

Real Lives with Piyush Jani

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Preacher: Roger Carswell/Piyush Jani

[0 : 0 0] Well, good evening. Welcome. Thanks so much for joining us. Whether you're in the room on Zoom, as it were, or joining us via YouTube, we're delighted you're here and have found your way. 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 us to Pius, our guest interviewee this evening. They'll chat together for half an hour or so, exploring Pius's life and the difference Jesus has made to him, and after that, Roger is going to help us think a little more about that by looking at the Bible. And I'll then come back up on your screens for a few moments to close things off.

We're keen to keep our time together to an hour, so we should be done by nine o'clock, and if tonight raises any questions or ideas or concerns, we'd love to hear from you. So we'll share an email address in the chat and on the screen at the end, and please do get in touch so we can pass questions on to the most helpful place, if that's someone at Grace Church Dunwich, Pius or Roger. So without any further delay, Roger and Pius, we're very grateful for your time. Over to you.

Great. Well, it's really good to be, as it were, with you, virtually with you, I think is the phrase these days. So good to see you. And I'm going to introduce Pius in just a moment, but as you can see, I have a banner advertising 10ofthose.com behind me. He who doesn't use propaganda is a proper goose, so why not have one of these things behind? It's a book distribution place, and I want to recommend one book that you might enjoy over Easter. In fact, you might buy a few, and when you're giving away Easter eggs to your postman and milkman, and I don't know who else comes to your house, you might give them one of these with the Easter egg. It's called Life Stories, and it's a little bit like we've been having this week. They're real life stories of how people became Christians. There are some fascinating ones. For those of you who are really old and remember Manfred Mann, Paul Jones's, that's Manfred Mann, his story's in here, but we've got various people as well, ex-terrorist, descendant of the Holocaust, drug addict, etc. A real variety of people, and you can get it very, very cheaply later on 10 of those. But let me now go to Pius. It's wonderful to have you. I think, if I'm right, you're in Cambridgeshire, aren't you?

I am. So not quite getting right up to the sophisticated north, but moving away from London anyway. In case you don't know, I'm speaking from Yorkshire. Pius, it's great to have you.

You probably saw the advertisement that we had for this particular interview, and it had a scalpel. I don't know whether that's attractive to people, but I've never liked the phrase that doctors use about themselves, that they practice medicine. Now, when you first picked up a scalpel, and we're going to actually go into somebody's skin, did you feel as though you were practicing?

[3 : 0 0] At the beginning, I did, yes. But you know, before we do that, at the very first day of med school, we practice on cadavers. So we do get a feel for human bodies very early on in medicine.

But that very first cut on a live patient, it's always memorable. I'm sure it is. And what was the operation, the very first operation you did? I did a tracheostomy, which is an opening in the neck, and we put a tube in. So that was my very first operation.

Oh, wow. Was it successful? Yes, thankfully. All right. And we won't ask the percentage of successes compared with failures. As a surgeon, well, surgeons historically, of course, have been quite elevated, really, in the medical profession.

But do you feel detached from your patients, or do you feel an affinity with them? You know, that's a really good question, because I don't think you can be a good surgeon unless you felt some sort of affinity for the patient, unless you particularly cared for them and wanted to help them.

So when we see patients and the outpatients, of course, you're feeling what they're feeling, and you're going through what they're going through. But when we then go into theatres, there's a switch which happens. And there, it becomes a technical exercise.

[4 : 34] And there, you try and put away all emotions and everything else, but just do the job which is in front of you, and just focus on that. An emotion at that particular place would not be helpful.

You know, that's, for example, that's the reason why the GMT suggests that you never operate on your own relatives, because divorcing the emotion at that particular time would be difficult.

So, yeah, but the answer is yes and no. We obviously feel affinity, we feel compassion, we want to help them. But yeah, when you're in theatres, though, you do have to make that switch.

Yes. And we hear of operations lasting, you know, sometimes six, eight, ten, twelve hours. I don't know whether you're in the theatre for twelve hours, but how do you concentrate with such intensity of concentration for so many hours?

You just begin to learn and you just do it. And I suppose the pressure, the adrenaline just keeps you concentrating. The longest operation I've done is about twelve hours. Is it really?

[5 : 36] Of course, in that time, you have a break in the middle. But yes, you it's just something which you learn slowly to develop and you grow into it and you just begin to do that.

Yes. And have you ever amputated a leg? No, thankfully. Because I always say all that. Anyway, we won't go down that route. At what stage in life, Piyosh, did you did you think, do you know, I want to be a surgeon?

Do you know, it grew on me slowly because when I first went to when I left school, I wasn't quite sure what I was going to do. So the first thing I did was dentistry and then I did medicine and then the doors just opened.

And then what I doing now, what I'm at the moment, I had my cancer surgeon part of the ENT department. My first desire to do that was when I was a house officer.

I used to work at that time for a very well-known surgeon who was at that time the president of one of our royal colleges. He was a delightful man, very humble man.

[6 : 40] And he was a role model. And I thought, I want to be like him. I want to do what he does. And one day he took me aside over a cup of tea and he wrote on a piece of paper the plan of my life and what I should do and everything else.

And, you know, I've still got that piece of paper. Really? So that was when I was a house officer in ENT. And does it have a retirement age? In medicine, you mean?

No, he's scrapping. No, he doesn't. No, not at all. But he retired at 60-something. 62 or something he was. All right. Now, Pierce, tell us about your background, your childhood. What was it like?

Where was it? Yes. So I'm from an Indian background. I'm ethnically Indian. But I was born in Kenya. I was born in a tiny village called Yala, which people won't know Yala, but they'll probably know Kisumu.

Kisumu is the third largest town in Kenya. It's on Lake Victoria. And Yala is about 30-odd miles north and west of Kisumu. So I grew up in a tiny, tiny village in Yala.

[7 : 50] Were your parents medics? No, neither were at all. So my father at that time in that village used to grow sugar cane. And the sugar cane was then used to make raw sugar, which was then used by the Africans to make alcohol.

Called Changa. And so Sipala did that. Mum used to have a little shop. Kenya, Yala was a very tiny little thing. About 10 shops. On either side of a dirt track.

There was no basic amenities. There was no running water, no electricity. It was just a few houses. And so mum had a shop there, where she sold everything. And, yeah, I grew up in that particular village.

Remarkable. And schooling? Did you go to school in the village or elsewhere? Where? Yala didn't have a school. So I didn't go to school. I had a period of about six weeks in Kisumu, which didn't work out.

But apart from that, I had no schooling there. Do you tell your patients that? I tell that to young children. That any education.

[8 : 55] Because the first time I went to school when I was 13. When I first came to England. So I just say that education before the age of 13 is a waste of time. Oh, my grandchildren would love that.

And did you, as a family, you came to England, did you? When you were 13. That's right. Yes. Yes. And so you went to school. That must have been quite a shock to the system. It was.

It was very strange because I came. I couldn't speak English. I'd never been to school particularly. It was. And you can imagine, Roger, schools can be quite difficult if you don't fit in.

And I was one of two ethnic children in the school. I couldn't speak English. So it was quite a cruel environment at the beginning. A lot of bullying and things going on.

Yes. Initially, it was quite tricky. Do you mind me asking, was that just because you didn't have the language and you were new? Or was there racial prejudice as well, do you think? It was both. Yes. There was racial prejudice as well as that.

[9 : 55] Yes. And how did you cope with that? Do you know, it was, it's quite difficult and quite painful. But when I was growing up, it was, it was, it was awful.

I used to live this almost as schizophrenic life. I used to, because there was all this racial abuse, I wanted to assimilate. I wanted to become like them.

So I tended to shut off all my Indianness and to be like them in the school. Yet I would go home. My parents would still be as Indian as anything.

And so I was living this kind of dual life. But yeah, it was a strange and a difficult upbringing. Of course, Piyosh, we associate India mainly with Hinduism.

Were you brought up as a Hindu? That's right. Yes. And did you understand about the religion? Did you practice it? Absolutely. Yes. So, yeah, as you know, Roger, most, a lot of Hindu families have a little shrine in the home.

[10 : 58] We would have little deities in the home. We would do pujas every day. Pujas just like a little ceremony. You would light a flame and do prayers. Once a week, we'd go to the temple.

And I would be partaking in the normal Hinduism. But also culturally as well, because the Hindu culture and the Indian religion is all intertwined. And a lot of the festivals, the religious festivals, also cultural festivals are good to all those.

And yes, I did understand this one. And presumably at school, there was some sort of notion of Christianity when you were at school, you know, maybe school assemblies, maybe religious instruction where you had something about Christianity.

How did you cope with that? What did you think of it? Do you know, it was strange, yes. Obviously, in the school I went to, there were hymns in the assembly. I would sing those.

It didn't mean much to me. The religious education, again, didn't much to me at all. I wasn't particularly interested at all. I did it. I had to do it without any particular interest at all. Now, presumably you shone academically.

[12 : 01] You picked up the language quickly. You must have done very well at school. What drove you? Partly, I think I have the school to thank because in the evenings when the class is finished, I would have extra classes.

The teachers would stay behind just on a wonderful basis and help me through that. That was great. My father was also an inspiration. He encouraged me in that. He got me to move to school at one stage.

I suppose it's also the work ethic of an immigrant family coming over from abroad to England.

We came with nothing at all. We had to make life here. I suppose that was part of the work ethic as well. It's remarkable. Your father wasn't dealing in sugar cane when he came over here.

What was his job? No, he came here and then he worked in a cotton belt. So, we initially came to Buckinghamshire and he had a job there for a couple of years.

[13 : 02] Then we moved to Oldham, the other side. Yes, Lancashire. Oh, dear. Then they got a job there. He worked in a cotton mill up there.

Mum, at that time, worked in a bakery. They used to make cakes for Marks and Spences. Wonderful. So, this amazingly rich sort of background.

Presumably, despite the fact you're in a secondary school in the north of England, nevertheless, those years back in Kenya must have left an abiding impact on you.

I don't know. Did it enhance? Did it enrich you? Or did it leave you torn between your background, which was so real, and yet, I don't know, you saw the materialism of here?

How was this impacting you? So, whilst in Kenya, life was very simple, but actually very happy. Because I was just at home with, you know, helping my mum in the shop.

[14 : 02] I would play with the African kids. I would speak Swahili with them. It was right here at home. There were no pressures. It was sunny, and you would go walking and swimming and all that sort of stuff. Coming to England, it was obviously an amazing eye-opener.

The first day we came, although it was 10 o'clock at night, it was still light outside. And you came there, you would never, ever have that. You know, it's always the sun goes down between 6.30 and 7.

So, there were these moving stairs, which I'd never seen before, escalated as such. And everything was glistening and clean and almost sterile.

And, yeah, so it was obviously very, very different indeed. In Kenya, although we were in a tiny village, most people would just have help at home.

In England, we had no help at such. So, all the children had to muck in and do the housework and cleaning and all that sort of stuff, as well as study.

[15 : 01] My parents had to work very hard. So, they had very long jobs, very long hours. And we would manage their home while they were out working, not just daytime, but also in the evening as well.

You say the kids, how many brothers and sisters did you have? I'm one of five. I'm in the middle. I have two elder brothers, myself, a sister, and the youngest one, who is 10 years.

So, you were third born. Normally, they're very independently minded. Is that true of you? I don't think so, no. All right, okay. All right, now, so you did well at school.

You went to university. Where did you go to medical school? So, before I did medicine, I did dentistry. Yes. So, I went to London. I did dentistry up there, and I studied there. And then I got a job in maxillofacial.

Oh, did you really? It's basically a field which deals with the jaws, the mouth, the broken jaws, you know, cancer of the mouth and stuff like that. So, I did that for about three years or so in London.

[16:01] And then you had to retrain for medicine, did you? Eventually, I did. Absolutely, right. Another five years to do medicine as well after that. Amazing. So, was it at university you came across Christians?

Yes. Yes. I mean, I met nominal Christians before. But my first time I met a Christian person was between dentistry and medicine when I used to work in this field of maxillofacial surgery.

And I was an SHO in maxillofacial surgery. And I was busy in a busy job, one in two on call. At that time, the person working with me was also maxillofacial SHO, but she was a Christian.

So, my first exposure to somebody who was a believing, professing Christian, I think the word I would use now would be a follower of Jesus, was at that particular time.

Now, were you intrigued by her because she was a young lady or because of her Christian beliefs? What do you think, Roger? But I know what we guys are like, so it's probably because she was a young lady.

[17:07] Absolutely. Absolutely. You know, and you're thrown together in a particular situation and you're working all hours of the day, you're helping each other out. And over time, we began to be associated romantically and it began to go out as well.

But she must have been speaking to you about her Christian faith. Not initially. Not initially at all. We were just getting on. Yeah, that didn't intrigue me a sec.

But what intrigued me, though, more than that, was the person she was and the person which made me realize the person I wasn't. So, if you ask me, what do I mean by that?

I would mean she was, you know, she had an honesty and integrity within her. She had a transparency about her and she could, there was nothing hidden about her.

She could just see her. And once you met her, you knew all about her as such. And I was so different to what I was like. Good God. What were you like then? I think I was perhaps not much different to a lot of people, which is I was a person who had an outside and external, which is all my good things, which I showed to the world.

[18:21] And I also had an inside, which wasn't as nice, but I kept those things hidden inside me. And yeah. Now, really, this young lady probably shouldn't have been going out with you, should she?

No. You've heard the story once before, but let me just spell it out. Yes. So, yes. So, yes. I began to go out. But what she didn't know was that I already had a girlfriend.

So, somehow, I'd acquired two girlfriends. And you can imagine. You can imagine what that involved. That involved even more deceit.

And I kept it all hidden and going. My friends knew about it, and they would perhaps have a laugh about it. But I kept this going for about three or four months. Yeah.

And somehow you managed to hide away the fact that there was another girl you were seeing. Yes. Yes. The intrigue was, you know, a web of deceit was just incredible to try and keep both apart and both.

[19 : 26] Yeah. Yeah. So. I think there's going to come a crunch moment any time now. Tell us about it. Well, you know, as always happens, you can only keep things hidden for so long.

And then, so one evening, I remember it was a Friday evening. I was invited to the Christian girl's house for a meal in the evening, which was a normal occurrence. She would often ask me to go for a meal, and we would go and have a meal and a glass of wine and just enjoy the evening.

So, this evening, she invited me to her house, and I went along. And when I went there, they were both present together. Oh, we shouldn't laugh.

This is a disaster. Absolutely. It's not one of my favorite TVs. You can say that. What had happened was that they both found out what had happened, and that I was cheating on both of them.

So, they got together, and one of them invited me, and then I was confronted at that particular time. And, yeah, so you can imagine. Although we laugh, as you say, it was a very, very awful evening.

[20 : 37] It was an evening. You must have been horror-stricken when you saw them both. Yeah, I just couldn't believe it. There was a lot of distress and tears and anger, and, yeah, it was a very, very unpleasant evening.

Now, sometimes God can use disasters to, I don't know, to make us realize really what we're like, to humble us and to point us away from ourselves. Was that true in your experience?

I think it absolutely was, because once that happened, you can imagine I was so upset. It really hit me what I was doing, what I'd done, seeing both people, very so sad.

So, that evening I went home, and I just couldn't sleep all night long. The next day, the Christian girl phoned me up, and she said, Pia, we have to work together, and I forgive you for what you've done.

And, I just, that completely blew my mind. I think she did it. I mean, of course, she did it to be kind to me, to forgive me so we can move on. But, just that phrase that she forgives me made me feel even more wretched.

[21 : 52] It made me feel even more guilty. And, yeah, it showed me up for exactly the sort of person I was, which was just not a nice person within me, doing the sort of thing I was doing.

Yeah. All right. And the other girl, did you ever see her again? No, not after that. I didn't, because I only saw the Christian girl, because we had to continue working together and be professional about the whole thing.

But the other girl I never saw again. But, you know, the whole thing, just, Roger, after that just crumbled around me. I used to be quite a proud person.

You know, everything was fairly good in life. You know, I was academically, as you know, quite good. I used to play hockey and cricket. I was captain for both of those in my college and university and hospital teams.

I had lots of friends, and, yeah, things were good. But suddenly, this particular event, as you say, sometimes God uses these things, and he particularly showed me up.

[22 : 51] He showed me up not just for this thing I'd done, but much more than that within me. And I realized that, actually, I wasn't the sort of person I wanted to be. I would look in the mirror, and I wanted to be different.

I wanted to not be that horrible person I was. And seeing her, the way she forgave, made me feel even more wretched.

You know, if the tables were turned, I could never have forgiven her for what I'd done. But she, you know, was so generous that she did that. But, yeah, so...

It's remarkable. It's remarkable. But now, a Christian is somebody who recognizes that they're not the people that they ought to be. Well, of course, the Bible word is sin. And you are aware of the fact that you've done something wrong.

But that doesn't make you a Christian, does it? So what happened after that that led you on? Well, the first thing which happened after that was that, you know, I wanted to resolve my sinfulness.

[23 : 49] I wanted to be different as such. So I went back to my Hindu faith to try and work things out of there. But, you know, it made me feel even worse rather than feeling better.

You may know that in Hinduism, there is the system of karma. Whatever I do, I reap later on, either in this life, the life to come.

There's a cycle of reincarnation. And all the things which I've become aware of within me, this wretched sin which was within me, I knew that I would have to face.

I wanted to take the karma. I was just piling up karma upon karma. The Hindu faith, actually, just rather than giving me solace, it made me feel even worse. So I was at that particular point introduced to a couple of churches.

By whom? So one was a work nurse used to go to a church in Plumstead. And this Christian girl used to go to Old Souls Church in London.

[24 : 53] So Plumstead at that time was about nine miles away. So I would go there in the mornings and go to the services there. And the Old Souls Church was about 13 miles. And I would go up there in the evenings.

And I would, yeah, I kept on going to those things. So can I just ask about this, Piraj? For you as a Hindu to go into a church for the very first time, was it almost as bad as putting a scalpel into somebody's skin for the first time?

Yeah, sorry. I think the internet fed up a bit. So should I repeat it? So for you as a Hindu to go to church for the first time, was that as bad as putting a scalpel into somebody's skin for the first time?

When you put a scalpel into skin for the first time, there's somebody there supporting, helping you. When you walk into a church, you do not know anybody at all.

You do not know what's going on. It's a bizarre situation. I've never been to a church. I never owned a Bible. I'd never read the Bible at that time. And I didn't know what was going to happen. But yeah, so initially it was very strange indeed.

[25 : 59] You went by yourself? I did. And you just watched and tried to do what everybody else was doing? Absolutely. So, you know, it's quite easy to, when they stand, you stand.

And when they sit, they would sing, but I couldn't sing at all. So I wouldn't sing at all, but I would just follow the words and the hymns and things like that. Somebody realized at one particular time that, you know, I was somebody who was desperate and seeking.

So I was introduced to a course at All Souls Church. A course a bit like, I presume, Grace Church runs, called Christianity Explored.

The course I went to was called Agnostics Anonymous. A bit like Christianity Explored, the church, Grace Church runs. A church where, you know, you could just go along and ask any questions and just learn, read, question, and at your own pace try and find out exactly what the Christian faith actually means.

So I went to that. I went to services Sunday by Sunday. And were you asking lots of questions? I was. I was. I was an angry young man when I went to that course, Roger. Angry because I was just so ashamed of myself.

[27 : 10] Angry because the course portrayed Christian faith as exclusive, as the only way to God. And how dare they, you know, reject me and my culture and my background and my Hinduism and all that sort of thing.

And that really made me cross. It irritated me a lot because they just kept on referring to this book. The Bible, which I'd never, you know, I wasn't familiar with. But I kept going a bit by bit by bit.

But why did you keep going, do you think? You know, I just because there's something compelling about it. And there's something also I was also given a Bible at the same time. And although it was a Bible in very plain English, you know, it was what used to be called the Good News Bible.

Yes. I was drawn to it as well. I was reading it night after night after night. I couldn't understand much of it. I couldn't make sense of it much. But I was drawn because I knew that I wanted to be different.

I wanted not to be the sort of person I was. I knew this sin within me and I needed some answers. And knowing this girl who was Christian, who was so different, that was the reason why I kept going.

[28 : 21] And Pius, did you go back to, I don't know, some of the leaders in the Hindu temple or even your parents and discuss what was going on in your mind, the questions you were trying to find answers to? No, I didn't do that.

But I did read more and more about the Hindu faith. And I knew much more at that particular time about my Hinduism than I ever did in the 20 odd years beforehand.

Because I was just so wanted some answers, particularly as when they kept claiming that the Christianity is the way to God. But I wanted to know the other side of the story.

So I kept on reading much more about Hinduism and learning about that, see whether that could be true or not. But yes, my knowledge of Hinduism grew much more at that particular time.

But eventually, Pius, it's clear there was a moment when you became a Christian. What led up to that finally? And how did that happen? Well, it was a strange thing, really.

[29 : 16] I was in a church at Plumstead on a Sunday morning. And, you know, again, I can't remember anything about that church service.

There would have been readings in the church service. I just cannot remember any of the readings whatsoever. That's very reassuring for all the preachers here. But anyway, yes. Absolutely.

For preachers, there was probably a sermon. I probably remember the sermon was very loud. The pastor was very emotional.

He would almost shout his sermons. But even then, I can't remember the sermon at all. I can't remember anything of the service at all. But as I said, when they used to sing, I would just follow the words in the hymn.

So then it came to the very last hymn. And some of the audience may be familiar with the hymn. It's called, Tell Out My Soul, The Greatness of the Lord.

[30 : 14] It's by Timothy Dutley Smith. And, you know, as I was singing, I was reading these words. And the words basically talked about unnumbered blessings.

Give my spirit voice. And I had no idea what these blessings were. Absolutely no idea. The second verse talks about the deeds his arm is done. Again, I had no idea what he was on about, what the deeds were.

It talks about mercy sure from age to age. But I hadn't felt any mercy. I hadn't seen any mercy at all. And it was all above me. But then the third verse, there's a line in there, which appeared to be written just for me, because it hit me right between my eyes.

It talks about proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight. Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight. It's as if that line was written just for me.

Because I began to realize that I am actually a very proud person, a very stubborn person. And it just made me realize how proud and stubborn I was.

[31 : 25] So I left church that morning. And that afternoon, that sentence just kept bringing in my mind. Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight.

That evening, I went to All Souls Church again. Again, at this time, the experience was very different. In All Souls Church, it's a very big place.

There will be about 600 people there. But this time, it was as if I couldn't be anonymous, because it was as if the vicar, the pastor, was preaching just to me.

And as if he was addressing me and nobody else. And there was a very strange experience. Next day, I went again to my group, Agnostic Anonymous, which was a group I used to go to.

And that evening, they talked about something Christians called the cross, by which they mean the cross on which Jesus died. But I was completely unfamiliar with what that cross was.

[32 : 24] And they tried to explain what it meant. And 90% of what they would have said went just above my head. I didn't have a clue what they were saying. But, you know, the 10% which stuck with me, I began to realize that this is where I can have a fresh start.

That my sins, the past I've done, could be put aside, could be washed clean. And I could start afresh with Jesus as a different person.

And that's all I understood. So that evening, I went home. And for the first time, I knelt by my bedside. And I prayed for the very first time to Jesus.

And I basically said that, look, I've made a real mess of my life. And I'm so sorry. Please come into my life. Please help me through all this.

And help me to live a life you want me to live. And to live with you as my Lord. So that, Roger, was February 1982. Ha.

[33 : 30] So it's quite some years ago now. What was the immediate impact? Yeah, the very first thing which happened after that, you know, was I intimated I was not a nice person.

One of the things I kept hidden inside me was the fact that I'd lied to get my job. So I was at SAG in medical professional surgery. At the interview panel, when they asked me a question, can you drive?

Because I had to drive between three. The job was between three different hospitals. I had to drive between three hospitals. And I said, of course I can drive. But I couldn't. It was a bare face line. So as soon as I became a Christian, I knew that I got this job on complete false pretenses.

So the first thing I wanted to do was I wanted to correct that and to sort that out. So I had to just go again and seek all the people on the interview panel one by one.

And speak to them and tell them what I'd done. Yeah. Did you keep your job? I did. You know, it was such a hard thing to do.

[34 : 41] You can imagine. I was trying to work out the formal words and what to say. And it was embarrassing. But actually, when I went to see them, they just laughed. And they just ignored the whole thing.

And yeah, they were delighted to help me carry on. But yeah. Yeah. Amazing. And long term. Well, I think I need to ask. Did you marry the girl? I didn't. You didn't.

After all. The girl I married was a girl I met over a dead body. Different story for a different night. Yes, absolutely.

Are you still in touch with the first, the Christian girl? You know, I'm not that much. But I sometimes I help out in the summer, in the summer camps where I go and help students to get together.

And they're basically Christian camps. Recently, I went on one and her daughter was there. Really? I had the privilege of leading the daughter at that campus.

[35 : 40] I was a leader for those youth. And, you know, we talked about it. She knew about it. Yeah. Now, if this was that old television program, This Is Your Life, we would now bring her on to stage and introduce her.

But anyway, Piyas, let me just ask you briefly about your work now. So you're a surgeon. Do you pray before you operate on someone? I do. So one of the things we do as surgeons is to wash our hands, as you know.

Often during washing my hands, I do pray. I do pray that God would give me the ability to do the job I've been called to do, to do the very best job I would possibly do. Yes, I do.

And, Piyas, when you think about the millions of people who are Hindus, how do you view them? Do you see them as, you know, God is on top of a mountain and it's just a different way up to God?

Or how do you view them? Well, I have family, Roger. We're still Hindus. So, yeah, I want them to be where I am.

[36 : 44] I want them to see and understand what I understand. So, yeah. So I look about them as I was when I was a Hindu and I was lost, I think.

And I want them to be where I am, to see the hope and the joy and the peace. But above all, a forgiveness of sins and a reconciliation with God and to be united with God and to have this amazing blessing of being a child of God.

Christians talk about God being a personal God. Well, actually, you can only understand that when you're in that relationship. And I see Hindus who are so fervent in their practices, so devoted in what they do and so zealous.

But I don't see that personal relationship with the living God. And so, yeah, how do I think of them? I think of them wishing that they were where I am.

Interesting. And you are married now. Have you got a family? I have a son and a daughter. Son's 25, daughter's 23. Are they doctors? No, neither are.

[38 : 01] My son's an officer in the army. And my son, my daughter, was until recently in a rowing program. But then she damaged her shoulder. But she's now waiting to, hoping to do a master's at Imperial in the summer.

So she damaged her shoulder. Does she not know a good doctor who can help her on that one? I'll leave that. Finally, for the Christian, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is very, very central.

Absolutely significant. But I just want to, what's your view of Jesus? Because I'm going to talk in a few minutes about him. What's your view of Jesus Christ? Well, Roger, at the moment, I'm just, you know, Christians have a habit, morning by morning, to read the Bible and to pray.

And it's the way we relate and talk to God. And at the moment, I'm going through a book in the New Testament where it describes Jesus as the exact representation of God.

The radiance of all God's glory. It talks about this Jesus who, being in very nature, God, but yet becomes a human, very naturally human.

[39 : 14] And he was, he had everything, and yet he gave up everything for us. It talks about him as a good, he's the one through whom we see and appreciate God.

And the Bible talks about him as a God, you know, it talks about his, when the Bible talks about the love of Jesus, you know, you really can't capture it. It talks about as high as heavens, you know, as far as east is from the west, and the magnitude is amazing.

And that amazing love of Jesus took him, in the very throne of God, into that very cross where he died for my wretched sin. And your certainty of forgiveness is not because of you turning over a new leaf, but it's entirely because of Jesus' death and then he's rising again.

Absolutely. And the forgiveness. And his rising is so important as well, because his rising validates his death on the cross. His rising validates the fact he is now, he's the only person who's risen like that.

He's now the right hand of God, the Father. So, but even when he's there, you know, he's interceding for me, you know, he's, he's, he's working all the time on my behalf.

[40 : 27] And yeah, so, and there's so much more I could say about the Lord Jesus. And, but yeah, I'll stop. Piyosh, I've loved chatting with you.

I hope people have enjoyed it as much as I have. But thank you very, very much indeed. I think there'd be a thousand and one other questions that people would love to ask, but, but thank you. I want to read, if I may, some verses from, and it may be the very book you were talking about, I don't know, from a little book tucked away in the New Testament that's often, I don't know, overlooked because it's so short.

It's called the Book of Colossians. And can I read some verses from it? And then I just want to draw out a few thoughts to draw our evening to a close. It's found in Colossians chapter one.

This is what we read. For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, for all patience and long-suffering with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. He, this is speaking about the Lord Jesus, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

[41 : 58] For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence.

And it goes on, it's a wonderful passage. This little book was written by the Apostle Paul. Now, he was the one converted when he was actually going on the road to Damascus to find and imprison and silence Christians.

He then was to take the Christian message all over the then known world. And he'd never been to the little town of Colossae, but he knew there were Christians there. And he wrote this letter to encourage them, but also to sort of sort them out.

I think we've all grown accustomed to what we used to call spin and now we call fake news. How do you discern what is truth and what isn't? And of course, that has dominated newspapers over this past week.

- [43 : 02] It's hard to know sometimes who is telling the truth and who isn't. And is there some sort of spin on what is being said? Well, what had happened with this little church in Colossae is that there was putting a sort of new gloss on the person of Jesus, who he was and what he'd done and what it meant to be right with God.

And so Paul writes this little letter. It's only four chapters, but he writes the church. He was probably read out in a Sunday morning service to sort of clarify the truth as to who Jesus Christ really is.

He wanted them to, well, here's another Bible phrase, earnestly contend for the faith. Don't get sidetracked. Don't get deviated from what is the truth.

And a bit like, you know, if you've got a beautiful diamond, you will guard it, won't you? You'll make sure nobody, I don't know, tarnishes it or steals it. Well, Paul was writing and saying, look, you need to be clear as to who Jesus is and what he has done.

And he tells us lots of things just in the verses that I've read about who he is. Now, Pierce already has referred to a crucial one. And the sentence might sound strange, but very clearly, Paul says Jesus is God.

- [44 : 20] Verse 15, it says he is the image of the invisible God. What a great sentence. So God who has no beginning and no end, God who is a spirit, God who is eternal and knows all things and can do all things and is everywhere.

A God who never changes. This God who is holy and true and just and pure. This God came into our world. I love to say God, God was big enough to become small.

And I love to say he clothed himself in humanity. It's my way of understanding or at least trying to understand what is happening. The God who brought all things into being.

Comes and is a tiny little fetus in a virgin mother's womb in Nazareth and then is born and laid in a manger in Bethlehem and grows. 12 year old taken into Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph and he's reasoning with all the scholars there.

And then at the age of 30, he's preaching and teaching and living this spotless life, this pure life. He's healing the sick. He's raising the dead. He's feeding the hungry. This is God.

- [45 : 26] That's exactly what the Bible teaches. And it's exactly what Jesus himself claimed. He is God. Verse 17, it says he's the eternal God and he is before all things.

And in him, all things exist. So Jesus, as it were, never began. But there was a moment when he became incarnate, when he came into our world.

He is the one who's the creator. Verse 16, for by him, all things were created that are in heaven, that are on earth, visible, invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.

All things were created through him and for him. It also says he is the reigning God. Everything was made for him. He is Lord. He's king over all.

And then at the end of the little passage, it says that he is the head over all the church, which is quite remarkable. So by the church, I don't mean the buildings as such, but over the people who belong to him, who are part of his kingdom, if you want citizens, or if you want even better, sons and daughters of him.

- [46 : 33] He's the head. So here is this vast eternal God who's come into our world and he has his people. And Paul is saying, you need to understand exactly who this person is, because he is the deliverer who has brought about a great deliverance.

Now, I think this is what's so appealing about the Lord Jesus Christ. As Pierce has said, we know there are many, many other religions. But basically, they are moral codes with views about God and spirituality and eternal and life after death, these sort of issues.

But Christianity focuses attention on one person. Now, he's God, but he's coming to the world and he's come to rescue us. You get this in verse 13.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness. When you look at what's going on in the world, and I was watching the news just before I came on to this program, I watched a bit of Sky, a bit of BBC, and I thought, right, I've got what's going on in the UK.

And then I went on to Al Jazeera, let's see what's going on in the world, etc. But it is a troubled world, isn't it? It really is. And it's a troubled world because there are people like you and me who are troubled, who are wayward, who are sinful.

[47 : 58] God has never grown accustomed to sin. Sin is the breaking of God's commandments. It's living as we want rather than as he has made us to be. And that sin cuts us off from God.

It's serious. It would, as Pierce said, it would leave us lost, not just for time, but for all eternity. But Jesus came to rescue us.

I've seen one or two rescues in my life, and they're very, very dramatic. Offshore, the helicopter comes, the cables load, the winch, and eventually, you know, the person rescued.

I've seen that happen. And yet this is God. And he's coming into our world with the express purpose of eventually doing something very dramatic to rescue us.

And verse 14 tells us what it is. He's delivered us. Yes. In whom we have redemption. And through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

[48 : 56] So Jesus has come to deliver us, to rescue us, to redeem us. There's a lovely Old Testament. That's part of the Bible written before Jesus was born.

Old Testament picture of redemption. And it concerns a man. I hope one day in heaven to meet him. His name's Hosea. He was a prophet called by God.

He was a bachelor until God told him who he was to marry. Her name was Goma. But I don't know that it's who you and I would want to marry. She was a prostitute.

And Hosea told to marry Goma. But he does so. And they have children. And I presume to begin with there was a period of happiness.

But, you know, there came a day when she walked out on her husband. And she went back to her old life, walking the streets. And how this broken prophet must have felt, I cannot imagine.

[49 : 55] But God came to him weeks, months, years later, I don't know, and said, Now, Hosea, I want you to go and find your wife. And he goes on these trails. We used to talk about dens of iniquity.

He was going around all these dark places. Have you seen Goma? Have you seen Goma? And eventually he follows the trail. And I suppose he comes to an eastern marketplace. So he's sending everything.

Fruit and veg. And, I don't know, animals and clothes and slaves. And slaves. And he looks again. And there, about to be auctioned off, is Goma.

And he stands in the crowd. And one by one, these slaves are auctioned. And eventually it's Goma. Who will give me anything for this specimen of humanity? And he bids some silver.

And somebody outbids him. So he bids some more. And somebody outbids him again. So then he says, I want some barley. And do you know, he pays sufficient a price to buy her back. Now, think about it.

[50 : 53] She was his by rights. And he was hers by right. They belonged to each other. They were married. But now she's doubly his. Because he paid a price to redeem her.

To buy her back. And it's a lovely picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ was eventually to do and for us has done. We are gods by rights. He made us.

We're the ones who sold ourselves to go our own way. But Jesus came into the world to pay a price, not with barley and silver, but with his own precious blood.

And when he hung on that cross, and Pierce was right to focus our attention on it, our sin, your sin, the sin, the rottenness, the rebellion of the world was laid on him.

And he paid for it that he might redeem us. So Paul is writing to the Colossians and saying, look, you need to understand who Jesus Christ is.

[51 : 49] This great deliverer has done something amazing to deliver us. He's rescued us. He's redeemed us. And then he's reconciled us. I didn't have time to read it.

But it says, and by him to reconcile all things to himself, whether things on earth, things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of the cross. When a person becomes a Christian, their sin is forgiven.

God, by his Holy Spirit, the personal power of God, comes to live within that man, this woman, child. But then they're reconciled to God. We come to know God. There is a sense, of course, in which every, every person and every religion will meet with God.

Richard Dawkins will one day meet with God. He's on a journey to meet with God. Everybody is. But the issue is, do we meet God as the one who is our judge, to judge us because we're not the people we ought to be, or as our father, the one with whom we've been reconciled because Jesus has died to take away the sin that would condemn us and brought us into a relationship with God.

Peter emphasized that, didn't he, that we have a relationship with God. And as he said, it's hard to understand unless you've experienced it and you know God. And you find he, he's a God who bathes us in his love and he carries us, guides us, leads us step by step.

[53 : 16] And he picks us up when we fall and we do very often. And he promises us that one day we'll be with him forever. He's rescued us. He's redeemed us. He's reconciled.

One other letter R, if I may. He's restored us. He begins the work of making us the people we were created to be. Verse 21.

And you who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now he is reconciled in the body of his flesh. And it goes on. He begins this work of making us, making us the people that he would enjoy a relationship with.

That's hard for us to understand, isn't it? That God would delight in being with us and give us a delight in knowing him. I do not believe there's anything more important than a person getting right with God.

And whether one is a surgeon or, I don't know, a road sweeper. I say that because my wife laughs at me.

[54 : 20] She always says, Roger, why don't you just go for a walk? But I can't just go for a walk. If I go for a walk, I have to pick up any litter that there is. She says, oh, no, just go and enjoy it. And I think, no, I can't enjoy it if there's litter.

So I always take a bag with me and pick up litter. I've often thought if I wasn't doing what I am doing, I'd love to be a road sweeper and clean the streets. But whatever job you've got, whatever position you're in, do you know you can come to know God in a real way?

My brother-in-law, bless him, has never heard a sound in his life. He's totally deaf and therefore, of course, mute. I'd love you to see him when every morning, he's in his 50s now, he opens the Bible and he prays.

And there's a sort of radiance on his face. I always think, oh, you can't tell me what's going on, but you show me. And one day, one day, when, you know, people say, have you heard the news?

He's gone, she's gone. People can know where you've gone to because God promises heaven, not the hell we deserve. He promises heaven. If our past has been forgiven, if we've entered into this relationship with God, not by works of righteousness, of goodness that we've done, but entirely because of the Lord Jesus.

[55 : 37] If you've never yet trusted him, I really would urge you. I really would urge you to do so tonight. I can see Katie's there sort of ready to press the mute button and silence me.

But Katie, just before you do, I wonder if we could pray a prayer very similar to the one that I prayed when I became a Christian and probably similar to the one that Pierce prayed when he knelt down by his bedside that night.

A prayer of saying yes to the Lord Jesus and calling upon him to forgive and to come and live within. And if you'd pray this prayer with me, just echo it, personalise it.

God will hear and promise this to answer. So a little prayer to finish. Father, we thank you for the story we've heard from Pierce. We pray you'd bless him and his family.

But thank you most of all for the real life of the Lord Jesus. Thank you that he loved us, loved me and gave himself for me and that he rose from the dead and he invites me to come.

[56 : 39] And I want to say today, I want to come. Please forgive me. Come and live within me. Please become my Lord and Saviour and help me to follow you.

For I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen. Roger and Pierce, thank you so much for being with us this evening, for sharing honestly and for giving us food for thought.

And thanks to everyone. Thank you so much for coming. If you've joined us here on Zoom or if you're on YouTube. As a church, we love to engage in discussion and conversation about Jesus. If you found anything this evening has raised questions or concerns or piqued your interest, we'd love to hear from you.

You can get in touch via email. We are on admin at [gracechurchdulwich.org](mailto:admin@gracechurchdulwich.org). If you've got any questions for the church or for Pierce or for Roger, please do send them in and we can put you in touch.

If you'd like to think a bit more about some of the things we've heard about tonight, we have held events like this on Tuesday night and Thursday night this week. Recordings of both of these are on YouTube.

[57 : 49] And if you'd like to hear how Roger speaks to some other people who have interesting stories about their lives and how they became Christians. On Thursday night, we heard from Roger and Yvonne Edwards.

Yvonne worked in the city for a number of years, had pretty much everything she wanted, but wasn't satisfied. And things spilled into drink and drugs addiction. And in rehab, that was the place where she began to explore Christianity and she met Jesus herself.

And on Tuesday night, we heard from Roger and Christian Diamond. Christian used to play football for Crystal Palace and is now a pastor of a church. You're also very welcome to join us for one of our Sunday morning church services.

They take place at 9.45 or 11 a.m. on Zoom and on YouTube. And also in person, we meet at Rosendale School in West Dulwich. It might be that you want to explore the claims of Jesus further.

And I'd like to flag two options briefly. If you'd like to read one of the biographies of Jesus's life with someone, then that's very straightforward to do. That could be with a friend you know who is a Christian.

[58 : 55] Or we can easily put you in touch with someone at Grace Church Dulwich. Do email through the website for more information. And also next Wednesday, the 17th, we're going to start a three-week Christianity Explored group, which is similar to the course that Piyosh mentioned earlier.

We'll be looking at Jesus's life and claims. And we're going to be doing that on Zoom from 8pm to 9pm. And please do email for more information. That brings us to the end of our evening.

Thank you so much again for coming. We hope you've enjoyed it. And if you're with us on YouTube, the stream's just about to finish. And if you've joined us here on Zoom, the meeting will finish shortly.

Thanks again. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.