

How not to lose heart - Part 1

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Preacher: Richard Hagen

[0 : 00] Well, do open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and it's this chapter that we'll be in in both talks today, 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and this morning, just those first six verses, and then when everyone's found it, I'll lead us in a prayer.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we praise you for bringing us all here safely, for the sunshine, for our fellowship together. And we pray that the entrance of your word would bring light to our hearts.

We pray for the work of your spirit in our hearts to help us to see your gospel in all its glory, and the ministry you've given us in all its worth.

For your honour, we pray. Amen. Therefore, having this ministry, by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart, but we renounce disgraceful, underhand ways.

We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word. But by the open statement of the truth, we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

[1 : 06] And even if our gospel is veiled, it's veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Well, I want to start today with a question. Why did the English stop going to church?

That was the title of a paper written a few years ago by Michael Watts, an academic from Nottingham University. Why did the English stop going to church?

And if you like bar graphs, here is one. The 1851 census, about 40% of the English went to church. But by 2000, it's down to about 7% and is still on its decline.

[2 : 22] Why did the English stop going to church? Well, why not talk to your neighbour and see if you can come up with some potential reasons why the English stopped going to church?

Do chat to your neighbour just for a minute or two. Well, let's just come together again for a moment. Any thoughts? Why did the English stop going to church? Any thoughts?

There are lots of answers people might give. Go on, yeah. Because it was in the era of the British Empire, maybe because things were being brought in by different religions.

Maybe at different religions, yeah. Thank you. Anyone else? And now we've got everything we need to hear. Yeah, we're better off, aren't we? Maybe in those times, in Victorian times, it was a bit harder, yeah.

Anyone else? I wonder whether in terms of the faith of the people going, actually that 40% is quite soft. Mm-hmm. But in the past, there was a lot of social convention around going to church.

[3 : 22] Yeah. And that, so maybe the church missed that faith was, the actual position of faith. Yeah. Because people were going along and then dropped away.

Anyone else? Yeah. Sunday trading. Sunday trading. Yeah. Yeah. Maybe the teaching was churches these days as a week. So it's not going to attend.

Yeah. Yeah. Interesting. In the back there. Maybe they went because of convention in the 19th century. Yeah. But they stopped believing that it was true. Yeah.

So therefore, the next generation thought, why are we doing this? Yeah. Yeah. Wow, everyone's got their thinking hats on already today. So it's good discussion, isn't it? Well, this academic, Michael Watts, did something very interesting.

He did a compare and contrast with America. So in America, church attendance was very similar, about 40%. But then later, by 2000, in America, it was 70% attendance with 44% going every week.

[4 : 27] So there are statistics and statistics. But basically, he noticed that in America, ever since 1851, a lot of people still go to church compared to very few people in the UK.

Well, he dug deeper to try and find out why did the English, as opposed to the Americans, stop going to church. And this is what he found in his research.

He said, he found out that one of the most, this is one of the most puzzling phenomena of modern church history because standard explanations, which some of us have given, fail to take into account the apparently similar conditions on both sides of the Atlantic.

When we think about prosperity, well, America is pretty prosperous, isn't it? America is pretty internationally diverse. There are other religions present and so on. And he writes, they fail to take into account the apparently similar conditions on both sides of the Atlantic seem to have produced exactly opposite results.

Well, this is the conclusion that he came to. The answer seems to be that American churches, to a far greater extent than English churches, have held on to the doctrines that produced the upsurge in popular religion in both countries in the first half of the 19th century.

[5 : 42] The doctrines of the sinfulness of man and of his ultimate destruction in the fires of hell unless rescued by the blood shed by Christ on Calvary. In his research, he concluded, to his surprise, that the English stopped going to church because the church lost heart with the gospel.

And losing heart is what we're thinking about in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 today. Do you see it there in chapter 4 verse 1? Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

And as Paul concludes this section in verse 16, he says again, So, we do not lose heart. Now, losing heart here has the meaning of growing tired, getting discouraged and giving up.

And we all feel that at times, don't we? Yes, that piece of historical research shows that it happened in late Victorian times.

But it's true for us all in every generation. Being a Christian is a struggle, isn't it? This business about evangelism is so difficult.

[7 : 03] The message just seems so weak and ineffective about a crucified saviour. And we, as messengers, are even weaker. And at that point, we want to give up, or at least look for some shortcuts.

Well, the Apostle Paul, here, is writing to Christians in Corinth. Some years before, he stayed in Corinth for 18 months. He made tents to earn a living. He preached Christ.

And people became Christians. Then, bingo, a church was started. After Paul left, the Corinthians had grown tired of Paul's way of doing things.

It seemed so weak and ineffective. I mean, Paul's message, he was like a broken record. As we'll remember from 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 2. I desired to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And he just kept going on about it. And Paul's ministry seemed weaker still. He was afflicted and perplexed and persecuted and struck down.

[8 : 10] He seemed to be this kind of guy. I'm picking this up from my children. He's got that L. He seems to be a bit of a loser. Well, fresh new faces had arrived in Corinth with a fresh new message.

And it seemed to be just what the Corinthians needed. A kind of reboot. Gospel ministry 2.0. And Paul, it refers to them here in chapter 4, but only implicitly.

But he names them and shames them in chapter 11. And it's good just for us to turn to chapter 11 to get a bit of context. To see who these people are. Chapter 11, verse 1.

He writes, I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me. I feel a divine jealousy for you. For I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

But I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

[9 : 33] I can see that I'm not in the least inferior to these super apostles. So these people had come into the church and they looked so good. They didn't seem to be full of all this kind of suffering and setback that Paul's ministry was characterized by.

But as he goes on in this chapter 11, he explains what they're really about. Chapter 11, verse 13. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

So there were serious problems in the church in Corinth. And these young Christians were in danger of losing heart and moving right away from this gospel of Christ and him crucified and this ministry of weakness that Paul had passed on from Christ himself.

And what we find in chapter 4 is that Paul is giving some of these contrasts along the way, perhaps especially in verses 16 to 18 of chapter 4, when he talks about how outwardly, yes, we're wasting away, but inwardly we're being renewed.

And yes, we have these slight momentary afflictions in this life, but there is eternal glory awaiting us. And he's having a poke at these super apostles, even in this chapter, so early on in the letter.

[11 : 01] So Paul teaches us about true ministry in contrast to the false ministry of these super apostles. And the choice we face in our generation, as we start another year in church life, is the choice that Corinthians faced.

Will we stick to the old paths of authentic Christianity, or go for something new down the road, so to speak? Because it's when things get hard that we're most in danger of giving up.

And in our generation, as we think about the ages past, will we be like that late Victorian period, losing heart and giving up? Or are we going to be that generation that doesn't lose heart, and stays true to the message and the ministry that God has given us?

Well, if we're to avoid giving up, we need to remember two things. And we've got this handout here. You need to do that one-fold origami to see that it's a booklet, not a madly printed handout.

And we're just going to see two things that we need to remember to avoid giving up and losing heart. The problem is spiritual blindness, verses 3 and 4.

[12 : 15] And we need to remember the solution is preaching Christ, verses 5 and 6. So firstly, we need to remember the problem is spiritual blindness.

So verse 3, Even if our gospel is veiled, it's veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Now, the God of this world is another name for Satan. And what he does is blind people. Now, he's not talking here about physical blindness.

He's talking about something far more destructive, which is spiritual blindness. And what is it that cannot be seen by the spiritually blind?

Verse 4, So with this spiritual blindness that Satan has brought about on the human race, we cannot see Jesus Christ in all his glory.

[13 : 30] We cannot see him as he really is the image of God. We cannot see him as God with skin on. He's just a pale historical figure of no real relevance to us today.

Yes, the spiritually blind might know that Jesus existed, that he was a figure of history. But they cannot see why people make so much fuss of him.

And when we hear comments from those who are spiritually blind, it can surprise us and make us feel like giving up, doesn't it?

We need to remember what we're up against. A form of blindness for which there is no human cure.

You've got a family like mine. I became a Christian. None of my family were Christians then. And none of them have become Christians since. 28 years ago I became a Christian.

[14 : 33] My mother, who lives closer to Emmanuel Church than anyone else who's a member of the church, she says she comes regularly, once a year. She comes along and I preach my heart out with my mum sitting over there.

But complete blindness. She cannot understand a word of what I'm saying. And it's heartbreaking. Especially when it's our nearest and our dearest.

I remember going through two ways to live with my brother in a pizza express saying, Simon, I'm just not sure if I've explained things clearly enough to you and gone through it.

And I just explained the gospel in its fullness and then nothing. Well, thanks Richard for explaining that to me. It's good on you. Blind.

It is a heartbreaking blindness, is it not? Perhaps you're involved in Bible study with someone who's not a Christian and you've done everything you can. But there is this blindness, this seemingly incurable blindness that they cannot see the glory of God in the face of Christ.

[15 : 40] Well, with those that we love not responding to the gospel, it's easy to blame ourselves, isn't it? Perhaps I didn't explain things clearly enough or didn't make that life decision to get them to that conventional camp or youth group or church.

Well, there may well be place for some self-reflection. But is the problem simply this, that they are spiritually blind? And there's nothing, humanly speaking, that we can do about it.

I don't know if you've had one of those conversations with a Christian friend and they say, oh, how's it going where you are? And they say, oh, it's hard where I am. You know, I live next to an imam.

Or I've got the top atheist in my class sitting next to me at school or whatever else it is. And it's a slightly competitive conversation about who's in the most difficult situation.

But, dear friends, there's a level playing field here. Spiritual blindness has been the problem for the human race ever since Genesis 3. It doesn't matter how great an opponent of Christ this person is.

[16 : 56] The problem is the same for them as it is for everyone. Spiritual blindness. Sometimes we can have those conversations and it kind of sets us back even further, doesn't it?

Oh, it's hard there, but it's really hard here. Well, spiritual blindness is everywhere. And as we admit that that is the same problem everywhere, whether it's Dulwich or Canterbury, in your family or mine, in your workplace or at home, in your class at school or in that university course or whatever, as we come together on what is the universal problem, we can spur each other on with the universal solution.

And this is the second thing we need to remember to avoid losing heart. Remember the solution is preaching Christ. Verse 5.

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

There is a universal problem, but there is only one cure. And that is preaching Christ.

[18 : 22] And what happens when Christ is preached is something truly remarkable. In verse 6, the Apostle Paul takes us right back to the creation of the world.

Quoting from Genesis, chapter 1. I don't know if you've been on holiday to a sound and light display. I remember going on holiday to Egypt some years ago and we were getting very excited about being off the beaten track and thought, this is, no tourist has ever been here.

And then this tradesman came up and he went, good price, as the price. And he went, well, okay, yeah, we've all been here. But a great thing to do was to go to the Karnak Temple and to go to a sound and light display.

It was all dark, couldn't see a thing, fumbled our way to get to the seat and then the music started and then the lights went boom! And then you saw this majestic piece of architecture, the Karnak Temple.

Well, go back to the creation of the world and something even more remarkable happens. Genesis, chapter 1, verses 2 and 3, which is what Paul is paraphrasing here.

[19 : 42] The earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Darkness. Darkness. And God said, let there be light.

And there was light. Imagine the situation. Complete darkness in the whole universe. And then, boom!

God says, let there be light. And it was so. Well, that same power from that same God is at work when Christ is preached. He switches the lights on so that we can see Jesus Christ as he really is.

In all his glory. The glory of God the Father in the face of Christ. That we stop seeing Jesus as a mere man. We see him as the God-man. God with skin on.

And that happens as Christ is preached. This was Paul's experience. Remember when he hated Christians and their Christ? He was blinded.

[20 : 48] Then his eyes were opened and he was converted. That was, if you like, a flick of the switch conversion. But for most of us, it's the dimmer switch conversion.

The same kind that we see with the disciples in the Gospels. Remember Jesus' disciples in Mark's Gospel? You know, halfway through, Peter finally says, you are the Christ.

He gets half of it, but then he rebukes Jesus for not understanding that he had to die. Well, that dimmer switch conversion, that gradual opening of eyes and light going on is our common experience, isn't it?

Well, Paul is saying here that people's eyes are opened with such power from the living God as Christ is preached. Now, it's true that this opening of eyes is not automatic every time.

You see verse 3, even if our Gospel is veiled, it's veiled or hidden to those who are perishing. But we know that the only way for the light to be switched on is as Christ himself is preached.

[21 : 58] And the way to avoid losing heart or giving up is to see the scale of the problem, spiritual blindness, and to see that the only solution is to preach Christ where God shines light so that we can see the glory of God in the face of Christ.

And this is our common experience, isn't it? I remember reading that Gideon's Bible. I had no idea why Jesus, I thought Jesus was an impressive figure of history. I didn't understand why he died.

It puzzled me. And then somebody in a very unremarkable way preached Christ to a group of three or four of us in the television room of a boarding house in the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral.

And that was the moment when this dimmer switch was turned up in a significant way and light flooded my heart to see Christ in all his glory. And that is our common experience, isn't it?

Perhaps you've had the privilege, unlike me, of growing up in a Christian family and it's like the kind of dimmer switch has been turning up for years. What an awesome experience that is.

[23 : 12] Perhaps for others of us fairly recently. But we need to avoid losing heart in this kind of ministry. I just want to think about four ways that we can apply these verses.

Four applications. The first one is to be thankful for your own conversion. Sometimes we can easily slip into the thinking that, well, I made a decision for Christ whenever it was.

Well, that may well be part of the story. But actually, your conversion is down supremely to God switching the lights on and giving you the expulsive power of a new affection for Christ, seeing him as he really is.

And that is something to thank God for from the bottom of your heart. Every time you walk around spiritually blind people and you get this, you get Jesus and why he died and rose again.

Thank God from the bottom of your heart that he switched the lights on for you. I love church and the opportunity in church as we sing together or maybe come forward to take the Lord's Supper just to look around and see these dramatic miracles all together with the same story that God, the God who said let there be light at creation has shone his light into your hearts and mine so that we can see the glory of God the Father in the face of Christ.

[24 : 48] make the most of every bit of fellowship to look around and think wow and where the opportunity is just to share something of your story. I love John Newton's Amazing Grace do you remember?

Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me I once was lost but now I'm found was blind but now I see. Let's never forget that the miracle of conversion and whatever your story is the fact that you can see Christ and understand him in all his glory now is nothing short of a miracle.

Be thankful for your own conversion. Secondly, be faithful with the gospel message. It's striking in how Paul begins in verse 2 isn't it?

We've renounced disgraceful underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

You see these super apostles that we find out about in chapter 11 seem to be very prone to tampering with the word of God trimming it at the edges to make it into a more palatable message.

[26 : 11] Yes, they talked about Jesus. Yes, they talked about the spirit. Yes, they talked about the gospel but Paul says they meant very different things by that so that by the end of that chapter he says these are deceitful workmen masquerading as angels of light.

Well, in times past well-intentioned Christians have tried to change the gospel message to fit the culture but that is very reason why the English stopped going to church.

If we clip the gospel's wings it won't fly. We're not at liberty to change this gospel message. In this research that I was talking about at the start it says conservative churches grow and liberal churches decline because liberal churches offer commodities such as fellowship entertainment and knowledge which are also provided by secular organizations while conservative churches offer the one incentive which is unique to churches salvation the promise of supernatural life after death.

Well, the summary of the gospel message in what we've read already this morning is that four-word summary in verse 5 isn't it? Jesus Christ as Lord.

That is the gospel message that Paul summarizes here. But if we want to be a bit clearer on what this message is we need to dive into the following chapter.

[27 : 45] Well, if we go to the end of chapter 5 we see that we are ambassadors for Christ verse 20 who are entrusted with a message of reconciliation verse 19.

So, the description for each of us is that we are ambassadors. So, if you're in the youth group the next time granny and grandpa ask you what you'd like to do when you grow up and you say I've got a job already fantastic well done I'm an ambassador oh great and then you can explain what that means in chapter 5 verse 20 we are all the moment we become Christians to be ambassadors for Christ and you know what an ambassador does they serve their sovereign or government and they're not at liberty to kind of tweak the message they're to kind of pass on the message from on high and that's the truth for us as well we are ambassadors with a message of reconciliation and there's no better summary than what we find in verse 21 of chapter 5 for our sake he made him that's Jesus to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God you see the whole world and the whole human race is out of relationship with God we are not reconciled to him and there's nothing that we can do about it humanly speaking we can't patch up this relationship by getting religious or being moral or whatever else it is

God himself had to do something to sort out this problem and I've got a couple of t-shirts the way we explain it in our church now what victims at the front can I pick on to hold up a t-shirt you don't need to change your t-shirt don't worry in fact why don't you come up just stand at the front here so 2 Corinthians 5 21 here's one t-shirt here's another so imagine for a moment that this is Jesus with the white t-shirt of his righteousness and his perfect obedience imagine this t-shirt the red t-shirt is us the human race we've sinned against God and rightly deserve his judgment and condemnation the wonder of the gospel message is a two-way exchange of infinite love that God himself stepped into this world and the one who had no sin was made sin so

Jesus took our sin upon himself on the cross he owned it he wore it at the cross he didn't have his own sin to pay for because he was perfect in his obedience and all the judgment and condemnation against that sin fell upon him as he was crucified Jesus went through hell for us so that heaven could be ours by right but it's more than that it's more than just us giving Jesus our sin and it's just judgment Jesus gives us his righteousness his obedience so that in Christ we are righteous before God that verse 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21 is one to memorize isn't it it's an awesome verse about this two-way exchange this gift of infinite love where Jesus takes us in and it's just judgment and Jesus gives us his obedience and in him we are righteous before God this is amazing thank you very much for standing up there for that but this is what

Paul is talking about this through Christ dying on the cross in him we are the righteousness of God now if we had time to go back to chapter 3 and see how different that was from the ministry of Moses there was Moses with the ten commandments and all that ministry could do was bring condemnation because none of us can live by the ten commandments can we but this ministry is a ministry that brings righteousness in an instant the moment somebody believes they can be fit for heaven because in Christ they are righteous before God this is an extraordinary gospel isn't it that we are to glory in and put as a lamp on a stand to the world but we need to be faithful with this message we are ambassadors who are not to change our job description this is given to us on high from the living God and he says this is the message of reconciliation that we need to pass on to the world so let's be faithful to this message there's a reason why the English stopped going to church because in times past we lost heart and what is going to happen in our generation are we one generation that will lose heart further still or will we begin this year as a church staying faithful to what God requires of us here be faithful with the gospel message

[33 : 07] I mean it's easy isn't it verse 2 to practice cunning as well and you know we say to our friend at school will you come to the youth group and we know they're going to hear a talk but you say will you come to come and have some pizza and there's a talk but if we're acting that way we kind of it says a lot to our friend about why we really want them to come if we're up front about come to youth group because you want to hear something remarkable about Jesus Christ and I know you've got your thoughts about Jesus Christ but come and be prepared to have your mind changed on what you think already talk up Christ in all our invitations at church and so on God made him have no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God so be faithful with the gospel message be open in sharing your faith I love that phrase verse two do you see that by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of

God the open statement of the truth what is going on when we openly state the truth we are giving the creator's words to a fellow creature and even their conscience is at work as we do that because it's that they're listening through us to the living God speak to them and deep down there's something more going on than passing on words and information there's something going on at the level of the conscience as we pass on and openly state the truth now we live in a culture where we're told to keep quiet about our faith and maybe you've kind of heard that people saying well yeah we we shouldn't be talking about our faith in the workplace well nonsense you know read about Peter and John in the early church they were called in by the Sanhedrin to keep quiet and shut up and they said well are we going to obey God or rather or men and they just carried on anyway when they were released we're to openly state the truth and yes we're to do our job well and study hard at school and not make a nuisance of ourselves as

Christians but there are very few of us who are in danger of overdoing it for the vast majority of us we don't openly state the truth enough do we perhaps we're involved in decision making at church maybe the group that we're running or so on well will we put this right at the centre the open statement of the truth of the gospel don Carson in his who's a Christian kind of elder statesman has written a book recently called prophetic from the centre which is available on the bookstore at the back here and the back of it says despite its centrality to the Christian faith it's easy to overlook the gospel and instead speak out on more peripheral issues this is a far cry from the New Testament emphasis on the gospel as the foundation from everything we believe and he writes perhaps more common is the tendency to assume the gospel whatever that is while devoting creative energy and passion to other issues marriage happiness prosperity evangelism the poor wrestling with Islam wrestling with the pressure of secularization bioethics dangers on the left danger on the right the list is endless this overlooks the fact that our hearers are inevitably drawn towards that about which we are most passionate every teacher knows that my students are unlikely to learn all I teach them they're most likely to learn that about which I'm most excited if the gospel is merely assumed while relatively peripheral issues ignite our passion we will train a new generation to downplay the gospel and focus seal on the periphery it's easy to sound prophetic from the margins what is urgently needed is to be prophetic from the centre well are we ready to be prophetic from the centre openly stating the truth preaching Christ as

Lord imploring people to be reconciled to God through the finished work of Christ we had a Chinese lady in our church last year she was shocked about how little we were sharing the gospel whether that's the staff team or students in church and so on well we've taken that to heart as a staff team and now we have a nice staff lunch and go out and do street evangelism at the moment and what a joy that's been just to be talking to people in the not preaching so much but just having conversations and talking to people about Christ in the open air and it's amazing yes the blindness is there but as we share Christ with people there is something going on in people's conscience and even in the course of one short conversation it's amazing how much people move from nothing and apparent hostility to apparent interest and a thankfulness that we've spoken to them well another historical book by J.C.

Ryle Christian Leaders of the 18th Century it's a fantastic read if you haven't read it already there was a time in the middle of the 18th century when things were pretty dire in this country so J.C.

[38 : 51] Ryle writes the celebrated lawyer Blackstone had the curiosity early in the reign of George III to go from church to church and hear every clergyman of note in London he says that he didn't hear a single discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero and that it would have been impossible for him to discover from what he heard whether the preacher was a follower of Confucius, Mohammed or of Christ but this is the introduction for this extraordinary book about how God raised up people to preach Christ with all our heart and thousands of people became Christians but J.C.

Ryle writes this book with a kind of twinge of sadness you get to the end of the book and this is what he writes about the generation in the late 19th century wherein do evangelical churchmen fall short of their great predecessors in the last century and he says they are too ready to fence and guard and qualify all their teaching as if Christ's gospel was a little baby and could not be trusted to walk alone devastating isn't it they are too ready to fence and guard and qualify all their teaching as if Christ's gospel was a little baby and couldn't be trusted to walk alone well is that our attitude today when we just it's like a little baby we're not not really ready to kind of openly state the truth and preach Christ as Lord and no wonder so few people go to church I love that story of

Vijay Menon if you know him a wonderful man who Hindu background who's converted in London and he worked in the Lloyd's building a time when the IRA were going around bombing places security was tight and as he was queuing up to get past security he gets to get into the Lloyd's building the security guard would customarily ask the people going in if they've got anything to declare so to speak so he put his briefcase on the table anything in there sir dynamite and everyone got to drop back and then he opened his briefcase and out came the Bible the Bible is dynamite and there was somebody enthusiastic about Christ who's led many other people to Christ himself well let's be open in sharing our faith our nation needs it more than ever and the hour of need is upon us is it not we see people around us is just searching around in hopeless ways and we have Christ and him crucified as the answer to the deepest problems in the world and how we need to pray for that open statement of the truth to stay true to this authentic ministry that God has given us be open in sharing your faith be prayerful to see other conversions because as we recognize that there's work that we're to do which is openly stating the truth preaching Christ there is a work of God that needs to happen as that is done which is that the dimmer switch needs to be turned up God needs to say let there be light that people would see Christ in all his glory and for that we need to be on our knees in prayer that the one who stands up would preach Christ that eyes would be opened from that complete spiritual blindness we often lose heart because we forget what's our job and what's God's job and if you've been to evangelism training with Rico Tice gets everyone to say out loud you know what's our job you know set forth the truth plainly and we chant that together and then what's what's God's job God's job to open blind eyes well if we recognize that our job is to openly state the truth let's keep on doing that and God's job is to open blind eyes it drives us to prayer doesn't it and how we need to pray for those around us now there's time just for five minutes of questions if you it's great just to have questions or comments from where we've got to so far in two Corinthians anything come to mind yeah so I was intrigued by your comment about offering what the world doesn't in terms of when you could say just a little bit more about how do you get from you know things that the world does offer for speaking about things that the world doesn't sorry more yeah in conversations yeah it's very easy to be offering things that the world will also offer so you mentioned those things on the throne how do you move from that to offering what the world doesn't if that's what people need well when people are spiritually blind they've got no need of

Christ have they so when we do our street conversations we you know we're not going up to people who are who are saying tell me about Christ to be saved we we begin by asking them so have you got a you know if you've got a faith you know do you believe in God or anything like that some kind of very you know basic question like that and then listen to what they say and they say I've got no faith at all and all this and then just learn to kind of listen into the conversation and respond with something which you know sets us in our place where do we come from where are we going and then to explain the Christian gospel of of how we need to be reconciled to God because they don't see that there's a problem generally speaking and that as we're faithful in speaking about Christ as Lord as we we're imploring people to be reconciled to God we're saying well you know is the problem Brexit you get chatting about that well actually that there's a much deeper problem than that and it's a problem that we have in relationship with our creator you know we need to be reconciled to him and just dive straight in there I mean

Christians in times past when we're unashamed just to get straight to the matter and maybe sometimes we can be a bit feel like they've got to be these 10 stages beforehand whereas actually the basic message of chapter 5 is be reconciled to God and even the language of reconciliation is used in our culture so frequently it's a very easy first step isn't it sorry it's not much of an answer but good for us to discuss it over coffee other questions or comments sometimes we can be so focused on our job is to openly state the truth we think we've done our job when when we've done that so I've stated the truth I'm just going to run away now but actually we're openly stating the truth with a view to people becoming Christians so in our small groups we it's it's more of a culture than a you know a set practice which if you've got a few people who are outwardly focused anyway among another group of people it's contagious is it not because they're praying for these things and other people are praying for these things the way we organize our prayer meeting is to be praying for people who aren't Christians but also praying that when we are going about our daily work that we're seizing the opportunities that are there before us so it's it's more of a vibe than a set practice yeah let's keep talking about these things as we go on ask questions of each other and maybe ask the the story of your conversion of one another it's a wonderful encouragement isn't it as we carry on with our day