

# Whose approval do you seek?

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- [ 0 : 00 ]     So the title of today's talk is Whose Approval Do You Seek? And generally, I don't think that I am particularly an approval seeker.
- As a child, apparently, I was contrary, which basically means that I did precisely the opposite of what people, i.e. my mum and my teachers, wanted me to do.
- And it wasn't that I was seeking the approval of the kind of popular rebellious crowd either. At boarding school, I was one of only two in my year group who didn't smoke.
- And it wasn't because I was worried about my health or terrified that I'd be caught. It was just that I didn't want to be like everybody else. So I didn't smoke. And I'm very grateful for that.
- But of course, there were times, like every teenager, that I just wanted to fit in. And I remember dying of embarrassment when my mother sent me to teenage parties, plural, in a party dress, when my friends were wearing boob tubes and satin trousers.
- [ 1 : 11 ]     It was awful. And I've always promised that I would never put any daughter of mine through that particular torture. And I've kept to that promise. But of course, I'm not immune to seeking the approval of others.
- I don't think any of us are, however independent and free-spirited we might like to think we are. I am naturally very untidy. But if I think somebody's coming round to my house, I make a bit of an effort to tidy up.
- I don't want people to think that I live in squalor. I want them to think well of me. I want their approval. And a friend of my son's came round unannounced.
- And he declared to my son that our house was the most untidy house he'd ever seen in his life. But I was absolutely mortified. Because I care.
- I care what people think about me. I want people to like me. If I hear that a group of friends have gone out and done something without me, I feel upset.
- [ 2 : 15 ]     Even if I know that I've done things with a different group of friends and not invited them. Because I want to be included. And social media has made things even worse, hasn't it?
- When I put photos of myself on Facebook, I choose ones which make me look good. If my husband takes a photo of me when we're out, I always take my glasses off.
- It's really sad, but true. I try to put ones on from my best angle. And I want those photos to make it look as though I am having fun. I'm not particularly bothered.
- But when I put those photos up, isn't it lovely when you see those little numbers go up with the little thumb? All those little likes as the numbers grow. I don't care that much.
- But it is nice to feel that you've been approved of by your friends on Facebook. So what is going on? Well, according to the World of Psychology website, apparently, on a deep emotional level, feeling approved of makes us feel secure with ourselves as a person.
- [ 3 : 25 ]     Well, I don't think we actually needed the World of Psychology website to tell us that, do we? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? If we are approved of, we feel we belong, we feel safe and we feel accepted.

And according to the website again, it says, desire for validation is one of the strongest motivating forces known to man. And it's true, isn't it?

We want to belong. As children, we want to belong and to fit in with our families. We do things the way our family does it. It defines us.

Now, when I was a child, our family had a deep suspicion of peanut butter and marmite. It's very strange. I felt that made our family just a little bit special and certainly superior to those families that seem to enjoy those particular things.

But as teenagers, it's our peer group and we want to fit in with them. So even though I never consciously wanted to fit in with my peer group, I knew which bands I was supposed to like.

[ 4 : 29 ] I knew which film stars I was supposed to fancy. And I knew when it was OK not to like them because I'd chosen not to.

But I knew what I was doing. And I always wanted to be invited to teenage parties because then it was up to me to turn them down. And I knew the rules.

And that meant that occasionally I felt free to break them because I belonged really deep down. And as adults, I think we're still the same, aren't we? I think we like to fit in to a tribe.

And our tribes tend to share the same values and reinforce each other's opinions, wear similar clothes, use similar vocabulary. And we also tend to be in groups which validate our own particular failings.

In a group where everybody drinks just a bit too much or spends an obscene amount of money on handbags, our own drinking and materialism seems not just acceptable but desirable.

[ 5 : 34 ] We belong. We feel safe. But only when we get it right. It's very isolating, isn't it, when you seem to be the only one who hasn't understood the dress code.

Or when everybody disapproves of your choice of school for your child. Or when your new haircut is met with stony silence.

We long to fit in and to be accepted. And when we don't, it can be horrible. We long to be secure, to belong and to be loved. So the bit of the Bible that we're going to be looking at today is in Luke chapter 7.

I'll read it out, so don't worry if you can't all see it. But it's on page 24 of the little Gospels on the tables.

And in Luke chapter 7 we meet two people. One who generally would have been approved of. Not just by his social circle but by wider society as well.

[ 6 : 34 ] He was respectable. Respected. Part of the in crowd. Someone who knew the rules of his particular club. But the other person we meet did not fit at all.

The woman we meet had a justifiably bad reputation. Not just for having a messy house but for living a notoriously bad life. That everyone seems to have known about.

She had broken all the rules of respectable society. She wasn't approved of by anybody. She was isolated, alone and rejected. So let's have a look at Luke chapter 7.

And I'll read from verse 36. It's quite a long passage. So do try and follow. When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him. He went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house. So she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping.

[ 7 : 34 ] She began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair. Kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who'd invited him saw this he said to himself. If this man were a prophet he would know who is touching him.

And what kind of woman she is. That she's a sinner. Jesus answered him. Simon I have something to tell you. Tell me teacher he said. Two people owed money to a certain money lender.

One owed him 500 denarii and the other 50. Neither of them had the money to pay him back. So he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon replied. I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.

You've judged correctly. Jesus said. Then he turned towards the woman and said to Simon. Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet. But she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You did not give me a kiss. But this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not pour oil on my head. But she had poured perfume on my feet. Therefore I tell you her many sins have been forgiven.

[ 8 : 38 ] As her great love has shown. For whoever has been forgiven little loves little. Then Jesus said to her. Your sins are forgiven. The other guests began to say amongst themselves. Who is this who even forgives sins?

Jesus said to the woman. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. So the host in this passage is a Pharisee.

A member of a very well respected religious group. Who were renowned for their earnestness and their morality. He was approved of. And would have gained approval.

By keeping clear of anyone or anything. That threatened to damage his reputation. His approval rating. Was based on him being better than other people. He was probably better educated.

Better behaved. And better connected. And in that particular box he was accepted. He belonged. And he was confident enough of his position.

[ 9 : 36 ] To bend a few rules. To be generous. And to invite Jesus. Somebody who didn't fit into his social circle. To dinner. But to maintain a certain distance from his guests.

To show that he was in control. He was the boss. He was superior. He didn't offer the usual courtesies. That a host would offer a guest. See that in verses 44 to 46.

He didn't welcome him with a kiss. He didn't wash his feet. Or anoint his head with oil. So in today's terms I guess. He didn't take his coat. Or offer him a drink.

Or introduce him. To the other guests. And the host. The Pharisee. Probably felt quite justified. In slightly patronising behaviour. When Jesus seems totally unaware.

Of who this woman is. Who gate crashes. He mutters to himself. In verse 39. If this man were a prophet. He would know who's touching him. And what kind of woman she is. That she is a sinner.

[ 10 : 33 ] This man's self-esteem. And status. Was based on the fact. That he obeyed the rules of his society. Those who didn't obey the rules. Whether that woman. Or Jesus.

Could safely be looked down on. And put in their place. In fact. They had to be looked down on. Because his approval. Was based on keeping the rules. Of his group. And in seeing those who didn't.

As inferior. So if in the words. Of the psychology website. Feeling approved of. Makes us feel secure. With ourself as a person. We're on very shaky ground.

As this man was to discover. What if he's got it wrong? What if he's been looking for approval. In all the wrong places. And from all the wrong people. What happens.

When the very basis. Of your approval. Your self-esteem. And your identity. Is disapproved of. What happens. When all the assumptions.

[ 11 : 30 ] Of where you fit. Who you look up to. Who you look down on. Are called into question. That's what happens here. Isn't it? It's not just the woman. Who embarrasses the Pharisee.

The host in this situation. Jesus does too. Jesus. Who the Pharisee. Has felt free. To criticise. And patronise. Puts him in his place. Jesus isn't just.

Some wandering teacher. Flattered to be invited. To the great man's table. Jesus has noticed. The Pharisee's bad manners. And his lack of a proper welcome. And he points it out.

In front of all the other guests. Who presumably. Were from the same social circle. As the Pharisee. Jesus tells a little story. Designed to show up. The Pharisee's real problem. His failure to see.

And appreciate. Who Jesus was. The woman. Who was beneath. The Pharisee's contempt. Was accepted. And approved of. By Jesus. This man has got it all wrong.

[ 12 : 28 ] Jesus was the one. Whose approval. This man should have been seeking. But because of his assumptions. His prejudices. Perhaps the opinions. His peer group. Whose approval. He has been trying to win.

The Pharisee misses the point. And is put in his place. So before we move on. To look at the woman. Can I challenge you. Not to make the same mistake. Check out Jesus.

Don't dismiss him. Based on the opinions. And prejudices. Of your peer group. Or the media. If you're tempted. To think that you can look down on him. Ignore him. Or treat him like an interesting celebrity guest.

While seeking the approval. Of your friends. And the society in which you live. Can I suggest that you read one of the Gospels. Take home this Luke's Gospel. And read it through. Ask the friend he brought you.

If they can read one to one with you. To get a little bit more out of it. Or sign up to the Christianity Explored course. Which will go through Mark's Gospel. Ask yourself.

[ 13 : 27 ] How the historical Jesus. As shown in the Gospels. Matches up. To those whose approval you seek. Is his opinion. More or less valuable. Than theirs.

Check out Jesus's character. His actions. His teaching. Now when I first read a Gospel for myself. I was absolutely blown away. By the person of Jesus.

He wasn't the weedy and rather anemic bloke. In a nightie. That I got the idea of. From Sunday school. And from our e-lessons. Check him out for yourself.

And see if his opinion. Is one that you would value more. Than those of your ordinary. Fallible friends. So moving on to the woman. This woman.

In the passage. Know whose opinion she values. And whose approval she seeks. She is a hundred percent. Focused on Jesus. She is totally unbothered.

[ 14 : 24 ] By the blatant disapproval. Of her hosts. And the other guests. Now to be honest. I think I would find her. Behavior very embarrassing. If she did that.

At a dinner party of mine. It would make me very uncomfortable. Gate crashing. And behaving like that. Would be looked down on. In Morden. Let alone Dulwich. So.

Weeping at Jesus feet. Washing his feet with her tears. And pouring expensive perfume. All over them. Breaks all the social rules. Doesn't it? She was disapproved of.

Before she even entered the room. Because of her sinful life. Now she's made it bad. Even worse. Because of her extreme emotional behavior. But she's not bothered. The only person.

Whose approval she seeks. Is Jesus's. And he gives it to her. While to the Pharisee. Self-esteem and status. Is based on rule keeping.

[ 15 : 19 ] And hierarchy. This woman. Doesn't seem to have heard. She just wants to show. How much Jesus means to her. Guaranteeing the disapproval. Of all the people in society.

Whose opinion. She should have valued. And whose approval. She should have sought. So why does she do that? How could she. Be so disrespectful. Of the way things are done.

How could she care. So little. About what those important people. Thought about her. And how could she care. So little about her stuff. That valuable alabaster jar of perfume.

Was probably an heirloom. The one thing. That might have given her. Some sort of financial security. How could she just pour it. All over Jesus's feet. Well because.

Unlike the Pharisee. She had realized. Who Jesus was. And what he'd done. And would do for her. She knew. That of everyone. And everything. In the entire universe.

[ 16 : 17 ] He was the only person. Whose opinion mattered. Whose approval mattered. So what was it. That she'd discovered. Well from Jesus's little parable. We can see. That she had realized.

That Jesus had forgiven. And accepted her. Not because she deserved it. She didn't. She was a sinful woman. Not because she'd tried. To keep the rules. Of society.

She hadn't. No. She had realized. That Jesus. Had forgiven. And accepted her. Because he loved her. Not because of who she was. Who her friends were.

What clothes she wore. Or what school she went to. But because of who he was. And how much she knew about Jesus. We don't really know. But so far. In Luke's gospel.

We have seen Jesus. Shocking the religious leaders. By spending time. With tax collectors. And sinners. People like her. Perhaps she'd been. In one of those groups. And met.

[ 17 : 12 ] And heard Jesus. She may well have heard. Jesus teaching. As it says in the Bible. With authority. Claiming to be God's. Promised king. Bringing good news. To the poor.

Healing the sick. And most importantly. Forgiving sins. Something as we see here. Only God. Had the power. And ability to do. Jesus. God on earth. Showing God's compassion.

Love. And power. Extended. Even to people like her. Showing that she could be loved. Forgiven. And accepted. By God himself. A woman.

Whose society rejected. And ignored. Was valued. And accepted. By Jesus. The Lord of the universe. So whose else opinion. Could possibly matter. But what she couldn't have known.

And what I think. Would have made her value Jesus. Even more. If that was possible. Is what he did. To make it possible. For someone. As undeserving as her. And as undeserving as us.

[ 18 : 11 ] To be forgiven. By a totally perfect. And utterly just God. To be loved unconditionally. By the one who made us. And knows exactly. How flawed and grubby.

Even the best of us is. She knew she didn't deserve. That kind of unconditional love. And she was right. None of us do. What she and all of us deserve. Is for God to turn his back on us.

Like we turn our back on him. He can't just ignore. All the ways that we ignore him. And decide we prefer to live our lives. Our way. Rather than his. Whether that's by legalistic rule keeping.

Like the Pharisee. Or that woman's blatant immorality. God can't just have us back. As if all the hurt we've caused. And the damage we've done. Is irrelevant. It can't just be brushed under the carpet.

It needs wiping away. Which means each of us. Should be wiped away with it. God's back eternally turned on us. But as he died on that Roman cross.

[ 19 : 12 ] Just a couple of years after this event. Jesus. God's son. Volunteered to take on. All our flaws and grubbiness. All our selfishness. Pride.

Snobbery. Laziness. And indifference towards God. And have God's back turned on him. Instead. No wonder he cried out. As he was on the cross. Not to his loving heavenly father.

But much more impersonally. He said. My God. My God. Why have you forsaken me? He was cut off from God. So we don't have to be. God's back was turned on him.

So God's face can be turned to welcome us. Jesus was separated from his father's love. So we never have to be. Now and for eternity. And the mind boggling thing is.

Is that we don't have to struggle. And worry. Whether we've done enough. To earn his approval. Of course we haven't. We couldn't possibly. Whether we're more like that woman. Or more like the Pharisee.

[ 20 : 10 ] We all fall woefully short. Of God's perfect standard. But that's the point. Jesus did everything. That was needed. For us to gain God's approval. As he died on the cross.

We just have to say thank you. And live in the light of that. Knowing that God has seen our messy hearts. And loves us anyway. Means that the trauma.

Of other people seeing our messy houses. Is diminished significantly. It is true. That to quote the website again. On a deep emotional level. Feeling approved of. Makes us feel secure with ourselves as a person.

But whether we rely on the approval of our peers. Or of our heroes. We'll never feel really secure. Really loved. Really accepted. There's only one person's approval.

Which is guaranteed. And that is the only approval that matters. The approval of God himself. Because it's not based on our behaviour. Our background. Our wealth. Our education.

[ 21 : 08 ] Our opinions. But on Jesus' death. On our behalf. That is why. If we turn to him. That's why Jesus can say to us. As well as that undeserving woman.

Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Well I've got a good number of questions. Some of them are fairly similar. So I'll try and answer each one individually.

But they might overlap. Or I might sort of do a couple together. We'll see how we go. The first one. You said that the sinful woman knew what he would do for her. Did she know that he would die for her?

As I was saying that I thought actually. I shouldn't have said that. Because as I said later. She didn't know that he was going to die for her. But she did know that he had forgiven and accepted her.

And that was extraordinary and enormous for her. Later on she would have understood probably that he had died for her. And that would have made her understand that even more.

[ 22 : 04 ] In even more depth. This is on the same piece of paper. But I will. And it covers some of the same material as another one. But I'll do it now. Jesus accepts everyone.

Forgives everyone. Forgives everyone's sins. Only if you turn to him. Question mark. But what about those who turn to God. But continue to sin. Murder. Have affairs.

Greed. And that's a very good one. I think people get very often put off. By people who apparently have turned to God. And who continue to live exactly as they have before.

And I think that's often called cheap grace. It's this God forgives me. Therefore I can behave exactly as I want to. Because Jesus died for my sins. The Bible is very clear. That if that is somebody's attitude.

They haven't got it. So this woman. When she realises how immense Jesus' love for her is. Before even realising that Jesus was going to die on the cross for her. She responded in love and gratitude.

[ 23 : 04 ] To him. And we don't know exactly what happened. But I think we can guarantee that her life was never the same again. And that seems to be the Bible's passage. Bible's pattern. And if you look just back.

A couple of pages. To page 21. You've got the very famous story of the wise and foolish builders. And you've got two men who build houses. One without foundations.

One with foundations. And when the storm comes. One gets blown away. The one without foundations. And Jesus says in chapter 6. 49.

It says. The one who hears my words. And does not put them into practice. Is like a man who built a house on the ground without foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house. It collapsed. And its destruction was complete.

And at the beginning of that passage. In verse 46. Why do you call me Lord, Lord. And do not do what I say. So if somebody has realised who Jesus is. That he's God on earth. That he has died. So that they can be reconciled to God again.

[ 24 : 04 ] The idea that they would then just carry on. Shows that they have not understood that. And does that mean to say. There'll be a transformed sin-free life from that day on. No. It's a daily struggle. But heading in a different direction.

Aiming to do what God wants. And to live for him. Rather than living for ourselves. But nor is it that. Oh I hope that if I keep going. And do these good things. That God will accept me.

Because as we've seen. God accepts those who trust in Jesus. Because of his death on the cross. And that life after that. Is in response to that. And I always think sometimes.

It's a bit like. If you're married. You don't wash your husband's socks. And make him breakfast. Hoping that he will then love you. I hope that's not. I mean it might be the case for some of you. I hope not.

That is a slightly dysfunctional relationship. And you might need counselling. But. It is that you love him. And you want to show that. Do you always want to wash his socks. And make his breakfast. No.

[ 25 : 00 ] But actually it's a way of expressing your love. So it doesn't mean to say. That your emotions are overwhelmingly. Gushy towards Jesus every day. It's not that you always want to do. What he. You know that he would like to do.

But in response to his love. You will be behaving in a different way. And the Bible also teaches. But it's not. In any of these immediate passages. That actually.

If we turn to Jesus. He actually comes to live with us. Through the Holy Spirit. And will therefore help us. To live for him. And to change. So. No. You can't just say.

Yeah. I'm a Christian now. I've been forgiven. Oh. I'm going to carry on murdering. If. Something happens. And you do something wrong. Does that mean to say you're forgiven? Yes. You can still be forgiven.

But if you just don't care. And carry on living in the old way. I think you have to. Really draw into question. Call into question. Whether that person really understood at all. In the first place.

[ 25 : 53 ] I hope that answers that one. And I think that. Follows on. And is similar to this one. If God's approval is unconditional. What responsibility does that place. Back on us. To deserve that approval.

We can't deserve that approval. This woman was approved of. Even though she was utterly undeserving. God loves us. Even though we're thoroughly undeserving. From Mother Teresa.

Due to. Down to the worst sinner. None of us deserves God love. We all fall short. Like that woman did. But. So we can't ever deserve his approval. We can respond to his approval.

To his approval. In love. And in trying to live a life. That is pleasing to him. And again. I think the marriage. Or even parent. Kind of situation. Is quite helpful. To think of that.

How we respond to somebody else's love. We're not trying to deserve their approval. We're trying to show that we love them. In response to the fact. That they love us first. And again.

[ 26 : 48 ] Quite similar. But what difference does it make to you. To know you have God's unconditional approval. And I think that's a you underlined. So that means me. Huge. Huge. I mean I forget it sometimes.

But I think it does. Free me. To be honest about who I am. I mean this woman. She knew she was a sinner. And she. Admitted that. And. Being forgiven was just amazing.

It means we don't have to pretend. You know. That we're actually quite rubbish sometimes. We don't have to put on an act. That we're better than we are. Because we know. That God knows. Exactly how rubbish we are sometimes. And we can.

Talk to him about it. And ask to be forgiven for it. And help to change. We don't have to kind of put on a mask. Even to other people. I think one of the most unhelpful things we can do. Is pretend that we're a brilliant wife. Pretend that we're a brilliant mum.

And everybody else is thinking. Oh no. I'm so rubbish. Because they're so brilliant. And actually. Soon you realise. That actually. We're all. Fail in so many different ways. But we can all help each other. And God can help us.

[ 27 : 44 ] I think it is. And particularly for women. I think. Often women do really struggle with self-esteem. And if we've been loved. And accepted by the Lord of the universe. Well. That's a pretty cool basis for self-esteem.

You know. Even if somebody doesn't comment on a new haircut. Or something like that. Actually. We've got a solid basis for self-esteem. And so that's the difference it made to you. Do ask the people on your table. What difference it's made to them.

What does it mean to seek Jesus' approval. On a practical level. In day-to-day decision-making processes. I think hopefully. I've made it clear. That actually. If we're trusting in Jesus.

And I've put our trust in his. I've turned away from going our own way. Look to him. And ask for his forgiveness. As a result of what he's done on the cross. We have got Jesus' approval. We don't have to seek it anymore.

But. Day-to-day. How do we know. How to live to please him? Well. He tells us. So. That's why he's given us the Bible. So there's lots of stuff. It could just be on.

[ 28 : 42 ] I don't know. If it's a teenage thing. W.W.J.D. What would Jesus do? It's a bit naff. But. Sometimes you can read a passage. And see how Jesus. Deals with. For that woman. For example.

How should I deal with somebody. Who is very unlike me. And I kind of naturally. Wouldn't like. But I love her. And I accept her. As Jesus did. Or it could be very obvious.



Kind of moral teaching. And there's a lot of that. In the New Testament. About. How we should live. About what marriage looks like. About what family looks like. Lots of things like that.

And we can see how God. How we can please God. In response. To what he's done for us. And little by little. Learn to live a life. Which is more in accordance.

With what he'd like. Us to do. And again. I've sort of answered this already. But how do we stop worrying. About other people's approval. It's a battle isn't it. Because I said.

[ 29 : 37 ] I mean. Officially. I shouldn't. And I don't. But like I said. When that lad said. This is the untidiest house. I've ever seen in my life. I just felt awful. I was saying to somebody else. When somebody put a two star review. Of one of my books on Amazon.

I thought. That's horrible. You can't do that. But actually. Just to remember. Actually. We have. We are loved. I mean. If you go on Christianity Explored. Which I would thoroughly recommend.

I think it's a brilliant course. We try to do in our church. One every term. Just a small group. To look at Mark's gospel. And almost the tagline. Is you're more sinful. Than you ever imagined. But more loved.

Than you ever dreamed. And I think that is. Brilliant. Because. Actually. We are more sinful. Than we ever imagined. So when people look at us. And they see faults in us.

Well yeah. Because there are. We are not perfect. We make mistakes. Just like this. Women did. The Pharisee. Just didn't own up. To that. We need to own up to that. But we're also more loved. Than we ever dreamed.

[ 30 : 33 ] So. That's the approval we want. To know we're loved. Whatever. Regardless. You know. And I remember somebody saying. God loves you. More than you love your kids.

And I thought. Impossible. Yeah. Possible. You know. He loves us way more. Than we love our children. Our husbands. Our parents. Whoever the closest relationship is. He loves us more than that. And that's.

You know. If we've got his approval. People. But it is a battle. We just have to remind ourselves. Of how much he loves us. Day by day. How can we encourage our children.

To seek Jesus's approval. Well I think again. I think we need to tell them. That if they turn to Jesus. They've got it. And actually. To show them Jesus. And to model Jesus.

If you are somebody. Trusting Jesus yourself. Sometimes it's very tempting. To want perfect children. Because they make us look good. And get the approval. Of everybody else. We don't have perfect children. I certainly don't.

[ 31 : 28 ] But actually. And nor are we perfect parents. So I think. One of the things. Is to. Like this woman did. Admit. She'd got it wrong. And go to Jesus. For forgiveness.

You know. If we get it wrong. If we yell at our kids. Shout at our husbands. Oh really horrid. Say. I'm sorry. You know. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that. Jesus isn't happy about that.

I'm not happy about that. But he forgives me. And actually. Again. With children. To show them. God's grace. And God's forgiveness. And to show them Jesus. Not a set of rules. So they become little Pharisees.

Which I think. Well actually you get. Rather than. Someone like the woman. Who loves Jesus. Understands his love. And responds. To that. I think we actually. Quite want little Pharisees. Don't we?

Who. But Jesus doesn't. He wants. Kids who understand. His love. And I think this is quite an interesting. The few here. Hang on.

- [ 32 : 22 ] Let's just make sure I've got them all. The problem is not worrying about other people's opinions. It's having the faith to want God's approval. How do you get there?
- Well I do think. Start with Jesus. And start with the New Testament. And have a look. I mean certainly. In my experience. That's what happened to me.
- I. My sister become a Christian. I thought this is a load of rubbish. This is. She is a bit embarrassing. She was all very gushy. And all this kind of stuff. And oh Jesus loves you. And yeah. And I didn't want anything to do with that.
- And then. She gave me a Bible for my birthday. When I was 17. Which was not something I wanted at all. And I started reading it. And like I said. Reading and seeing Jesus.
- Absolutely blew me away. I was never going to admit to her. You know. That actually I was finding this quite interesting. Because she's my big sister. And you don't do that kind of thing. But. Just seeing. That Jesus was not.
- [ 33 : 19 ] Was way more. Than I had ever thought he was. He wasn't just a bloke. You know. He was. In a category all of himself. And I think. Do. Honestly. Either read Luke's gospel.
- I've seen there's some word one-to-one. Books up there. Which will help you read. With somebody else. To go through the gospels. Together. Or Christianity explored. But. What do you make of Jesus?
- And. Actually. Allow him. To change your thinking. You know. Get rid of your prejudices. So what do I make of him? And work from there. Because faith isn't some wishy-washy. Kind of. Feeling.
- That some lucky people have. Who've managed to get rid of any brain. That they once had. And kind of responded. In some. You know. Emotional way. Faith is based on fact. And the facts of the historical Jesus.
- So. Go back to the gospel. Say. What do I make of this guy? What do I make of the resurrection? You know. How do I explain that away? You know. Work it out.
- [ 34 : 16 ] Because faith isn't. Oh gosh. I wish I had it. It's something you just say. Hang on. Okay. Show me the evidence. What do I make of that? And see where you go. So do. If you're that person. Sign up for Christianity Explored. I would thoroughly recommend it.
- And I think this is similar. What is it about Jesus' identity. That allows him the claim to forgive sin. And therefore allow us to have God's approval. As the guests.
- So the Pharisee. In that passage said. Who can forgive sins but God alone? You know. That is. Particularly in the Jewish culture at the time. That was huge. You can't just say you forgive sins.
- They knew he was claiming to be God on earth. And that again. That is the crux. Who was Jesus? And throughout Luke's gospel. Mark's gospel. All the gospels.
- That is the question they're asking. Who is this guy? You know. This humble carpenter from Nazareth. Doing things that nobody else has ever done.
- [ 35 : 12 ] So he taught as nobody else had ever done. And all these people say. Who is this? He's teaching with authority. He showed love to people. Who nobody should have been showing love to.
- And he performed miracles. That only God could perform. He calmed the storm. He raised the dead. He healed the sick. And ultimately. Obviously. He rose again. So. Who is this guy?
- You know. How dare he? And that's what the Pharisees were saying. How dare he? Forgive sins. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Until they go. Ah. Okay. Maybe that's who you are. So.

If Jesus is God. On earth. Which is what the Bible claims. He does have the right to forgive sins. And he has also the authority to die in our place.

Because he's sinless. And he's God. So therefore he has the right as one man to die for the whole of mankind. And so it matters who Jesus is. So again. Think it through.

[ 36 : 06 ] Work out. Who do I think Jesus is? And ask your friends about it. Hang on. There's another one. I think I've lost it. Hang on. Yeah. If Jesus is the only way to be okay with God.

What about other religions? And that is a very big question. Because I live in Morden. We've got the biggest mosque in Europe. Just across the road. And they are lovely, lovely people. And some very good friends there.

So what is it about Jesus? Why do Christians say. And Jesus said himself actually. That he was the only way to God. Well again. Who is he? If he is God on earth. He's unique.

And that's not to say other religions are nasty. Other religions have got, you know, not nice people. They're delightful. But actually. If Jesus was God on earth. If Jesus died on the cross.

For our sins. He's unique. If he rose again. He's unique. So you have to say. Hang on. I've got to take what he said seriously. And he did say. In one of the other gospels. In John. I am the way. The truth.

[ 37 : 05 ] And the life. No one comes to the Father. Except by me. So. I said. The person of Jesus. His identity. Is absolutely crucial. So. Being a Christian.

I certainly thought when I was growing up. Was about being a good person. And trying hard. And. You know. Keeping the ten commandments. All that kind of stuff. And I think. As this Pharisee. I was a Pharisee. That's where the Pharisee was coming from. But actually.

I think. We can see from that story. The essence of Christianity. Is what we make of Jesus. Do we get Jesus. Like that woman did. Do we see him. As supremely loving.

Supremely. Good. And above all. God. Who alone. Can forgive us. Or do we just see him. As another bloke. Another good teacher. Which is what the Pharisee.

Saw him as. And. If it is true. That he is. Unique. And he did rise from the dead. What he said. About himself. Is true. Well then.

[ 38 : 00 ] Christianity. Is not compatible. With all the other religions. Obviously there are similarities. But actually. Jesus is the only one. He can forgive us. And bring us into relationship. With God our father.

Which is what we were always created for. king of a■■■■ier.spray. I'm sorry. He can forgive us. And even. He says he acts.