little bits and remembering it and i was just full of just joy and um and then i do remember and it sounds really almost childish but i was afraid to go to sleep because i thought what if i go to sleep and i wake up tomorrow morning and it whatever and and there's nothing there and it's just been and of course i went to sleep i slept an amazing night's sleep and i woke up in the morning and god was where he's always been um and has never been anywhere else and the same has gone on through my life the desire for alcohol um was completely removed i can i you know i carried on i i knew i i knew i could walk away that day a free woman from alcohol but i also learned it's interesting isn't it that through what i'd read and through what i'd learned of god that that that that terrible defiant rebellion against authority which had just always been a part of my sin nature i didn't know that i thought it meant i just want to i don't want to conform and i don't want to be like you or

you or you i just want to be me but actually you know it was that defiance in nature that i had and i just thought no just not keep your head down but just you know just do what your lovely husband has paid for you to be here and do go through the process learn because you don't know it all you know these things that were new to me because i was like yeah i know i know everything i was unteachful that the annoying person and we all know one who every time you go to say something they're like yeah i know i know and that that was me i was that annoying yeah i know oh sorry amazing now the time has gone but um you went back home how did paul react um well in honestly um a little bit tentatively because i knew i'd been changed from the inside out and i i i felt that people maybe should be able to see that but there'd been so many false storms and false hopes before of you know she's okay and then she wasn't then she was and she wasn't and i think everybody just held their breath for quite some time to come and and but you know eventually he did i i joined a local church because i just knew that i needed to and i i was baptized which was um just incredible um and and you know the sad part is paul's kind of reaction he wasn't resistant but he was just quite apathetic he was really glad i wasn't drinking he was really glad that i was reliable dependable i'd become you know i was able to be the good mother i'd want to be i was a good wife and a homemaker um and all those things but he just wasn't interested in the things of god um yeah and then just tell us very quickly now what what happened to him oh gosh yeah well like you know i mentioned he was very fit and healthy and um he he gave up the football and the rugby because as you get older the old knees don't do too well but he kept playing squash um he was very very good standard squash player and you know he left home a couple of years after um i came to know no um jesus he left home one thursday to play squash and he had a fatal heart attack on the squash court um and and he died and um yeah you know it's it's um yeah painfully painfully sad and the boys were still very young but um yeah that's 25 years plus ago what does jesus mean to you now oh my goodness well i that that day in august bank holiday 1995 i fell in love with jesus and i've never not loved him my behavior hasn't always um you know i'm not not not the the best um disciple or um but i i i love his i love him i love love love the word you know the the bible is the breathed out word of god and if it can do that for me it can still do that for me every day and that's a transformational book um it's not um you know it's just it's just amazing me and to sit down what's my favorite thing now is to sit down with other ladies and say let's open the bible and see who jesus says he is and let's see what we can learn and i just love that's that's my passion um these days is sharing jesus with others ivan it's always a treat to talk with you i love your story and i always find it deeply moving we're going to have to finish there i'm afraid but i'm going to do what you've just suggested sort of just open the bible for a few minutes and share some for some truths but thank you very very much for so interestingly engagingly sharing with us but uh that's great so don't forget that book city lives uh ivan's stories in there um it's interesting in the bible that there's a theme that runs through and it connects exactly with what we've heard from ivan but it goes against what we normally think about the bible and christianity it well let me read it this is jesus speaking it's found in mark's gospel which already ivan's referred to jesus said to them it is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick i have not come to call the righteous but sinners now that's not normally what people think they think

[40 : 28] oh jesus is after good people but no he said he came to call sinners then in matthew's gospel he said the son of man speaking about himself came to seek and to save that which was lost now you get that teaching all the way through the bible so in the book of romans the apostle paul's writing he says in chapter five god commended demonstrated his love toward us in that while we were still sinners christ died for us or he's writing to his young friend timothy and he said this is a fatal saying worthy of everybody accepting that christ jesus came into the world to save sinners and he adds of whom i'm the the worst the chief of them and you stop and think about this and um it's sort of underscored time and time again in the bible think of some of jesus's parables i i love the story and i don't know how many times i've told it to children of the shepherd who has 100 sheep and one of them goes astray so what happens the shepherd leaves the 99 and goes to find the one that's lost when he finds that one he comes put his shoulder comes back rejoicing and similarly a lady had 10 very precious coins one of them got lost so she searches diligently every nook and cranny of her house until she finds that one and i'm sure you're familiar with the story that jesus told i think the greatest story it's ever been told of of um uh a farmer who has two sons the youngest one says to his father father give me everything that one day i'll have when you die but i want to i want to have it now he really was treating his father as if he was dead already and he went to a far country and he just squandered his living all this inheritance on on wild living and um with well the

bible story tells us he was going with prostitutes and you can imagine all the friends he had until the money ran out and eventually just gets a job feeding pigs which for him was the lowest of the lowest but until eventually he comes to the the conclusion do you know this is crazy my father's servants are better off than me and he works out this sort of prayer he's going to pray to his father as he returns home father i sinned against heaven and against you i'm not worthy to call your son but would you take me on as a servant but the father just runs and greets and welcomes him the story of the prodigal son or i love the story and i think i may have spoken about it when i was in uh dulwich last time of the um the great feast a man has a banquet and he invites all his friends but they all make excuses they're pathetic ones so then he sends out his servants to go and find anybody poor maimed blind etc and yes they come but there's still space so then he says look just go into the highways to the hedges the cardboard cities of um of the area and um just compel people to come in and he said those who were originally invited okay the feast isn't for them but for these who most people would just reject jesus says this man had a welcome for them and of course he's speaking about himself he came not to call the righteous it's interesting it was the religious people wasn't it who who had jesus crucified and yet jesus seemed to make a beeline for the underdogs i don't know whether you use the phrase down south but we talk about the riffraff the rag ends of society and and jesus went for them think of the people he healed the blind and the maimed and lepers they really were the uh the untouchables of that day and age but jesus went he touched them he healed them the paralyzed my father died oh it's almost 20 years ago now but the last visit i ever uh had with him i took him across to salford to go and see the the lowry exhibition of lowry's arts and uh uh i think we had a great and a memorable day but the picture that stands out most in my mind is one that he calls the crippled and it's salford square and he's he's he's painted lots of disabled people but do you know the way he does it he gives them all dignity in his own inimitable way

where what lowry was portraying is really what jesus was doing he went for those that nobody else seemed to have any time for in fact he's dealing with individuals zacchaeus i love zacchaeus because he was a little man and anyway we won't go down that line but he was a chief tax collector he had bought from the romans the privilege of of taxing but really exploiting his own people he was hated so hated they wouldn't even allow him into the synagogue to worship but jesus when he was going towards the cross but he was going through jericho the crowd gathered around him and poor old zacchaeus because he was a little man couldn't get past the crowd you know and he sort of sees bobbing up and they're trying to see over to see jesus so what did zacchaeus do he ran ahead and he climbed up a little sycamore tree and there's jesus thronged by this crowd interestingly it's almost as if jesus did not notice the crowd but he did see zacchaeus and he said zacchaeus come down and come home and come now and come as you are and they go and dine together and eventually zacchaeus comes to the the front of his house people are trying to peer in and see what's going on and he says to the crowd have i robbed you and when you read the story in luke's gospel you can almost hear the murmur murmur yeah rob me all right you know this sort of thing and then zacchaeus says look i'll pay you back four times what i took from you and half of all that i have i'm going to give away do you know salvation has come to my home my heart and it's transformed my pockets it's a lovely it's a lovely truth that's just running through the scripture jesus teaching once early in the morning in the temple and the pharisees dragged before him and and threw before him a woman who had been caught in the very act of adultery now we know it takes two to tango so where was the guy and we don't know the answer to that some have suggested maybe he was one of them but we don't know but they took this woman and um they they throw her in front of jesus before the crowd that uh jesus is speaking to and then they say do you know the law says such a woman should be stoned to death what do you say well the law spoke about the man as well as the woman but they're ignoring that jesus just stooped and he wrote something in the ground i've often wondered what did he write did he did he i don't know write out the ten commandments in the dust of the ground there's a a verse tucked away in the in the in the old testament that says those who depart from god's law will have their name written in the dust of the ground but we don't know and the crowd gets impatient come on now what do we do with such a woman and jesus stands up and he looks at these religious leaders full of their own self-righteousness and he says the one here without sin let him throw the first stone at her now of course there was somebody there without sin and that was jesus but he didn't want to throw a stone at her in fact he stooped and he continued to write and from the eldest to the youngest they all sort

of dissipated and left jesus and the woman and jesus said to the woman does nobody condemn you and you can almost see you know they will stay under the mascara as the tears run down her cheeks and she said no one lord and jesus said neither do i condemn you now go and sin no more and then he spoke to the crowd and he said i am the light of the world whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness but she'll have the light of life do you know when light shines it exposes the corruption and when that happens you can do one of two things you can walk away from jesus like those religious leaders did or stay with him and let him deal with it like that woman did she was a stone's throw away from death wasn't she and yet jesus had compassion on this sinful woman and even even when the lord jesus

was on the cross two thieves one on either side they both began by blaspheming and cursing and then one of them turns and says lord remember me when you come into your kingdom and jesus said to him today you'll be with me in paradise isn't that an amazing truth he he he admitted he deserved capital punishment not many people would do that and and yet he turned to jesus and jesus said today you'll be with me in paradise you know heaven is filled with bad people who have been forgiven and really in that i find tremendous hope because if it was for the good who is that not certainly not me i may not have done all that some others have done i may not have hit the headlines but i know i'm not the person i should be and yet jesus came into the world for people like me i'm looking at the the clock have i quickly got time to have i got your attention i don't know but uh think of the disciples i think what a motley wrote a lot they were jesus chooses these 12 people matthew the one who wrote one of the gospels he was a tax collector and when when jesus called him he arranged his party for all the sort of sleazy side of society and jesus mingling with these people and then simon peter this outspoken disciple who to be honest he he opened his mouth before he engaged his brain very often he was a bold bold man but jesus chose him even though later on he was going to curse and deny jesus three times james and john they're nicknamed sons of thunder and um you know anybody against us let's deal with them and yet well one of them was beheaded because he followed jesus and john who's very close to the lord jesus christ you know probably outlived the others but devoted to him but but it wasn't like that to begin with andrew unassuming shy diffident though it's lovely every time we read of andrew um he's always bringing somebody to jesus very quiet but every time we read of him he's got somebody who introduces to jesus and then philip an earnest enquirer i'm sure the other disciples at times must have turned to philip and said oh philip can't we just talk about inconsequential things for a while do we always have to talk about theology because he was always raising big big issues and then thomas we call him doubting thomas but really he was disbelieving thomas wasn't he he said i don't believe jesus could rise from the dead unless i can put my fingers in the wounds in his hands and my fist in his side there's no way i'll be convinced and then jesus appeared and he falls and he says oh my lord and my god and then there's simon zelotes he's a political agitator they're not very easy to to to live with you ask piers morgan you'll know that's true and yet he calls a simon zelotes and thaddeus let me look at the clock again have we got time to tell you everything about thaddeus well i just have we don't know anything he's a total nondescript and yet jesus chose his chooses this man and and a guy called james the less i'm sure poor guy when he was at school he was sent to the educational psychologist who'd say now what's your name and he'd say well my name's james the less oh no no no no you mustn't think of yourself like that you know you must have self-acceptance but jesus chose him and bartholomew a guileless israelite and judas iscariot what a crew and jesus chose people like this but then he's chosen anyone edwards and a roger carswell maybe you can put your name there as well perhaps the greatest of all christian witnesses is saul of tarsus the man who we later on called paul the man who wrote so much of the new testament this devout follower of jesus who took christianity to the then known world but it wasn't like that to begin with really avowedly jewish in his beliefs and his religion and furious about christianity he is there at the stoning to death of the first christian

martyr stephen and then he goes and gets permission to go to damaskets 120 miles away to round up christians there and have them silenced in prison killed it doesn't matter and yet dramatically this man is met by the lord jesus christ on his road to persecution and is wonderfully converted and changed he calls himself less than the least of all the saints well as an ex-school teacher i want to say now just a minute you cannot be less than the least of that's theologically not oh sorry grammatically not correct theologically it is correct he calls himself the chief of sinners listen to these words written by the apostle paul to a difficult church in in corinth this is what he said do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of god do not be deceived neither the sexually

immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of god and what's coming next he's writing to a church that would have read this out loud and he says and that is what some of you were but you were washed you were sanctified set aside you were justified forgiven in the name of the lord jesus christ and by the spirit of god in other words in this church congregation were a group of men and women who were sexually immoral idolaters adulterers male prostitutes over sexual offenders thieves greedy swindlers drunkards but they've been forgiven jesus came into the world not to call the righteous he came to call sinners and that includes you and me sin is breaking of god's commandments it's not loving the lord our god with all our heart mind soul and strength it's not loving others as we love ourselves we're all guilty sin is serious it cuts us off from god it would keep us out of heaven it would condemn us to hell but jesus came for sinners you and me and the final greatest demonstration of that go in your mind's eye outside the city of jerusalem and see those three crosses and hanging on the central one is jesus that the sight would be horrendous but a darkness came over the face of the earth so that we couldn't see jesus for three hours and as he hung there god did something amazing he looked backwards in time to the beginning and forwards in time to the end wherever whenever that will be and he took from all the world from you and from me from every continent and country and city and citizen he took our sin and laid it all on jesus and hanging hanging suffering bleeding dying there out of love for us he carried our wrong that we might be forgiven the blood of jesus christ god's son cleanses from all sin the bible says if we trust jesus god will separate our sins from us as far as the east is from the west he says oh your sins are scarlet they shall be as white as snow though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool he'll cast our sins behind his back the bible says into the deepest ocean he'll blot them out and so on and so forth i want to ask you if i may do you know that you're forgiven there was a sinful woman and there was a sinful man but christ came for both and he came for you and me and do you know he is only a prayer away if you ask the jesus who died for you and was buried and rose again to forgive you this living jesus he'll take away the past and by his holy spirit he'll come to

live within you and make all things new he promises to take you through life yeah through death and eventually to be with himself in heaven heaven is not a reward for doing good heaven is a gift which jesus purchased and he offers to all and i would urge you tonight to ask jesus to be your lord and savior before i hand back to warren i'm going to pray a prayer very similar to the one that i prayed when i was 15 and i trusted jesus christ and i'd urge you to pray with me tonight if you would so a final prayer echo personalize these words if you will dear god you know everything there is to know about me so i want to say i am sorry for my sin and i want to turn from it i do believe jesus died for me and and rose from the dead please forgive me come and live within me please become my lord and savior and help me to follow you for i pray in jesus name amen amen well thank you for being with us i'm going to hand back to warren and he'll explain what you can do if you prayed that prayer with me tonight but warren roger uh thanks so much yvonne thank you too uh thank you both for being with us this evening for sharing honestly for giving us food for thought and thanks so much for coming if you've joined us here on zoom or on youtube as well now the church we love to encourage and engage in discussion and conversations about jesus if you found anything this evening that's raised questions or concerns or just maybe piqued interest we'd love to hear from you and get in touch via email to admin at gracechurchdulwich.org i think it's in the chat if you've got any questions for the church for yvonne or roger send them in and we can put you in touch with them it might be you want to think a bit more about some of the things we've heard about tonight uh you could come again to the third event on saturday evening in our series this week on saturday night at eight we'll be joined by roger again and pius yanni he's a from a hindi family he came to the uk as a teenager became a doctor and then found himself exploring the christian faith you'll be welcome to come on saturday evening or you could join us on one of our sunday morning church services at 9 45 or 11 a.m on zoom or youtube or in person at rosendale school in west dulwich it might be you want to explore the claims of jesus further so i promise that last few things two more things briefly um if you'd like to read one of the biographies of jesus with someone that could be a friend you know is a christian or we can put you in touch with someone at grace church dulwich do email in through the website for more information and also next wednesday the 17th we're going to start a three-week christianity explore group looking at jesus's life and claim on zoom again at eight to nine i know everyone loves zoom right now again email in admin at gracechurchdulwich.org for more information information so that's it from us um the zoom is going

to come to an end shortly and the youtube stream is going to come to an end just want to say a big thank you to roger and yvonne and thank you for your time good night you
[60 : 57] Thank you.