

Real Lives - Debbie Flood

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 March 2019

Preacher: Roger Carswell/Debbie Flood

[0 : 00] Jeremy, great to have you. You, you... Any good? Thanks. Oh, well, do you want to use this one? It's more important that you're heard. He's loud. He's loud. Yeah, more important that you're heard than me.

You lived in Dulwich for a while. I did. And then you left. We left. But not to Yorkshire. Not to Yorkshire. Oh, dear. Just up the road, the elephants and cuss.

Oh, right, OK. A house is cheaper there. Yes. Oh, OK. Good move. All right. And I'm interested in the knighthood. Do you mind me asking about this?

How did it feel with the Queen about to chop off your head with the sword? Well, it's the ears you have to watch, actually. Oh, is it all right? Yeah, that's it. By each side.

And was it Her Majesty who knighted you? Yes, yes. Yes, sweet. What was it like? Tell us. You know, my invitation to be knighted got lost in the post. So I probably never know. Well, it's all very highly organised.

[0 : 59] But if you're a judge, a high court judge, then you get invited and you get basically a ten minutes or quarter hour with the Queen on your own. Because you're one of Her Majesty's judges.

Right. So Niqueli tells you what to do. And you wander in and bow and you sit down. And actually, first of all, she knights you. That's right. So you wander up and you kneel down and she does the appropriate thing.

Then you sit down and you have a chat. And the etiquette, of course, is that you can't begin the conversation. So she has to begin every topic of conversation. And you answer her questions. And she's very expert, I think, because she's done it with thousands of people, I suppose. And so you have a little chat. And then, when she's had enough, she rings a door. Oh, really?

Please get rid of this man. Thank you. Is that right? Are you allowed to tell us what she asked you about? Most of the conversation, I had a very interesting conversation about were criminals different from ordinary people?

[2 : 03] Oh, really? And she was very interested at the time, because you'll recall that Toby Martin, do you remember? I do. He has a farmer. He's standing in the farmer. Yes. And he had shot a murderer who was running away at the time in the back.

In fact, he'd been sitting on the stairs waiting with his gun, hadn't he? But she felt some sympathy for him, because, of course, she had a man in a lot of her bed for three quarters of an hour, completely undetected by the House authorities.

And she obviously had felt pretty insecure, and sacrificed, therefore, with the farmer in question. So we had a bit of a chat about him. Was she tempted to shoot him in the back? Well, she didn't do that.

She didn't have the sword. So there was a little she could do. Oh, interesting. She definitely worked, didn't she? She kept talking. Yes, she did. That's right. Until someone, actually, came in.

Did she ask any questions? I don't know, such as, if my husband caused an accident. They're all right. We don't talk about it.

[3 : 07] All right. Fascinating. And she literally rang a bell, and you were rushed away. Yes, yes. Amazing. Have you been in touch since?

It's the one and only time. Is it? All right. But that was wonderful. And you were knighted because of services to legal work?

Because of the service I was about to do. Oh, right. Okay. Rather than by way of remorse.

Amazing. Yes. One of her majesty's judges has to have some sort of moniker.

And your wife, do you now call her lady? She is. And is that what you call her? I call her lady's seat. But maybe we're going to 1960, because that's not a very good one. Yes, I know.

Let's not go down. All right. Wonderful. And she is here. Welcome. There you are. It's really lovely to see you. So tell us about your legal work.

[4 : 04] You've mentioned this one case. There must be some sort of highlights. When you look back on your years as a high court judge, you think, oh, wow, wasn't that a case? Are there some that you can mention to us?

Well, a lot of them are very grisly. And the ones that would interest most people here are murders. People are much more interested in that sort of stuff than in the commercial stuff that I think, which is really my specialism.

So in the commercial court, I would decide cases involving many millions and the decisions down to me between banks and oil companies and hedge funds and all that sort of thing.

And on the other hand, I would do serious crime. So mostly murders, but other high-profile criminal things as well. So for a while, I was known as the jeek-saw judge because I did a series of murders where the bodies were chopped into small pieces.

Amazing. So I could tell you a little bit of people ready for this one. No, no, the first thing I'm taking a nervous. The canapes have settled. Right.

[5 : 11] Well, if you imagine a security guard outside an office block, and he's standing there minding his own business, when he sees a bird fly overhead and drop something.

He looks like what that is. He wanders across and has a look. And it's a thumb. Oh, right. And he reports it to the police. And the police are able, in fact, to trace whose thumb it is because that person was known to them from their previous inquiries.

And he's a man, of course, who has been murdered. Ah. And they're able to trace the history. He'd been reported as missing and so on and so forth. And they work backwards and eventually they come to the bottom line of the story.

And did they find his body? No. What had happened was that his body had been initially cut in two and carted out of a flat in a carpet, taken down literally to the butchers.

Ah. Put into small pieces. The sausages. And dropped. So all the parts went into the tent. There's an an seagull that picked by. Oh, I see. Took it back to within about a mile of the place where the events got.

[6 : 31] Really? And did they find the culprits? They didn't yet, yes. And you tried them? I did. Are they in prison still? They sent me out, yes. Amazing.

Absolutely. Absolutely. And, Jeremy, at night, you know, whatever time it is you dismiss the court for the day, does this go over and over in your mind?

No. You could switch off. Well, pretty much, I think. You get inured to it. You know, as a surgeon, he doesn't, he doesn't trouble by blood.

So I guess a judge is not too troubled by all the misery he seems around the world. Do you ever feel the wrong person was found guilty? It hasn't happened with any of the cases I've been involved in. It might have been. Do you ever feel I was too lenient or too severe in the punishment I meted out? There have been occasions where the court of appeal have thought I was too severe.

[7 : 35] Too severe? But not very often. No. All right. Amazing. Not being found out too often. It's remarkable because we don't norm, well, some of these people may meet judges, but most of us don't.

And, you know, it just seems, I suppose it's a very, it's a mystical world because of the wig and the gowns and the sort of bowing and the honour and respect and esteem that we give to judges when they come into court.

Does that impact you in any way? There's a disease known as judge-itis, which is all about people becoming too self-important.

Yes, that's what I'm really asking. Yes, that's what you can see. And I suffer from it. But the best chance to do is to have children. Because they soon pick it up.

They do. They do. They do. They do. And one other question about your work as a judge. Did you ever nod off during a case? No. No. I used to have a very sharp pencil, which I would dig into my leg.

[8 : 41] Did you really? Absolutely. Have you ever thought of writing your autobiography? No. I think that would be a terrible mistake. Oh, I think it would be very interesting. So, was your father a lawyer?

He was a solicitor, yes. Was he? So, you were brought up with cases and stories being told. Yes. His practice was not a litigious practice. So, he was not. It's a conveyancing of his sort of thing. He did a bit of everything. Did he? Yes. All right. And tell us about your home. What was it like as you were growing up? Brothers, sisters? Two brothers. There were three sons. Did you all become lawyers? We did. Did you really? How interesting. And happy home? Yes. Very happy home. Christian home? Yes. So, you were taught to go to church? Yes. Brought up in a Christian family. And did you resent that in any way? No, I didn't think so. I don't know, though there would have been a period when I wouldn't have acknowledged it. [9 : 37] All right. It would have been not very cool as an 11, 12-year-old to be very obviously a Christian. So, I probably would have kept quiet about it.

Okay. Did it just follow naturally that you were brought up with Christian parents, Christian home, going to church, that you would become a Christian? Or was there ever a sort of crisis of faith? And can I really believe this? Do I want to be committed to this? Did these things go through your mind? I think it's absolutely inevitable that for any person who thinks at all, we'll go through a process.

And that would have happened to me in the early teenage years, 14 through to 16, I guess. Was it a miserable time for you? I think I hit teenage angst quite young.

And it just seemed to me that life was utterly absurd. You know, completely meaningless. If there wasn't some purpose behind it and a God who lay behind it.

[10 : 37] And it seemed to me there were only two options, really. At the end of the day, I would think the whole thing was completely meaningless, totally absurd. I would think absurd is like, can you have it right?

Or there was purpose, there was desire, there was a God. In which case, one had to find out what that was about. And I had this great advantage of being brought up in a Christian home to be able to see what was being said.

And particularly to see what Jesus had to say. And then it appeared, I guess, of about two or three years. Perhaps two years. I saw, really, slightly older people for whom the Christian faith was very real.

It was obvious to me that what they understood about life and what they put into practice in life exhibited an authentic faith. And I could see that was attractive.

So there were two things that came across, I guess. One, the question of truth isn't true. But secondly, how do you live by it? And in these people, I saw people who were living by it.

[11 : 40] And then came to me, well, if it's true, I've got to live by it too. So that's a great approach. There's no dramatic revelation of any kind. It was a process of thinking things through.

And then essentially making a commitment. Well, that's not my last thought. And you're a teenager. Yeah. But you went up to university. I did. It can be tough at university to be a Christian.

There are a lot of other pursuits. And, you know, suddenly you're free, aren't you? Shackles are off. You can do as you want. And how was university life as a Christian?

Well, I played a lot of rugby at university rather than weren't. I only got around to work in the last year or so. So in the rugby team, there was a lot of stick because one was Christian.

What's that? Yeah. But in fact, underneath it, also quite a lot of interest and respect. And one recognized that here were people who, whilst ostensibly thinking all very funny and having a go at you, were actually underneath interested.

[12 : 46] Interesting. And so you studied law. You went to which university? I was at Oxford. And what do you think of Cambridge? I don't think I'll make any comments.

All right. I thought it went to Cambridge. We're the split family. Yeah. Well, you don't always get the first option, do you? All right.

So you went to Oxford. And straight into, what, did you train to be a barrister? No. In fact, I went off to be a solicitor initially. And I practiced as a solicitor in a big city firm for about three years.

I was a bit slow in recognizing that really my interests lay in the courts. And then I changed over and became a barrister. And did that until I finally got a phone call saying, come and see me.

Would you like to be a judge? And that must be quite a significant moment in your life, to get that sort of phone call. Well, it's the Lord Chancellor. Can't wheel round the room? Well, in those days, you didn't apply.

[13 : 53] These days, you have to apply. Oh, dear. In those days, they just pictured me. They said, we want you. So one morning, I'm sitting in chambers, ostensibly working.

And my clerk said, the Lord Chancellor wants to see you this afternoon. So you realize that you're either going to be disbarred for a terrible misdemeanor, or you may be talking to what some would call promotion.

So I had a couple of hours to talk to my wife and say, is this a good idea for you, or is it? And then went to see him and said it. Now, there are whole issues, aren't there, with regard to justice?

Because we're going to think, obviously, about God being a God of love. Do you feel it's right for a human being to, I don't know, impose a penalty or punishment on somebody else?

Well, yes, otherwise I couldn't. I know, but how do you justify that? Well, I don't know. Some people do that anyway. But how do you justify that as a Christian thinking this through? Well, society has plainly got to have law.

[14 : 59] It's got to have sanctions. And as a judge, one is given responsibility by society to make the sanctions work and to find the right sanction for the appropriate offence.

And as a Christian, one does that. In a sense, as God's agent, it doesn't mean I'm any different from the court. Because I get things wrong as well. So I'm not condemning the individual as a person.

But I am dealing with what they've done that's wrong and reaching out justice in that context.

Justice is trying to put things right so far as you can. And where you're talking about crime, you're trying to put things right from the perspective of the victim and from the perspective of society.

And punishment is the only way you can get that sense of equivalence. It's interesting because talking to the average punter about God, there's a strange sort of notion that God is a very severe God to people here on earth.

And if you follow him, God's going to be down on you like a ton of bricks and life will be tough and miserable. But then a view of God that sort of sees him as very lenient in judgment.

[16 : 13] Oh, he'll let us all in, you know. Everybody will be all right. Actually, I would argue that the opposite is exactly the truth. But that's how people see it. Now, God being a God of justice and judgment, what's your thinking about this?

Do you, are you happy with that? Can you, can you, can you understand how God can be absolutely a God of love and a God of justice and judgment as well? Yes.

And how do you reconcile the two? Well, my favourite story that Jesus told is the one in Luke's gospel about the bad judge. Yes. Oh, I know it very well.

Yes. And you remember the story goes like this. There's, there's a widow. Yes. In a town who's being cheated. And she wants to get justice, get things put right.

And she goes off to see the judge. And he won't have anything on God because he's cynical, he's world weary, he's bitter, he doesn't care about truth, he doesn't care about justice. He's just waiting to take up his index of pension.

[17 : 14] Now much reduced, that might say. But at all, he does nothing. But she keeps coming to him and saying, give me justice, do right. And he gets so fed up that in the end, world weary and cynical and hard-bidden millions, he does exactly that.

He listens to her and he gives her justice. And Jesus says, if that's what a cynical, world weary, corrupt judge does, the one thing you have to be certain of is that a just and right God will do justice in the end.

And of course, it would be wholly unloving to the widow for justice not to be done. And in society as a whole, therefore, justice is an absolute deception.

And if God didn't give justice at the end, we'd all think there was something wrong with God. What would you think of a God who either saw no difference between right and wrong or did nothing about it?

And so in the end, I think we all recognize naturally that justice has to be done and it's going to be done right. It's got to be someone who really does get it right.

[18 : 20] We can get it all wrong as human judges and jurors and so on, but God will get it 100% right. And that's actually a great comfort. It is. Very much. If the system may get things wrong here, God will get it right.

Because, of course, we have the story of Pontius Pilate as well, a judge who certainly got it wrong. But I'd like to ask you about something else, if I may. The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I know you've studied this as a lawyer and you've sifted through the evidence. It's fundamental, really, to Christian belief that Jesus died, was buried, and three days later bodily rose from the dead.

And I think it'd be very easy just to dismiss this as always a nice notion. But really, there's no historical evidence. But you've studied it and that wouldn't be your conclusion at all, would it? No, I think anyone who's prepared to treat the documents, the New Testament documents, as some sort of historical document, without starting from the position that they are either make-believe or wholly accurate.

If you treat them as historical documents and look at them, then you have to come to a conclusion. What do they actually show? And you've got to explain how it is that everybody, about everybody at the time, accepted the tomb was empty.

[19 : 37] That's the starting point. The story, the only story that those who were opposed to Jesus could come up with was the disciples stole the body. So you're actually only left with two options.

Either that or he rose from the dead, as he said. However, unlikely and improbable, one starts off by thinking the resurrection is. When you look at the alternative, the only coherent explanation, I think, looking at the evidence is the resurrection of Jesus.

He did what he said he was going to do. And the witnesses to it, and this is what evidence is, it's from people who were there and saw at the time. These are reliable witnesses for whom truth was the highest value.

Not people who you would look at and say, well, there are people who are likely to tell stories and lie. They weren't that kind of people. They saw Jesus and his teaching as fundamental, of huge importance.

They saw truth as being vital. And then they went on to base their own lives on the fact they had was and were prepared to die for that truth too. So I think if you look at the thing and say, now what's the most logical, rational, coherent explanation?

[20 : 50] That's intuitive or facts. That's where you get to. So if you were presented to the court of law, the evidence for the resurrection, your verdict would be, yes, he did bodily rise from the dead.

Well, that would be my conclusion. And it would be that of a historian who looked at the documents. It's not just a lawyer's view. I think historians, it's the same sort of exercise that they're involved with. And anyone, I think, who approaches this from an objective standpoint will come to that conclusion. But the problem of thinking here is not ultimately an intellectual problem. It's a problem with the world. Do people want to believe or not? And that's the reality.

Because if you are going to accept that as truth, then you have to take the next step, which is, I guess, what I did as a 15, 16-year-old. I've got to live by it. And that's costly.

Because it means no longer is your life your own, but your life is now. Belonging to Christ. And that's tough. It is tough. And the thing I've seen as I've grown older is it's increasingly harmful as you get older for people to change their way of thinking and to accept and say, yes, I need to bow the knee.

[22 : 02] I need to accept that God is God and I must live my life by reference to him. That Jesus is Lord and therefore I serve him. And that's a tough decision to make from a personal standpoint because it involves a complete realignment of all your attitudes in life.

And we all get found by habits, don't we? We do. Jeremy, just quickly. So you became a Christian as a teenager. What difference does being a Christian, what difference has it made to you as a husband and as a father and a family man, do you think?

Well, if you asked my wife, she'd say I was a very poor husband. So you'll get a different view from that which I might give you. But fundamentally, I tried to live my life in a way that's going to honour God in the context of work, in the context of my family life, towards my wife, towards my children, and now my many age grandchildren, grandchildren, whom I'm enormously proud of.

They're not going to be lawyers, are they? I don't think any single one of them is likely to have my children. There's a possibility that one or two of the grandchildren might go that way. I can see they might have the job.

Yes. Who knows? Who knows, yes. And the difference that being a Christian made to you as a barrister and then as a high court judge? Well, the difference, I think, is one of motivation than anything else.

[23 : 27] I don't think there would be many decisions that would be different if I wasn't a Christian. Decisions that I actually made. Because you apply the law as it is. There would be one or two

where it might have made some difference.

But most good lawyers are good lawyers and you apply the law. But what I'm trying to do is something rather difficult. Because I'm trying to praise God in what I'm doing. I'm trying to serve Him. I'm trying to honour Him. And I try to do justice because it makes sense to justice. Because there's a God of justice. So I have a different motivation from all my fellow judges who are probably just as good as judges.

Much better some of them. And that's good. But where's the logic of it from that point of view? Why does justice matter? If there's no God at all?

Why does right and wrong matter? The whole thing is just chance. It's all absurd. We're back to that same point that I started out with. Even as a 14-year-old. It doesn't look to me any different now.

Did you pray about what sentence should I give this character?

[24 : 32] Did you? Yes. When I went to court I would pray for everybody in court. I prayed for the barristers who appeared in front of me. For the other lawyers in court.

For the witnesses. For the accused. For the litigious parties. Whatever it is. And I would pray that I would honour God in a way I acted in court.

And that his will of justice would be done at the end of the day. And that involved getting sentences in the right. Getting decisions right. And I need all the help I can get.

And so to know that I would pray and ask for wisdom. Because I've got to come. And Jeremy. Did you watch Judge John Deeds or Law and Order UK?

I occasionally watched John Deeds at the final list. And is he accurate? No. But he did us good. I mean it's an oddity isn't it?

[25 : 32] There's John Deeds. I mean he is the most reprobated captain. In some respect he sleeps with barristers. He sleeps with witnesses. I mean you know. No way to draw the line.

But the one thing that came across with him was. That he was desperate to do justice. Yes. And that actually did us good. Apart from the fact that all the middle aged women loved him. Because he was a sexy character.

And most of us aren't. And Lord Order UK? I've never seen that. You've never watched it. Okay. Last question. Jeremy. I think we can guess what your answer is going to be.

But have you ever regretted putting your trust in Christ and seeking to follow him? I think there would have been a point where I would have said.

This is difficult. This is costly. But the reality is that whenever that thought crossed one's mind. I would say that there's just no other option.

[26 : 30] There's no other sensible way to go. If this is true. Then that's the way it has to be. And the reality is that whatever the cost. The satisfaction.

The peace. I suppose you might say. That comes to him doing what he knows to be right and following Jesus. That's something I never regretted. Wonderful. Oh, just one other thing.

Your story is in this city life. So if somebody came and asked for an autograph. The value of the book would go down. About 10p.

Yes, yes, of course. All the other chapters are very good. Let's show our appreciation, shall we? Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

I really enjoyed interviewing Jeremy. I must say. But there was one question I meant to ask and it slipped my mind. I was going to ask what he thought of Judge Judy. Do you ever watch Judge Judy? Yes.

[27 : 32] I love watching Judge Judy. Do you enjoy it as well? Huge fan. Huge fan. There we are. Have you ever watched it, Jeremy? No. No. I think the phrase is, get a life.

But anyway, there we are. Thanks so much for coming tonight. On Thursday, I think it is, I'm going to be doing a similar interview. But it's not here, is it? It's elsewhere. They'll tell you more about it. And I'm going to be interviewing Debbie Flood, who's a Yorkshire girl. I knew you'd all love that. And she's twice got a silver in the Olympics.

The first time, absolutely elated. The second time, just dreadfully disappointed because she wanted the gold. And it's quite fascinating, you know, the success and failure, etc.

I've interviewed her many, many times. But in the past, I used to ask for a rowing machine. And I'd get her to challenge Meg. And it all went very well, time after time after time.

[28 : 34] One young guy came up and left her standing. So I thought, oh, we'll leave it from now on. I think she's not really growing older. But he was a tough guy. But anyway, that's Thursday.

We'd love to see you on Thursday. But I just want to round off, really, by going back to that Bible passage, if I may. And I'm going to be a little bit naughty. I'm going to introduce you to some theological words.

And some of them, you may think, oh, wow, do we have to know these? Well, of course, in every sphere of life, there is vocabulary that is exclusive to that realm.

And I'm going to introduce you to one or two words. And it's all to do with that phrase, God is love. We've all heard it, haven't we? God is love. When I was much younger, I used to teach Sunday school in a wooden hut that was a sort of church.

And at the front of this wooden hut, they had in polystyrene tiles the letters G-O-D-I-S-L-O-V-E.

[29 : 30] But there was always one falling down. So it's left an indelible impression in my mind. So you'd see, odd is love. Or God is of. Or God eat love.

And it was always like that. But nevertheless, God is love. We are familiar with it. But I think, actually, if we stopped to reflect a little, we'd all suddenly realise that, actually, those words put together like that are quite revolutionary.

Because millions live with the fear that God is not a God of love, but a vindictive, capricious, spiteful, vengeful, unpredictable sort of God.

And they wonder what God will be like. And yet, God is love. Spelled out in 1 John. But actually, you can read anywhere in the Bible. And yes, we see sometimes God is judging sin.

But nevertheless, through it all, permeating the whole of the Bible, the idea that God is a God of love. And really, it gives four evidences for God being a God of love in the passage that we read.

[30 : 35] Well, I say in the passage. The first evidence, I want to sort of hang on the word revelation. In that God has revealed himself as a God of love.

We've all come across people who've said things like, well, my idea of God is. And away they go. But if that's how we define God, you know, there'd be eight billion gods, wouldn't there?

Because we'd all come up with a slightly different definition. What really matters is what God has revealed to us about himself. And through the written word, the Bible, and the living word, Jesus, Christians say, God has revealed himself to be a God of love.

Now, of course, he's told us many other things about himself. The Bible teaches there is one God. And this one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three persons in the Godhead.

That God is infinite and eternal. That God is a spirit. You can't put him in a cage and analyse him. But he's a spirit. And God knows all things. And can do all things. And he's everywhere. He never changes.

[31 : 42] A God who's, well, the word is holy. Absolutely spotless. And loving. And just. And a God who's come into our world. So God has revealed many things about himself.

But God, a God of love. The trouble with human love is it fades, doesn't it? And sometimes it can blow hot and other times cold.

And it can be unpredictable. God's not like that. It's a consistent love. An eternal love. That's absolutely reliable. So God never, as it were, gets out of the wrong side of the bed.

And he's in a bad mood all day. God is a God of love. So Christians believe that God is love because of revelation. But there's a second reason. And we get it in the passage.

And later on, if you want to look up the Bible. I'm going to give you a portion of the Bible if you'd like later on. But this is found in 1 John chapter 4. And we read this.

[32 : 39] We have seen and testified that the Father sent the Son as Saviour of the world. And we also read in this the love of God was manifested toward us.

That God has sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. The word here is incarnation. That God has given us a revelation.

But he's gone beyond that. God has become the incarnate God. The God who is. Who, let's be honest, had every reason, every right, I suppose, to wash his hands of this world which is in rebellion against him.

This God has come into our world. This God has clothed himself in humanity. This God, well let me put it like this, is big enough to have become small.

The infinite God becomes a tiny little baby laid in a manger in Bethlehem. In fact, nine months earlier, an infinitesimally minute fetus implanted in a virgin mother's womb.

[33 : 43] And this is God stepping into the arena of humanity. And why? Well, he's demonstrating to us that he's a God of love.

He's manifested himself to us in that he's come into our world. And this is absolutely unique. There are many features about Christianity which are totally unique. But the idea that God would bother with us and come for us.

I was doing a week like this a few years ago in Glasgow. But it was coming up to Christmas. And I was in a church in which was pretty much central Glasgow. And a little like here, I arrived on the Sunday night.

And, you know, I get my itinerary. You're going here, speaking there, etc, etc. But they had in the itinerary, 10 o'clock on Thursday night, soup run. But my name wasn't there. And I said, oh, why aren't I, you know, attached to the soup run?

And they said in true blunt Scottish fashion. They said, Roger, you need your beauty sleep. And we don't get back till half past three and we'd rather... I said, no, no, I'd really like to go if you don't mind.

[34 : 47] And I joined a man, and I'm not making up this name, honestly. A man called Wally. That was his name. And apparently he's one of Glasgow's most successful and well-known businessmen.

Multimillionaire and a member of this church. Now, when I was there, they told me that every Thursday night for the last 13 years, with no exceptions, he had led a group from the church on this soup run.

They told me if he goes on holiday, wherever it is in the world, he comes back for Thursday night. And if Christmas Day is on a Thursday night, he still does a soup run. So I was joining Wally and a group of others.

He got a minibus and we went out at 10 o'clock on this December evening. And we first of all went to some men's hostels. And I remember we sang one or two carols and somebody or other gave a little sort of Christmas message.

And then we had woolen hats or mittens and some hot chocolate and sandwiches that we gave to all the men. And that was it. We went to one or two like this. And then after we'd done the men's hostels, we went to the motorway and the intersections.

[35 : 54] And under the intersections were people, well, I suppose we say now living in cardboard city, living rough, homeless men. And Wally and these others from the church knew exactly where these guys would be.

And we went up to them. We gave them the Christmas gifts, had a little word with them. And we continued like this till about half past one in the morning. Then we went back into the centre of Glasgow to the red light area.

Parked the car there. Or the minibus there. And within minutes, the minibus was surrounded by prostitutes and pimps and police. They were all around like this.

And of course, every Thursday night they were going there. So they all knew half past one, that's the time to go. And we gave them all the gifts, etc. And I said to the minister of the church, Craig Dyer, at the time, I said, Craig, we've got to preach to them.

And he said, Roger, it's half past one in the morning. You can't have an open air meeting. I said, oh, I'm sure we can. And we stood on a little wall and we had a little Christmas service for them there. And we carried on till just on three.

[36 : 55] And it was coming to the end. But Wally said, there's just one more man I want to go and see. And it left a great impression on me. Because we went back into the centre of Glasgow, near a big department store.

And stopped the minibus. And I said, oh, can I come with you, you see. And Wally went by himself, just me shadowing him. And went down a slope. And there was a grate in the pavement next to the department store where central heating fumes would come out.

Of course, terribly polluted. But there was a man just lying there, intoxicated. And Wally went up to him and he gently shook him. And he said, Jock, Jock, it's Wally.

Jock, it's Wally. But Jock was so drunk, he really, he wasn't with it at all. So, Wally then, remember who he is. This successful, wealthy businessman who could have just lived his own life.

Not bothered with anybody else. He lay down next to him, face to face. And he just said, Jock, it's Wally. I've got some gifts for you.

[38 : 02] And he opened his eyes a little bit. He said, oh, Jock, God doesn't want you to live like this. He's got something so much better. And he spoke to him a little bit about the Lord Jesus.

And he pushed the woolen hat into his pockets and the sandwiches. And he helped him with the hot chocolates. And we left. And I thought, do you know, tiny little picture, really, of what Christmas was all about.

The incarnation. God. Coming into our world. In the person of Jesus. And sometimes you think, all that's going on in Syria.

And Iraq and Afghanistan. And let's face it. You know, the streets of our big cities in recent weeks. And the tragedies that have hit the headlines. And you think, is God really a God of love?

And once in a while we hear of something sad happening. A child dying. Or, well, you can list them in. Is God really a God of love? When he's revealed himself as such.

[39 : 07] And actually, coming into the world, the incarnation testifies to the fact. Yeah. God loves this world. But then, there's a third reason.

And again, it's found in the passage. And I deliberately chose to read from this particular translation. Because some of the more modern ones slightly change the word. Because it's not a word we use. But this one tries to keep as much as it can to the original.

So it puts in an old-fashioned theological word. So, in this is love. Not that we loved God. But that he loved us. And sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

And it's that word propitiation. Is that a demonstration of God's love? Well, what does it mean? If an attribute of God is that he is loving.

And just. And holy. Is it right that God could ever be angry? It's not an attribute of God to say he's angry. But is it right that God would ever be angry?

[40 : 07] Not in a losing your temper sort of anger. But think again of Syria. When God sees everything that has happened in Damascus and Aleppo.

Has God the right to be angry? About three, four years ago I was watching late night television. Sky News of midnight. Now whether they'd shown this earlier I don't know.

But at midnight they showed it. And it was at a distance. But they showed ISIS crucifying children. And it turned my stomach to see it.

It was at a distance. And I just thought this is horrendous. Has God the right to be angry? And I don't want to tread on anything political at all.

But think for a moment. Today in England and Wales. 500 unborn babies have been aborted. Now God's the giver of life. Has God the right to be angry?

[41 : 10] But then. Let's be honest. You know we've heard a high court judge today. Say that he doesn't get it all right. And here's a. If you want a Christian minister of swords.

I certainly don't get it right. And when you look in the mirror in the morning. Do you get it right? I think we all know. We're not the men, the women that we were created to be. We're not the people God intended us to be.

There's something gone wrong. And we think. We speak. We do wrong things. Don't we all of us? And some of the things I should do. I don't do. I know I'm. I'm not the man that.

God wants me to be. Has God the right to be angry at some of the things I've got involved with. Or said. Or done. And yet he loves me. So a God who is just.

And must. As we heard from Jeremy. Must. Have a penalty for wrongdoing. For sin. What does he do if he loves us? The word propitiation means.

[42 : 12] That when Jesus was dying on the cross. And he was born to die. We're not. We're born to live and do this. Go here. When Jesus was on the cross. God's anger against sin.

Was carried by Jesus. So all that is rotten and wrong about me. Was laid on Jesus. And God's justice was focused on Jesus.

About four or five years ago. My youngest son got married in Dorset. And so the whole family sort of descends on Dorset. For a day or two early. And you've got grandchildren and grandsons.

You're trying to entertain them. We went to the Fleet Air Arm Museum. Just outside Taunton. I don't know if you've ever been. It's worth going to see. And Concord is there. The prototype Concord.

So I can say. I have been on Concord. We didn't travel very far. But anyway. I went up the steps. I walked along. Came down. I've been on Concord. And when I go to museums. Which I enjoy.

[43 : 09] And I love London. For all your galleries. And museums. Etc. But I don't particularly read all the inscriptions. And you know. It's a bit boring for me.

But I did. I looked at Concord. And next to the conical nozzle. At the front. Can you remember it? Which used to dip and rise. Etc. There was an explanation about its function.

It's designed to pierce the atmosphere. And to take all the friction. All the heat. Onto itself. To protect the rest of the plane. So that conical nozzle.

Takes the fire. The heat. So that everything else is kept safe. Do you know what it's called? The propitiator. Now I suspect some theologian.

Must have been involved. With the naming of that. That piece of aeronautic equipment. But there we are. The propitiator. It took the fire. On itself. To protect. And when the Lord Jesus Christ.

[44 : 07] Went to the cross. And I just find it horrendous. What he physically suffered. And the emotion of losing those friends. Who once forsook everything to follow him.

Now forsook him and fled. Denied him. Sold him. Etc. Scattered like sheep. But the spiritual suffering. That he who was the pure. Son of God. Who'd been at one with his father.

Throughout the eons of eternity past. Is hanging there. Carrying on himself. The weight of the world. Sin. And he did it because he loved us. So the Bible says things like.

That God demonstrated his love toward us. In that while we were still sinners. Christ died for us. So he loved us. And he gave himself for us.

And when Jesus died. Paying for our wrongdoing. He was dying. So that we could be forgiven. So that that which cuts us off from God. And would keep us out of heaven.

[45 : 03] And let's be honest. Would condemn us to hell. That sin could be dealt with. Forgiven. Removed. And we might be reconciled to God. I think that's an amazing thing.

So if ever I'm wondering. Does God really love me? Oh well he's revealed himself as a God of love. More than that. He came into our world. The incarnation. Oh but more than that. Propitiation.

He loved me. And gave himself for me. But that little passage. Has one other reason. And this is where it becomes very personal. Because we see it. I've read it already.

And we have seen and testified. The father has sent the son. To be the saviour of the world. Verse 14 of 1 John chapter 4. When a person comes to a moment in their life.

And it may be gradually. As we heard from Jeremy. But when a person comes to that time in their lives. When they recognise. Okay I have done wrong. And that has cut me off from God.

[46 : 02] But I need forgiveness. And yet Jesus has died for me. And of course we go much further. And Jeremy's already spoken about this. He rose from the dead.

He defeated death. The grave where once his body lay. Is empty. And he's risen. When they come to realise. He loved me. He died for me. He was buried. He rose from the dead.

And he can save me. To save means to be forgiven. To be reconciled to God. He can save me. And they ask Jesus to become their Lord and saviour.

Do you know in the most wonderful way. He becomes real and precious. It's not just the saviour of the world. But my saviour.

So I know God. And I can speak with God in prayer. And it's not just as it were crossing my fingers. And hoping for the best. I can read the Bible. And God teaches me.

[46 : 58] And instructs me. I can be part of a church community. And I find that. Actually God is teaching me through others. And we serve together. We worship together. And we want to live.

Yes for each other. But we want to live for the Lord. And then when death comes. And we know it's going to come. We always. You know. Think. Oh it would be a long way away. But when death comes.

We can be absolutely certain. That to be absent from the body. As the Bible puts it. Is to be present with the Lord. I'm going to be with him. Not because I've done anything good. But.

Well the Bible teaches that heaven. Is not a reward. Heaven is a gift. Which Jesus purchased. And offers to. Lost humanity.

I think it's wonderful. I sometimes interview a man. Called David Hamilton. He. When he was a youngster.

[47 : 53] In Belfast. He was badly treated. By. As it happens. Because he's a. He's going to. He was a. Quote unquote. Protestant. Though he never went to church. But he was badly treated. By some Roman Catholic boys.

And he became bitter against them. And eventually. He joined the UVF. A Northern Irish terrorist organization. And. Within a few years. He was sent on missions.

To murder. He never says. How many people. He did murder. But I. I've tried. Because I've interviewed him. Several times. I think. Probably two policemen. And one other. But I'm not certain.

He. He's a tough guy. Just to illustrate. How tough he is. He's now in his late 50s. But he recently had. The bottom part of his leg. Amputated. Without. Anesthetic. He said to the doctor. I don't want any anesthetic. Just do it. Anyway. Is that crazy. Or is that courageous. I'm not sure. Crazy. Yes. I think so. But. So. Tough.

[48 : 47] Tough guy. How he became a Christian. In the maze prison. Is a story that. Is another story. It's fascinating. But interestingly. One of the things he did.

He was a voracious reader. And even today. He reads. Four hours every day. Just loves books. And he pours through them. But in prison of course. He read. And read. And read.

But one of the other things was. He tattooed himself. So he'd get ink. And he'd get needles. And all over his body. He's got tattoos. Down his right arm.

He had a naked woman tattooed. But then he became a Christian. What do you do. If you've got a naked woman. Tattooed down your right arm. He.

He. He. He tattooed a bikini on her. And he made her decent. That's really true. Eventually. He actually turned it into a dragon. But that's a different matter. Now. You may not believe this story.

[49 : 41] But this is what he says. And I can believe it. But you may not. But even if you don't. Here's the metaphor of it. On the palm of his right hand. He had the letters. S. E. X.

He became a Christian. Every time he. He put his hand out to shake hands. He just felt embarrassed. So he prayed. God.

What do I do with this tattoo? Do I just turn it into a big blue slurge? What. What do I do with it? And two or three days later. He. This is his story. He was there with a line of other prisoners.

Going to the sink to wash. And shave. And he filled the sink up with water. He put his hands in the sink. And that tattoo intact. Just floated to the surface. He pulled the plug.

And down the plug hole it went. And the right hand. You can look at it. I just looked at it. There's no sign that he ever had a tattoo there. All the other tattoos remain. But that one just went. Now whether you believe that or not.

[50 : 36] It's up to you. But the metaphor. That God saved. And our sins as it were washed down the plug hole. Our sins just dealt with. To be able to put your head on your pillow at night.

And know. That you're right with God. If you never wake up again. You're ready to meet him. Because all that would condemn you. Has been dealt with. Or to wake up in the morning. And think. Alright. I'm in a relationship with God.

And I'm going to live this day. For and with the Lord Jesus. It's a wonderful thing. And to know that eventually. When people say. Have you heard the news? She's gone. He's gone.

Yeah. But we know where they've gone. Not because they were good enough. But because all. That would keep them out of heaven. Has been dealt with. Salvation. The great demonstration.

Of the love of God. I suspect my time has gone. Now. You probably realise. When God created me. He over oiled my jaws. I even sleep talk. So. But.

[51 : 34] It's time I finish. But I just want to say this. With all the earnestness. Of my heart. If you've never come. To that moment. In your life. Where you've experienced.

The love of God. In a personal way. I really would urge you. To respond to it. I was talking to somebody. Earlier today. And.

Um. Um. Um. I asked about. You know. Getting married. And he said. Oh. There is such a person. But she said. No. That's very painful. Isn't it? And to say.

No. To a God who. Loves. Has revealed himself. As a loving God. Has come into our world. Has died on the cross for us. And offers salvation.

To my mind. It doesn't make sense. A God who loves you. As well as me. And a God who's willing to start all over again.

[52 : 28] With you. And bring you into a relationship with himself. That goes throughout life. And then yes. Through death. And into eternity. How do you respond to the love of God? It's coming to that.

Very definite decision. Where you say. With God's help. I'll turn from that which is wrong. And I will trust Jesus. Who died for me. And rose from the dead.

To forgive me. I'm going to ask him. To become my Lord. And my saviour. I too was a teenager. On the holiday in the Middle East.

And I met some missionaries. Who ran a Christian hospital. In Beirut. And one of them. After a game of tennis. He was too old to play tennis. He was about 40. But anyway.

After a game of tennis. He chatted to me. About the gospel. And he explained. How Jesus had died for me. And I thought. Wow. If he loved me enough. To die for me. I want to ask him.

[53 : 24] To forgive me. And I prayed that day. A prayer. Lord Jesus. Please forgive me. And would you take over my life. And become my Lord and saviour. And it was the hinge. Which changed the whole direction.

Of my life. I came to experience. For the first time. The love of God. And as the years have unfolded. Really he's become more. And more. And more precious to me.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.