

Defeating the defeaters

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[0 : 00] So let's just ask God's blessing on this final session. Our gracious God, once again we come before you acknowledging our need. I'm thankful that in Jesus all our needs are met.

And we've been reminded of the fullness that there is in him and that he is ours in the gospel. And we pray that we might feed on him even as we are learning how to reach out to others with the good news of the gospel.

So we commit this final session to you and pray your blessing on David as he addresses us. And on ourselves as we have fellowship with one another for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Okay. I want to mention some things from the bookstall so that I encourage you.

I mean, Ian writes books. Alistair will write books soon. When we persuade him. I think books are a great tool to use.

[1 : 03] And I read books as well. But I just want to, some of the books on the bookstall are very important to me personally. This one, Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God. Anyone who says we can't do evangelism because that's doing the Lord's work for them is not Calvinist.

You need to read this book. It's a wonderful book on how the sovereignty of God works in evangelism.

And it just gives you tremendous confidence. God has put you in this place at this time. Then this one I've just read. Ready, Steady, Grow. Equipping today's gospel churches.

And there's a huge amount I think that churches here could learn. I highlight books and I shouldn't really do it. My wife doesn't like it when I do all that. But this one's a multi-rainbowed book.

I've just stopped highlighting it because there's just so much stuff in there. And I would strongly recommend that. This, my favorite writer of all, is actually Oz Guinness.

[2 : 06] And he has a book on doubt which helped me phenomenally. And this one is the best book on apologetics I've ever read. It's just out. It's called Fool's Talk, Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion.

And, again, I couldn't recommend it highly enough. And then I do want to say something about my own books. Just because it might help me a little bit.

It might not. I'm useless at the sort of sales pitch. But engaging with atheists. Understanding the world view. Sharing good news. A lot of the stuff that Alistair was saying.

You know, well, first of all, thank you very much, by the way. I thought it was tremendous. But I kind of developed some of that a little bit. But particularly at the personal level. And you may say, well, how many atheists are there? In my view, I describe different atheists.

In my view, most of the people you meet are actually atheists. They might say they believe in God. They might say they don't know. They might say they don't care. But they live their lives as functional atheists. As if there were no God. And I think it's very important to know some of the arguments and things that are there.

[3 : 09] So there's that one. But this one I'll only mention because I think you should have a book like it. Just you should have a book about Jesus that you can give to people.

Wherever you are. I go on trains a lot because I don't like flying. I sit there and people come and sit beside me. And they ask questions. You know, what do you do? And so I never get talking. And I usually end up just giving them this or something.

Because I tell them why I believe in Jesus. And I think it's important for that reason. The Dawkins letters is one that you would give to somebody who was a big fan of Dawkins.

And I was speaking to someone already here who we're talking about Shobos tonight. Saying, oh, they can't come because his nemesis. I admire his nemesis. Well, Dawkins is not my nemesis.

Ian, he's my nemesis. No. I might as well continue the theme. This was just written for non-Christians.

[4 : 10] Who are bestimulated to think about the gospel. Because of Richard Dawkins. It's wonderful. I mean, one of the chapters that we added on was a testimony from a guy who headlined his chapter.

Salvation came through Richard Dawkins. He was converted through reading Dawkins' God Delusion. And engaging in debate on the Dawkins website with me.

And then people say, oh, no one's ever converted in that way. Well, he was. And his story is tremendous. And this one. This is actually my favorite book in terms of what I've written. And it's one that people don't know a lot about.

It was just a life of McShane. And I went to McShane's church, St. Peter's in Dundee. And I was fed up at McShane. People coming to visit the godly Robert Murray McShane's grave.

We are the Protestant shrine in Scotland. And I thought, I'll do some research. And David Bevington and Stirling University encouraged me to do that. And so we did.

[5 : 15] And I ended up, I was doing a PhD at the same time as Dr. Ian D. Campbell. And mine literally got stolen. Not by him. And it was, our house was broken into.

My computer and all my backup discs were stolen. And I just, I lost heart. I couldn't be bothered. So I ended up, instead of writing an academic book, I just wrote a popular biography of McShane. In fact, it was such a different style that the original publishers put it down as autobiography.

As though I was the reincarnation of McShane. But I'm not. But I do think we need to know our church history. And it helps us a lot, actually, in evangelism. And history is a means of evangelism.

So, do make use of these books. And as regards the Dawkins letters and Magnificent Obsession.

Also one we didn't, it's all that's called Why I'm Not an Atheist. Until December the 9th, Amazon and Christian Focus have got them on a deal like it's \$1.99 each if you're on Kindle.

And I had to laugh. I'm sorry, this sounds so bad. But last night I laughed so much because I got a note from them that said, The number one theology book in UK Kindle is the Dawkins letters.

[6 : 21] And the number two is Magnificent Obsession. But even better, the number one book on atheism in the United States is the Dawkins letters. So I just thought, yes. And Dawkins was way down the list.

I said, that's one in the eye. Sorry, I'm very competitive with these kind of things. Anyway, speaking of the cheaters. What I want us to think about, I'm going to do, as I said, a few minutes on this.

And then I want you to basically fire in questions. Here's the thing I'm looking at. I'm looking at people and I'm saying, you know, maybe go out into Solas the restaurant on behalf of Solas and ask for a free meal.

Because of all the publicity we give them. But why wouldn't people even consider the gospel or come to church? Why? What's the things that defeat them even thinking about it?

And I spend most of my life dealing with these things. So I thought I would just share with you some of them. First of all, reasons to do with the world.

[7 : 21] Science has disproved God. That's a very, very common one. And I hear a huge amount that, on the one hand, you've got faith. And then you've got science. And they're set up as opposites.

Now, here's a classic principle. Always question things. When someone comes up with a statement like that, don't assume that it's true. You see, Richard Dawkins describes faith as being belief contrary to or in spite of the evidence.

Now, the trouble is, you can look at any dictionary before the year 2000. That's not the definition of faith. But if you look at the Oxford English Dictionary and other dictionaries now, that is one of the definitions of faith.

And it shows you how, if you control the language, you can control the way that people think. So people think of faith as being vague and so on. Whereas the Christian understanding of faith, of course, is not that.

So this idea that science has disproved God is deeply ingrained in our culture. The more intelligent you are, the more scientific you are, the less likely you are to believe in God.

[8 : 25] Which is just actually not true. I'll show you how this affects in popular culture. Having said I don't do a lot of door knocking, I did knock on a door once. And I do remember quite an extraordinary interview.

In fact, the street, I remember that street that afternoon especially. Because the first door I knocked on, and the woman came to the door, and I said, I'm from the local church. And before I could say anything, she went, no, no, where do all those witnesses?

And I went, revenge! To hell in my life. But she slammed the door in my face. So, JW, 200% humour. In fact, I was telling you something about, last night a couple of us were talking about this. And one of my favourite stories that I heard, and I don't know whether it was from my father-in-law or my mother-in-law, but from Lewis, was the JWs were going around the doors here, and they came to this old lady's house, and they knocked on the door, and they said, you know, we're from the Jehovah's Witnesses, and do you think we're living in the end times?

Oh, yes. And do you think that the end will come soon? Oh, yes. Why do you think that? Because you're at my door. I don't know if it's the best answer I've ever heard.

[9 : 38] But, I knocked on this guy's door, and he came to the door, and I said, we're from the local church. Hang on, I'll get the wife. That's the first thing. Very interesting. We talked about this at our table. Well, is there a perception that people have that if you're a man, you don't go to church?

Real men don't eat quiche, and they don't go to church. And they, I can see that James McHeader's wife is laughing because her husband absolutely adores quiche. But, I said to him, no, no, look, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop.

Look, me man, you man, me beard, you beard, we talk. And I was trying to have an incarnational conversation with him. And he said, it doesn't believe in God.

It believes in science. Okay. Are you a scientist? No. You read science? No. Study science at school? No. You know anything about science?

No. It just believes in him. Now, actually, that's an extreme case of many people. They say that. Now, what you must not do, and you can jar me on this later, you must not immediately, when you come across this, go into a defense of young earth creationism against evolution.

[10 : 48] Because the only people who are really interested in that are Answers in Genesis, and Richard Dawkins, and the new fundamentalist atheists. You're talking about science.

You go much broader than that. Now, I'm not saying that the evolution creation argument is not important. But I'm saying that it's usually trivialized, and Christians have read a book, and then they end up arguing against people who actually know something about it, and make fools of themselves.

And I've seen that happen so many times. What we're looking at is, and I recommended it last night, I'll recommend it again, John Lennox's God's Undertaker. People like John Polkinghorne. People like Francis Collins. Now, there's many, many scientists who actually are Christians. Christians. And you really, really do have to defeat, you need to understand what faith is, you need to understand what Christianity is, and you need to understand what science is.

And I actually think that's a very, that's something that congregations could be trained in, to understand what we mean by science, and what we mean by what Christianity actually is.

[11 : 51] Here's another one. Evil and suffering disapprove God. Now, I normally do an hour and a half lecture on that one. And I think it's really important. It's probably the number one reason I don't believe in God, because my granny died.

Or because of suffering in the world. Or you may have seen the statement that was attributed to Justin Welby, that Paris made him doubt the existence of God. That wasn't actually true.

What he said was Paris made him question where God was in Paris. Even then, I don't think that was particularly helpful. But there are people who will say that. I don't believe in God because bad things happen.

And it's a very difficult question, but you must wrestle with that question for yourself, so that you have a biblical understanding, and a trust in Christ, which means that you can communicate that to other people.

Now, there's lots and lots of things that could be said, and we can maybe discuss it. I'm raising these as flags in a way. But I remember a woman in Borora. I remember a young couple, didn't come to church, hated the church, but got on with me okay.

[12 : 59] And they had an 18-month-old baby who died and a cot death. I did the funeral. We had a three-foot-wide coffin in the church. They came, and I thought, they hated God before.

What are they going to say now? And much to my astonishment, the mother was in church the following Sunday. And as she's going out the door, I said to her, please excuse me.

I have to ask you this. What are you doing here? This is the last place I would have expected to see you. And she's just crying. She said, David, if there's no God, none of this makes any sense. It's interesting. Suffering sometimes drives people to God.

Or let me put it another way. When suffering drives people away from God, the God it drives them away from is not the God of the Bible. It's the God of Santa and Disneyland. It's the God who, if you're really, really good, you'll pass your exams.

If you say your prayers, your hamster won't die. You know, and things like that. It's not the God in the real world. That's why when you read the Bible, the Bible's brutal at times in describing human sinfulness and suffering.

[14:02] But into that world, God's answer to that question is Jesus Christ. See, the thing is, if you say evil and suffering prove there's no God, remove God from the equation.

You've still got evil and suffering. Except you've got no solution. Now, as I say, I've wrestled with this particular issue for a long, long, long time. It was evil and suffering that actually drove me towards becoming a Christian as I studied the Holocaust.

But in recent years, I've been just tremendously helped by St. Augustine. And in fact, this morning, I read a quote from Thomas Watson really citing Augustine.

Our God is so great that if he could not bring good out of suffering, he would not allow it. And the Bible does say that, that God brings good out of suffering. Now, you may say, how can you possibly say that when, and there's a trite version, you know, oh, well, the child's just died or something, so never mind, God works all things for good.

That's just an insane and wrong way to deal with that. But I personally couldn't live in this world and see all the evil and stuff that I see, and that's only a tiny bit that I see without knowing that somehow God will work all things for good.

[15:21] Myself and Annabelle, we were in Coit and Bound House in Harlem, Amsterdam. You know the story, The Hiding Place, and if you don't, you should know it. It's also a great book to give to people.

And you go in this house, you say, it's just a wee house, a clockmaker's house. And on the wall, the house turned around, it's a tapestry. But where you see it is the way that they have it, they show it to you.

It's just a mess. It looks like a tapestry I would have done. But when you turn it around, it's a crown. And they show, they talk about Corrie Tenbaum, a poem that she wrote, involved with that.

And you can see how the Lord weaves and works everything. And I honestly believe that this evil and suffering, rather than disproving God, they point to God.

And we do have to wrestle with that. We can't be simplistic about it. And we need to be alongside people in their suffering. Religion causes evil. You know, it's responsible for the majority of evil in the world.

[16:28] Is, well, Paris was religious people. I used to get shouted out in meetings. Things like, atheists don't fly planes into buildings. What's the answer you would give to that one?

My response was a bit cheeky. I'd say, well, neither do Presbyterians or Baptists or even Charismatics. Don't fly planes into buildings. But you see, this is this notion, if you're religious, uh-oh, something really, really harmful.

And I'm sure in the islands here there are people who perceive religion and Christianity and Calvinism and the free church, whatever. It's just about everything that's wrong with the whole society.

It's all your fault. I just get blamed for everything. Now, that's actually happened to the church from the beginning. How we answer that and how we deal with it is hugely important because one of the problems with that statement, it's like all these statements you have to deconstruct them, one of the problems is in our culture people are told that all religions are equal, but they're not.

I'm sorry, but Christianity is not Islam and Islam is not the cargo cult and probably most of Islam is not ISIS as well. And to lump it all together is really wrong.

[17:49] Richard Dawkins would describe religion as a virus that infects people and, you know, it needs to be eradicated from society. Well, we have to recognize that religion is a human understanding and expression of the need that we have to connect with God.

We are all, I honestly believe that nobody is born atheist, that they have to be educated atheists. Bertrand Russell, who was an atheist, said that people are not born stupid, it's education that

makes them stupid.

Well, I just revise that a little bit and say that people are not born atheists, it's a certain type of education that makes people atheist. And so, what we need to do is we need to ask what people mean by religion, we need to realize that people, that religion is of course used because it's so powerful, it's used to oppress people.

Karl Marx, religion is the opiate of the people, he was actually correct because it is often used to suppress people. But we're talking about Jesus Christ, know the truth and the truth will set you free. Now, by the way, there's a tendency among some Christians to go, well, I'm not religious, I'm just a Christian. I understand that and I do it myself, but it's not that wise. The only time religion, the word religion is used in the Bible is in James, pure religion, none defiled before God the Father is this, to visit the orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. [19:17] Well, that kind of religion, yes. But we admit that religion is harmful, but we're looking for a true religion. And people just, in our culture, they don't like the idea of, what do you mean true religion?

And I think it's made more difficult, because we were talking about this at our table as well, about the number of churches that exist here. People go, yeah, you people are always falling out with one another. And how do we know which is true and which is the right one?

And you've got to work through how you answer that as well. I would argue, look, money causes a huge amount of evil.

Sex causes a huge amount of evil. Power and abuse. Are you saying abolish them? No, you're saying look for the right, look for the right one. So, those are sort of basic questions on that.

The church, there's a lot of complaints about the church. Lots, oh, the church this, the church that. I was missing one actually. Yeah, other religions, I mentioned that already.

[20:28] You're very arrogant, aren't you? Claiming that your way is the right way. Well, it's very interesting because people who say that believe that their way is the right way. And so, you end up just calling them arrogant as well and having a fight.

So, you have to get them to see that the argument that they are making is actually, it doesn't make sense. I ask you, from a Christian perspective, it's right for us to show respect to all human beings is all human beings are made in the image of God.

We don't say their identity is primarily their religion. Their identity is primarily that they're made in the image of God. And I think it's right for us to look at other religions and see the good that's in other religions. There is good in Islam, there is good in Hinduism and so on.

What I think is a disaster is how many evangelical Christians now are even just going along with the idea, well, maybe it's different ways to the same God. No, it's not.

Our unique distinctive and it's not. You know, sometimes churches talk about their distinctives. We stand to pray, we sing psalms only, we clap our hands, we don't clap our hands.

[21:33] Whatever the distinctives we like to make. But our distinctive as a Christian faith is actually religion without Christ is from the pit of hell.

You will find very few verses in the Bible that argue against atheism. The vast majority argue against idolatry and false religion. And yes, I will. I will stand up in front of a group of Muslims and say that I think that their religion is false and wrong.

It's interesting, people say you can't do that, it's rude and so on. I remember being in a debate where there was a Muslim evangelist against himself and this Christian in very common stood up and was very angry and said, David, you're disgraceful, you're a disgrace to the Christian name and so on.

You're used to that happening quite a lot. And he just said, you know, you know, and I said, why? Okay, maybe I am, but why? And he said, because you're not accepting that Mohammed here is on an equally valid path to God and so on and so on.

And before I could say anything, Mohammed said, excuse me, he said, I'd like to say something. He said, I actually agree with David. I know what he believes and I know why he believes it and I know what I believe.

[22:41] I'm sorry, sir, I haven't a clue what you believe. And it's quite funny, Douglas and Willem told me he was on Gaelic television once in the Western Isles. He was in Barra and there was a Catholic bishop and himself and a minister of another denomination who shall remain nameless or which shall remain nameless.

And the Catholic bishop spoke about what he believed. Douglas spoke about what he believed and then the other minister went, waffled on about how we all believe the same thing and all different paths to the same God and it didn't matter and all that kind of stuff.

And Douglas told us that the Catholic bishop leaned over and said, well, I know what you believe, I know what I believe, I haven't a clue what that boy's on about. And actually, there's many like that. There's nothing wrong with being clear and seeking, but you still respect people in other religions. And think about it and it is good to know a little bit about other religions. And actually, I'm including in other religions for example, liberal Protestantism. Find out what people believe.

I did a debate with Scott McKenna who's so liberal, he doesn't really believe in God, he certainly doesn't believe in the God of the Bible. And it was just fascinating discussing with him and discussing with other people and just how sad.

[23 : 59] You find things, I think you can always find things that are true and correct, but then you find things that are wrong. And for me, it just keeps always coming back to Jesus and his word. The church is full of hypocrites.

This is my favourite one in lots of ways. I used to answer it in a very bad way. Someone in Broer I remember would say to me, oh, I can't go to church, it's full of hypocrites. And I would say, great, come and join us, you'll fit in.

But that probably wasn't the best way to go about it. I found something very simple. I just say, you know you're right, you're absolutely right, there's a lot of hypocrites in the church.

But I'm not going to diss the church. But out of curiosity, do you know any real Christians? And you know, I found it astonishing. They always mention the same people. They go, yes, there's Rossi the lorry driver, there's Big Margaret, there's We Margaret, there's Big Donald, there's We Donald.

You know, we weren't as inventive with nicknames as you are in Lewis. But it always intrigued me. I knew the people that they would mention in my congregation. Because of the lives that they lived, the consistent, loving, Christian lives that they live.

[25 : 08] I do think that a huge obstacle to people here is that they have a perception of the church which may be false but actually which may be grounded in experience. And we can be a bit defensive with that and we can say, well look, you're right.

I mean, there's nothing that puts you off more than Christianity than hearing someone preach the word of God and then discovering or experiencing for yourself that they're a pervert. or that they cheat and lie or the elder who goes home and is abusive to his family and people know that.

And I think sometimes in the church we've been far too tolerant of ourselves and intolerant of other people. And so that whole hypocrite thing, we have to look at ourselves because I have to look and say, in what ways am I being a hypocrite?

And it's not a biblical prayer but Rabbi Burns' prayer, oh that God would give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us. Just develop that a bit more and put it into a biblical prayer.

Lord, show me your ways. Lead me in the way everlasting and show me if there's any offensive way in me. That's a dangerous prayer to pray because he might answer it. The church is full of hypocrites and I think you answer that one by acknowledging the weakness, acknowledging your own weakness and saying, yes but, there's also a great deal of good.

[26 : 36] I think the church should be one of the best apologetics for the gospel that you get. See how these people love one another. It's interesting if you look at John 17 how Jesus in that whole section gives people in the world the right to determine whether he's come from God or not because of the unity and love of God's people.

You need that in a local church. That's why in the New Testament things like gossip are so dangerous. Pride, spiritual pride is so dangerous. Okay, let me mention another couple.

Put them in Jesus. Christianity takes away freedom. You know, I'm religious or you're religious and you're suppressed and I'm not religious and I'm free.

Well, it's very easy to dismantle that. Again, I remember a boy in Baroda and I'll use illustrations from Baroda because I think it's a bit closer to here than Dundee in some ways and I remember him saying to me, would you go to church if you weren't paid to do it?

Yeah. He says, you go twice though, David. That's a bit extreme. I said, yeah. And I knew him. He was such a fanatical Rangers fan that the rumor was in the village that he, well, the truth was when the council came and painted all the council house doors green, he repainted his blue and the rumor was that he'd attempted to spray paint the grass blue.

[28 : 09] So I said to him, you're a Rangers fan. Yes, of course. I mean, that was the most natural thing in the world to him. I said, you go to Ibrox every fortnight. You travel all the way down to Ibrox every fortnight. Yeah. You pay a fortune to follow Rangers.

Yeah, all your spare money. Absolutely. And I said, I go to church. You do that to watch 11 men kicking a pig's bladder around.

And I go to church to worship the living God of the universe. And let me tell you, at that point, in my sin, I was a Rangers fan at the time. I've since repented. But I said, do you know, if Rangers were playing in the Scottish Cup final, and I had the opportunity of watching that, or going to church to hear about Jesus, I'd go to church to hear about Jesus.

And he looked at me and said, you are a fanatic. I said, no, I think you'll find that at least I'm fanatical about the right thing. You're fanatical about something that doesn't work.

Now, that whole idea of freedom is very important. I think it's been very detrimental to the gospel on the island here, that the Lord has blessed tremendously, and there's been tremendous encouragement and blessing over the years, but sometimes that blessing has been turned into something that becomes quite ugly.

[29 : 25] So it's seen as suppressing stuff. You know, now personally, I believe in the fourth commandment. But when people identify you and know you as the people who lock swings up on a Sunday, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense in that way.

The freedom that we have, the freedom in Christ is not freedom to sin, it's not freedom to abuse, it's not freedom to gossip, it's not freedom to indulge ourselves, it's freedom to serve the living God.

And we have got to show people freedom.

See, one of the ways of approaching people is you can go to people and say they're a sinner. In a lot of our culture, many people just won't accept that. The great thing is free to be what you want to be. What's the song, I believe I can fly, I believe I can touch the sky?

It's rubbish, you can't fly. And I'm sorry to bring this up again, but when you're in a baked bean can coming into Stornoway airport, it's bouncing all over the place, you know you can't fly. You're just thankful there's a pilot who can fly that baked bean can as it's bouncing around.

See, I've got issues here. But, you know, our culture, you can be anything you want to be. No, you can be free in Christ.

[30 : 37] And we as Christians have got to learn to exemplify that in terms of people. And it's not seen so much in all the external behaviour. You know, people go, oh I'm free because I can drink a pint and I can wear what, you know, that's not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about an attitude, I'm talking about an openness, I'm talking about a tolerance, I'm talking about a freedom from fear, and above all, freedom from the fear of death. I owe a lot to this place because of, well obviously my wife and my in-laws, but my mother-in-law is a really, really godly and wonderful woman.

I never saw an ounce of that repressiveness in her, and my father-in-law when he was dying, I just thought, for me, I want to be like that when I die.

You know, just for me, there was a freedom in that was just quite extraordinary. But in our churches we give this impression that everything is repressed, and Christianity takes away freedom, and it doesn't.

It brings real freedom. We've got to work out what that means. Jesus did not exist. You may think this is a strange one. This is going to be the main tactic over the next few years amongst those who are what I would call the new fundamentalist atheists.

[31 : 56] People say, oh, never worked, never happened, everyone knows Jesus existed. Now, no serious historian doubts that Jesus existed, but we do not live in a culture which appreciates serious historians.

Sorry, Ian, again. You and I are serious historians, but people don't appreciate us. They don't love us as much as they should do. And they don't care. It's on the internet. I read it on the internet.

The most popular film for 16 to 25 year old young men was an internet film. It was there in a cinema called Zeitgeist. And it's anti-Jewish conspiracy and anti-Christian and all the rest of it.

But people buy into that. And people said, oh, this will never, ever work. Apparently, in a survey done by the Church of England last month, they found that 40% of people in England now think that Jesus probably didn't exist.

exist. When I say think that Jesus fully didn't exist, they're not thinking. They just feel because they read it. And that's why you need to know more about Christ and who Christ is and so on.

[32 : 57] And we sometimes use Jesus as a religious word and we shouldn't. Jesus is a real person. There's a wonderful video series by the Australian apologist John Dixon called Life of Jesus.

Highly recommend to all the churches here that you get it. because all he did was he went to Jerusalem and filmed in various places where Jesus appeared and he just goes through Mark's gospel really and talks about the real Jesus.

And it's wonderful. It interacts history and archaeology and biblical theology and so on. And when we did it, I found that there were people in my congregation who were Christians who came to say, ah, it's just so real.

It's like if you go to Jerusalem or I remember once being in Ephesus. I've never been to Jerusalem but I've been to Ephesus and just standing in the temple and going, Paul was actually here.

This is real. And we live in a world where everything is kind of fantasy and the reality of Jesus Christ, we need to bring it home. And I actually think that's where history is really, really important. And again, that's why I did the magnificent obsession thing.

[34 : 04] Jesus did not perform miracles. Again, I wrote a chapter on that in my magnificent obsession because miracles don't happen and so on. And again, things are made worse in our culture because we've got God TV and things like that.

You want a miracle, you want a miracle here and a miracle that. And the way we use the word miracle is just so bad. And that's why we need to know our theology, B.B.

Warfield, for example, on miracles. It's just superb. And we apply it. What Jesus did was completely and totally extraordinary. The point about miracles is that they don't happen normally.

that's the idea. And again, you can look at that and there's a great deal that you can get from it. All right, so I've began to use my PowerPoints.

I don't like this idea of what that would be. But where do we go with all these different kinds of questions? things. Those are some of the things that people have in their heads.

[35 : 03] Probably not even so much in their heads. It's just a feeling. It's an instinct that they have. I mean, I'll give you another one about the church. The most common thing I hear from non-Christians, actually even from Christians, who come to St.

Pete's for the first time, is after the service, I hear them something like, they usually always say something like, okay, I did not expect this. This is not what I expected.

And you wonder, well, what did they expect? What were they thinking? And I think that, you know, we have a lot of preconceptions, a lot of difficulties to overcome.

I explain it this way. If I could, sometimes when I was training people, I would say, Christians, in average, I'd say, right, here's five quid, go into the bookings and place a bed.

What? I've never been in the bookings. I don't know how to do it. You know, you go in the door, do I turn left, do I turn right, what do I actually do? Think about how I turn to the church.

[36 : 03] There are many, many people who when you invite them to come to church, one of the reasons they're not going to touch it with a bar school, it's so strange. They've never ever been, they don't know what to expect, what happens, what occurs.

And it's very, very interesting to get the perception of people who have never been to church, who come for the first time. So, anyway, those are some of the defeater beliefs.

There are others, there are some that I think will be specific to your context and your situation. So, I've just thrown those out, I've only, those are only tasters for them. What we'll do just now is we'll just take a wee while if anyone wants to ask a question or make a statement about, I'm asking the question if you want to give the answer and we'll see what we can do with them.

What are the defeater beliefs? What are the things that stop people even considering, who even if you gave them a Christian book would say, no thanks, not for me, invite to church, no thanks, I'm not going to come, it's not for me, fair enough for you.

Most people are not antagonistic, some are, but what are the things that are preventing people even considering Jesus Christ or considering the gospel? Anyone want to go first?

[37 : 08] I am a free church minister, so if you want I can talk for another 45 minutes. Right. What's that?

Sorry, I'm down. It's the Holocaust. The Holocaust, yeah, the Holocaust. That's the evil suffering thing. That for me, personally, when someone says to me, that's an absolute gift because it's the reason I became a Christian.

So it actually drove me the opposite way. Last year I went to Auschwitz for the first time. I'm not going back unless I take my daughter. I promise I take my daughter. I don't want to go back. I found it, you know, I'm just a big softy really, but I'm sorry, if you can stand in that room with all the human hair and see the horror of that, the children's shoes, you know, or you go to Birkenau, which is beside Auschwitz, and the sheer industrial scale of three trains an hour coming in and 20,000 people a day being just burned straight away, you're thinking, oh, how could.

And I do that, I look at it in different ways. I mean, I know that there are people who say, well, if there's a God, why wouldn't he prevent that? And that's going to be a question I would want to ask. I think it's more a question around who is responsible for the Holocaust, human beings. And I tend to work backwards. Now, I'll tell you one story that I was down in Cambridge and doing a debate, which we were bound to lose because it was a Cambridge University debating society.

[38 : 43] And John Baldwin was on my side, but the motion was this house believes that there is a God. And we were asked to prove that there was a God in an environment which was largely atheistic. We knew that we weren't going to win, but we just saw it as an opportunity.

Until one of my opponents, the president of the Atheist and Skeptic Society, stood up and in the course of his speech said, Dachau is wrong is not a fact.

Dachau being the concentration camp as well. And I interrupted him. I was so stunned by his remark. I said, excuse me. And he said, well, yes, David, I thought you would interrupt. He said, but I think Dachau was wrong, but he said, it's not a fact like the law of gravity is a fact.

And I looked at him and I said, I'm utterly, utterly astonished that you can say that. To me, Dachau was wrong is a fact. I don't doubt it for a second. And he said, prove it to me.

So I did one of these Nehemiah prayers. I thought, oh, I don't know. Well, okay, Lord, help me. And I said, well, I'll tell you what. That's how I'm going to prove it to you. He said, you can't say Dachau is wrong because you don't believe in God.

[40 : 01] And that's your stumbling block. Because for you, everything has got to be scientifically proven. And morality cannot be proven one way or another scientifically. There is no concept of good and evil. As Dawkins himself says in *The Blind Watchmaker*, we live in a universe in which there is no good and evil.

So actually, for an atheist to be concerned about Dachau or Auschwitz, doesn't make any sense. Because they're complaining about something that's just a human social construct. And he looked at me and said, well, but you, you start with the view that there's a God.

You say, I start with the view that there's no God, but you're starting with the view that there is a God. And I said, no, I'm not. I'm not starting with the view that there's a God. I'm telling you this. It's one of my reasons for believing in God. And I said, if you rape my daughter, I'm not thinking, I wonder if that's the right or wrong.

And how can I work out that? I know that's wrong. And then I ask, how do I know that's wrong? And I ask, what's because of this? It's because of this? And I keep going back, and keep going back, and ultimately I come back to God.

And if there is no God, there is no absolute right or wrong. And if that's the case, then you've got nothing to condemn the Holocaust with. Not really. If you're the rich and powerful and elite, you can do whatever you want.

[41 : 12] You can decide to kill 20 million babies a year in the womb. That's a good thing. You can decide that, no matter what it's said. And for me, that is the absolute key question.

It's the nature of good and evil. And it's why God will allow some things to happen and not others. Now, if you're saying, sorry, this is old suffering thing, so I don't want to go into it old, but if you're saying that if anything bad happens, then therefore God cannot exist, you're saying that if the wee child falls over and skims her knee, she gives a right to say God doesn't exist.

I would put it the other way. I would say, look at what the Bible says, and the Bible says the most horrendous things about Now, you could ask, oh, I don't see the purpose that God has in allowing the Holocaust to happen.

Two things. One, be careful, because you don't see, it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. There's lots of things I don't see that do exist. And two, we don't know the whole pattern about what's involved.

And three, if we reject God from our society, then in my view, the Holocaust will end up being like a picnic. that will become hell on earth.

[42 : 27] So, when people talk about that, I think they're making quite a simplistic equation, which cannot be giving a simplistic answer. But when you actually look at it, and in my view again as well, it's interesting that people who are most likely to deny God are those who are comfortable, well-off, middle-class, liberal Westerners, and one of the reasons they give for denying God is the amount of suffering in the world, and yet people who experience the greatest suffering, like, say, the Rwandans and others, are more likely to believe in God.

I think it's a bit patronising sometimes when we do that. Now, I'm not saying that. There are people who ask the suffering question because they themselves have genuinely suffered and are really hurting. That's a different thing. But there are other people who ask it as a kind of philosophical argument, and making themselves superior to God.

And I don't think that we can do that. I think that's just a supreme human hubris and arrogance. And then finally, I'm not going to answer every question this long, but this long leave, long.

My grandma's not that great. It's a Saturday afternoon, and Dundee were just getting hammered, traumatised. nothing to me makes sense unless you can bring it back to Christ.

Rabbi Duncan, a good Scotch freaker professor, once said, there is no pit so deep that Christ has not been deep or still.

[44 : 02] When the atheists did the bus slogans, there's probably no God, so cheer up and enjoy life. I remember debating the person who ran that campaign, and I said to her, brilliant, just brilliant.

You're a mom who's just burying your son who's died of a heroin overdose. But there's probably no God, so cheer up and enjoy life. What kind of comfort is that? And it's nothing.

Whereas I know I can go to anybody, no matter what circumstances they face, and tell them about Christ. Christ is the answer to the world's evil. Take Christ out of the equation, you've still got the world's evil, and you've got no answer.

Suffering to me always brings back to Christ. I'm not going to try and defend and justify God as though I knew, but I am going to point to Christ. Anyone else?

On the flip side, would you agree that the existence of goodness is a bigger point for an atheist than the existence of evil? Yes, I'll repeat it because people didn't hear the existence of goodness is a bigger problem for an atheist than the existence of evil.

[45 : 08] Yes, it's the question of morality. Now again, in a trend in our society, what's going to happen is over the next five years, you're going to find more and more people, reports in serious magazines on what's called evolutionary psychology, trying to explain how animals are basically good and we're just a sophisticated animal, because they're desperate to explain goodness.

Francis Collins was an atheist when he started the human genome project, became a Christian because of the morality. He just couldn't see how you could have morality without God. And I think that's a hugely important and significant argument.

But they're trying to explain it, they're trying to explain it away, but it doesn't work. Now in a dumbed-down world with a Disney-fied view of the world, where pigs talk to one another, you know, and so on, people might buy into that, but if you've lived in the real world, you know that that's not true.

You know how these cute cuddly seals? I lived in Easter Ross with the seals, I was ministering in Aurora. You know what the cute cuddly seal does? Takes a bite out of a salmon, just one bite, and watches, dies an agonising death over, you know, do we hold them morally culpable or responsible?

No, we don't. Human beings are not just sophisticated animals, there's something more. And I think the atheist has an enormous problem in explaining the whole concept of goodness. In fact, they can't explain the concept of goodness.

[46 : 31] And I'll tell you something else they can't explain, love. Because if love is just a chemical reaction, interesting discussion on the Moral Maze, Radio 4's programme, where they were talking about the Paris, no they were talking about drugs in sport, and saying what's wrong with giving yourself an injection so that you can run quicker?

And then they asked this fascinating question, I, sorry, this is the way my mind works, probably not very well, you're thinking slightly crazy, but they asked a question that I had me thinking for about a whole week, which was, if you could give someone a drug that made them a better person, would it

be right to give them that drug?

Or if you could give someone a drug that made them love you, would it be right to give them that drug? I wouldn't be drinking that water, by the way, if you're, I spiced it all before you came in. You know, would, would he really love you if it's because of a drug?

Now, actually, in the atheist worldview, everything boils down ultimately to a chemical reaction, so there wouldn't really be a problem with it. But in the Christian view, we are made in the image of God, and we have a certain moral responsibility.

It's the only reason we can be judged. And so, Jesus is right that goodness is a real problem to explain.

[47 : 51] Now, in their eyes, it's less of a problem because they're not so bothered about it. They like it when people are good. Peter Hitchens, who's the brother of Christopher Hitchens, an atheist, and he said that he became a Christian because he realized that he couldn't live as an atheist in an atheist country.

And he said this, the best place to be an atheist is in a Christian country. The worst place to be an atheist is in an atheist country. Because you can be an atheist in a Christian country and, as he put it, experience the benefits of it as well.

So I do, yes, I think that's spot on. Anyone else want to ask anything other than? Response under the church. Yeah. The church is anti-gay.

Yeah. Thank you. Okay. Yeah, it's interesting. I was on BBC Radio Fine Life and I was a bit ambushed.

I was given a list of subjects that we were going to speak about and instead of those subjects, transgender came up and I spent a very interesting hour. I think the new producer has banned me, actually, but I had a really full-on discussion and the Conservative MP who was debating, he said, are you saying that being homosexual is wrong?

[49 : 08] And I was so fed up, I just said yes. And there was this shocked and stunned silence. And I said, okay, let me qualify that. I don't mean being homosexual is wrong, I mean homosexual acts are wrong.

And I said, I don't believe in all that therapy stuff, but I don't accept that someone is defined by their sexuality anyway. I just don't buy into all of this. Well, I think that this is a huge, massive issue in our culture, not because the church has made it such, but because the culture has made it such.

So there was a boxer this week, what's his name? Not Tyson, is it? Who won? Is that Tyson? Yeah. Tyson Fury. Tyson Fury. I see that Ruth Davidson, the Scottish Tory party leader, has just tweeted today that Tyson Fury should not be on the British sports person of the year thing because he's homophobic.

Because at one point in the past, he had compared homosexuality to pedophilia and that's a bad role model and so on. Homosexuality has been used in the shippeleth issue.

How would I answer it from a church point of view? I would do this. I would say, first of all, you're right. There has been within the church, at times, a fear and a hatred of homosexuals which is entirely wrong.

[50 : 29] One of the reasons for doing that is because, A, it's true and, B, it disarms people. Conceived when it's right to do so.

And that is true. I don't understand why in some churches, if you said you were homosexual, you'd be treated worse than if you committed adultery or you gossiped. They're all sins.

So we accept that. And, in fact, we accept also that, for many people, there's the yuck factor, which is not a biblical thing. But you then go on to say, and for me, you don't answer the question.

If you say, what do you think of homosexuality? I never answer the question. I always ask them if I can go back. Because they're really asking, why are you such a bigot? And there's a whole series of parameters around it. And this is very important when you're discussing with people.

What are they actually saying? What are they actually asking? What's the worldview in which they're thinking? And if you're thinking in a different worldview, you have to let them see that. So, I'll give you one example of how I answered it in a particular context was in Borders Bookshop in Glasgow.

[51 : 32] And the manager was there, and he was not keen that I was to be there, but Borders had ordered, because the documents letters had become a bestseller, they'd ordered that all their shops were to happen. And the place was packed.

And I finished the talk on God and science, it was actually, and he put his hand up to ask a question. And I jokingly said, well, you're the manager, you're not supposed to ask questions. I knew he was hostile. I said, no, I want to ask you a question. I said, well, go ahead. He said, what do you think of homosexuality? And I knew I was in trouble. And I said, look, I'm going to talk on God and science. I'm not really here to discuss this. However, since you've asked, I'm curious, are you asking out of genuine interest, or are you asking, saying, why are you such a homophobic bigot? And he looked at me and he said, I'm asking why are you such a homophobic bigot? I said, okay, fair enough. Since you've told me the truth, I will now answer you on condition that you answer one question. And then we're done.

[52 : 32] I said, once I give my answer, we're not discussing it. You and I can talk about it afterwards. And that's not what we're here for. That's not the subject. And it's the only question I've got to answer on this. So he said, fair enough. So I said to him, here's my question for you.

Is there any form of sexuality which you would consider to be wrong? And he looked at me and because this is good Christian gathering, I will not tell you all the words of his response.

But he basically said to me, you clever so-and-so. And I smiled and said, why am I a clever so-and-so? And he said, because you know that if I say no, you're going to ask me about what about pedophilia or bestiality or something like that.

But if I say yes, you're going to ask me, how do I know? And I said, I'm not the only clever so-and-so. That's exactly what I was going to do. So now, since you've answered it, here's my answer.

And these are the five points I always, I'm sorry that I couldn't do three points for all you ministers, but there's the five points I just put in. Number one, I believe that all forms of homophobia are wrong.

[53 : 43] I think it's wrong to look upon homosexuals as being somehow particularly worse than any other people. And as a Christian, I'm not have a phobia of anybody.

I don't fear homosexuals or homosexuality. Number two, big deal for me, I believe in God. And I believe that God made the world. And number three, I'm what I call an Ikea Christian.

In other words, when I go to Ikea and buy one of these beds or chairs or whatever, I come home, I have no practical sense whatsoever. So I lay out the box, I put out all the screws, I even count them.

You know, I've got it all there that we've got the 24 and all the 23 and all that kind of stuff. And I follow exactly the maker's instructions. So I figure that if God made us, we should follow his instructions.

God made us male and female. And God gave us that relationship between male and female and the gift of sex.

[54 : 52] And sex is only to be used in the context of marriage. And I said to him, so I don't care whether you commit homosexual sin or heterosexual sin.

From my point of view, all sex outside marriage is sinful. Because, not because sex is dirty, but the very opposite because it's sacred. And my fifth point is this.

This has been the view on which the whole of Western society has been built for the past 1500 to 2000 years. So you have no right to call me a bigot for that at all.

And he just looked at me and he said, fair enough. And we let it go. I do a lot of work with LGBT and others.

And it's a very difficult question. And there are people who are in my congregation who are, I don't like the word homosexual.

[55 : 54] Sam Albury and others prefer the phrase same-sex attracted. And I think that's correct. There are people who struggle. I had somebody from this island who came down to visit me and told me that she was same-sex attracted or words to that effect.

But she couldn't talk to you because I remember this was many years ago. I remember saying this in a free church committee and her minister was president. And he said, we have no homosexuals in Lewis. And I said, you do actually.

And I couldn't tell him. Because it's, you know. Look, human beings are messed up in every single way. And that includes sexually. And it's going to get a whole lot worse, by the way, with the transgender stuff.

And so on. It's an absolute nightmare that's hitting our society. And the only way that we counter that is not just with biblical teaching, but biblical practice. You know, that's why I think sexual abuse or domestic abuse within the church needs to be dealt with really strongly.

Partly because of the corporate witness and partly because it's just, it's so wrong. It does so much harm. But I mean, I, as I say, I've, the, there's a gay magazine called Kaleidoscope.

[57 : 09] Kaleidoscope, they wrote an article about me becoming free church moderator, which was, Sinclair Ferguson thought it's the funniest article he's ever read because the, the headline was, free church takes lurch to write in appointment of David Robertson, homophobic order.

So I just want you to know, I am the right wing of the free church. Right? These guys are just absolute liberals, the rest of them. And, you know, and I wrote to them and said, if you guys haven't a clue what you're talking about.

And to be absolutely fair to the editor, he said to me, David, all right, I, I volunteered. I said, can I write an article explaining what the free church view is on homosexuality? And he said, okay, good. So I got an article published in the LGBT magazine in Scotland on the free church view on homosexuality.

Do you know this? It's the most read article ever. And it got the most responses ever. And some people were very, very, very vitriolic. But a huge number were not.

And one gay activist wrote in and said, I'm fed up with all the abuse. He said, if I had to live in a country that was governed on Christian principles, then I wanted to be the kind of principles that David Orson wrote about.

[58 : 15] I'd be happy with that. So, you know, I think we can overcome that one. But it's usually used as an accusation. It's a shibboleth test of, you know, how cute you are and so on.

Personally, I wouldn't weigh in straight away and sit in the booty. Somebody who's asking that could be asking because they themselves are struggling. I would definitely make sure that you have resources like some always we vote.

Or there are others, Thomas Smith, straight and narrow, which is much more technical. But as a church, we must not compromise on this issue at all. But our theology should help us because our theology tells us that the world's not divided into games straight.

All human beings are made in the image of God. And in some ways, all of us are perversions of that because of our sin. And all of us need salvation. I mean, I'll tell you, the transgender thing for me came up years and years ago in Barora, of all places, where...

I'll tell you the story. Yeah, I'll tell you. We were a very working class congregation. And my wife sometimes said, we had so many problems.

[59 : 21] I buried a guy who died because he came home drunk and he ironed his shirt while he still had it on and he died of burns. I mean, that...

So imagine taking a funeral like that. I mean, it's insane. And I... After I did that, I remember animals saying, why can't we just get any normal people? And I'm saying, well, there's no normal people in the free church. That's just the way it works.

And then this lawyer turned up. And she was like middle class, Edinburgh lawyer, used to go to St. Giles Cathedral and wanted to come to the free church in Barora where she's up every weekend because she bought a house in Barora.

I said, well, there you go. There's a normal person. Well, I wish I hadn't opened my mouth because I did a lot of work with this lady, helping one or two things. And one day she asked me to go and see her.

So I went and see her. And she said, David, I've got something to tell you. I said, what is it? She said, well, you know how I'm standing as a Scottish nationalist candidate for Cape Nesson Sutherland? I said, yes. She said, well, the daily record's got something on me.

[60 : 19] I said, what's that? She said, well, they've been holding it back until this moment because the sun is going to come out tomorrow in favour of the Scottish Nationalist Party. So they're going to publish front page story about me.

I said, what have you done, Sandra? I said, well, first of all, my name, my original birth name is not Sandra. It was Sandy. And I used to be prop forward for the Stornoway Rugby Club.

And she said, okay, I'll let you take that in. I'll go make a cup of tea. I mean, when I came back, I mean, she basically, she'd had the operation and moved from being, in her eyes, in a way, man to being a woman and the whole transgender thing.

And it's funny, when I went back to Annabelle and taught her this, she said, yeah, I do that. Everyone knows that. Look at her hands. You know, the hands of a woman. I said, oh, okay, fair enough. I'm thick as two short planks. But what was interesting about that was just very, very sad and very messed up.

I met with my elders, because it's going to be big, you know, in a small community. Can you imagine it? Imagine if one of your Stornoway elders, for example, you suddenly discovered that he had actually been a sheep. You know, that would be an interesting scandal.

[61 : 31] Well, so I met with my elders. I said, guys, what are we going to do here? And Ross, the lorry driver, looked at me, and he's a smart guy and great preacher. He said, what do you mean, what are we going to do? I said, well, isn't this a big issue?

He went, no, what's changed? I said, okay, Ross, explain yourself. He said, well, she came to the church as a lost sinner, needing to hear the gospel. She, he, or whatever, remains in the church as a lost sinner, needing to hear the gospel.

Let's just carry on the way we've always done. And I said, the rest of you feel like that? And they said, absolutely. I said, well, that's great, guys, no problem. I said, what happens when she's converted and wants to?

He says, we'll cross that bridge when we come to. And actually, that was very, very wise and very right. I don't think we exclude anyone. I don't think we turn away from the truths of the gospel. But my biggest aim for somebody, when someone comes to me and says, David, I'm homosexual, I'll just say, hi, I'm heterosexual. Now, what's your point? And then we'll just talk about, I want them to know Jesus and to know Christ.

[62 : 35] And I know many people who are homosexual, who have become Christians, and who have decided to remain celibate. And I think we can show a much more positive attitude sometimes than we think.

And we don't need to focus on this one society shibboleth. By the way, if you want, in terms of something to read, Rosaria Butterfield's *Tales of an Unlikely Convert*. It's the best book I've ever read in the whole subject.

She is, she was a lecturer in queer theory in Syracuse University in the States. And she was converted.

And if you read the story for yourself, she was converted through a reformed Presbyterian church. Our book's really weird because she writes about sexuality and queer theory and so on, and then exclusive psalmody.

So it's interesting. Kenny Stewart will love it. But it's a fascinating book and a fascinating story. And she's got a follow-up to that.

[63 : 36] And I think it would be really helpful to any of you. And please, if you've got relations or you've got friends or you've got neighbours, you love them as human beings and you seek to bring them Christ.

And don't let the sexuality issue be a hindrance to that. That's what I would argue. But that's a huge question. Sorry. Anything else? Anything else? Yeah.

People are comfortable.

They don't see any need. So they're not sick, so they don't need a doctor. They see their sin as being something that they can easily handle and cope with. And God will forgive them any need because they do a lot of good stuff. Materially, they're quite well off and they're not dying.

So I went down to do an outreach in Portland. And the biggest problem the church has had down there is most of the people around there are just incredibly well off and you don't see any need. The church is just, ironically, they think the church is for the poor.

[64 : 42] Which is a strange kind of way, it is. The only thing is we need to show everyone that everyone's for the poor. At one level. Again, I'll go back to Broer, I'm thinking about Fisherman and his wife.

We were doing very well, very comfortable with Fisherman's good then. And they came to a separate evening that we organised. And I was talking with them. And I was only joking. I didn't know that sometimes Fisher folk can be quite superstitious.

And I said to them, I'm a minister and if you don't come to church, I'm going to put a curse in your house and it'll burn down. And they were so scared they came. It's funny.

She was converted. She was really determined not to be converted. So we went and we had a barbecue and Greta Johnson was speaking. And her husband got out and stood around the barbecue and opened the fire. And she absolutely refused. Sat in the car with the window up. And he had such a loud voice. She was converted. And he wasn't. I mean, hopefully I'm not saying threatened to burn people's houses down in order to stare at me.

[65 : 44] But I do think that that comfort and complacency, you probably got to gently prick it until God explodes it.

You know, I had a guy, I did a wedding and the father of the bride was the millionaire. And I mean the kind of millionaire who drove a silver shadow Rolls Royce that was worth 350,000 pounds to the wedding.

You know, and it was his, one of his collections. So you're talking serious, aren't you? And he seemed to have absolutely everything. And I sat beside him at the wedding and he talked to me a lot because he got really drunk and he was so unhappy.

And I said to him, why are you so unhappy? And he said, you don't know about my son, do you? I said, I'm sorry, I don't. And his son had an accident and was paraplegic from the neck down and just, you know.

And this guy put millions of something in Dundee called the I think it's a laptop center. You know, his whole world would have been completely shaken up.

[66 : 52] Comfort, we live in a fragile world. We had a boy from Lewis down with us, a boy who's 40 years old. And one day he went home to his mother and father.

Never had a day of illness in his life. And he said, I've got a sore head, sat down and died. Massive brain hemorrhage. You know, the comfort that we have is illusory. It's like driving in a car and thinking, oh, this is great, you know, and it made you feel uncomfortable.

But if you took away the outer shell, it's fake, really. You're traveling at 70 miles an hour, you hit something, you're going to be in severe trouble. And I think that, for me, is an analogy of life for a lot of people.

So I would question that. And I would also say, well, what about lots of other people who are not comfortable? And also, in this, I would be incredibly blunt.

I would just say to someone, one day you are going to die. I don't know if that's going to be tomorrow. Or 50 years from now. But you are. What then?

[67 : 58] Not everyone can get away with being a thuncy sometimes. But sometimes you have to do that. And sometimes it works. Kenny MacDonald in Roskeen, he was asked to visit a boy, not again, not a boy, but a man who was having DTs withdrawn.

And we've seen spiders coming out of the wall and all his family were in. And Kenny went in and tried to talk to him and tried to pray with him and share with him. Not interested, no problem, no problem, no problem, I'm fine, I'm fine. So Kenny got up and he was just blunt, he was brutal. And he just looked, he's like, I'm away. And the next time I see you, you'll be in my church in a coffin. And I went home. The boy was such a fright, he was in church the next Sunday. And he was converted.

Now, don't use that as a method or a technique. But you understand what I'm saying, that sometimes people need to be shaken out of their comfort. And that will happen in church too. I wonder when that was the last time you were in church and it was really convicting. People were, I remember a boy in Barora was just an oil rig worker, came along and when he came out, I could see the sweat on him. And it wasn't a particularly hellfire sermon or anything.

[69 : 01] And he said to me, he was really angry, he says, you come to my house just to get information about me so you can preach about this. I said, no, no, wait a minute, back off. I didn't know you were coming. I said, I don't preach at people from the pulpit, individuals.

If I've got something to say to you, I'll say it to your face. I was just preaching the word of God. And the look on his face, and he literally started running down the glee. And he just ran. And my old elder never said boo to a goose, never said a word, shouted out after him.

Aye, you can run, but you can't hide. That's not that. Brilliant. And I think, well, was it C.S. Lewis says that God whispers to us in our pleasures and shouts to us in our pains?

You know? How do you understand? I mean, it's about the Holocaust. How do you understand the aisle there? You know, there's hundreds of men coming back after having survived the First World

War.

The traumatic effect of that on the whole of this aisle is just phenomenal. But that's where we're at. We live as very fragile people. I mean, four years ago, at this time, I was in a coma.

[70:14] I was dying. You know, I should be dead. But I was sitting healthy, you know, eight weeks before that. So, I think you gently warn people, and sometimes very directly warn people.

And then you also are aware of providences that shake up people. You know, and pray that the Lord would use them in people's lives.

Anyone else? Praise the Lord. I'm going to go ahead of the coma, first of all. But secondly, somebody who says to you, I don't want to come to church with you. I don't want to come to church with you.

Oh, do that. There's no fun. I don't sense too much. And you look up to the students, and somebody will just go, why would I get attracted to that?

I'm almost meant to go, do it. You ain't seen nothing yet. Come along and really experienced, do it. You know. Depends the context in which you're in.

[71:18] I think, I'd be inclined to say it as somebody like that. You know, you could be right. And there may be an element of that.

But please be very careful about judging by outward appearance. We do that, and we're wrong to do that. So please don't you do that. And actually, it's not about that. Why don't you come along and see for yourself?

I think that appeal to experience works with you're going by reputation, you're going by image, you're going by gospel. You know, come and have a look. Now, some people you just can't win with, because when somebody comes along with that attitude, and afterwards he went away and he goes, oh, it was great, I loved it, but they were just faking it.

You know, so, you know, people are dating sins and trespasses, and a lot of this stuff is used as excuses. I think also, we need to remind our own people that the psalm says, I joy went to the house of God, go up, you say to me.

And we look, sometimes, well, if that's joy, it's so deep that nobody is going to see it.

[72:24] And I wonder if, you know, I love Psalm 51, give me back the joy I had. I wonder if one of the biggest problems we have for many of us is we have actually lost our joy.

And we need that joy of the Lord as our strength to be returned. I don't mean the superficial thing. I mean, I go to church and they ask me to clap my hands on my dad and my arms hold. If they ask me not to clap my hands on my dad, that's a personality.

But, I don't mean that. There should be in any gathering of God's people a solemnity and a reverence and an awe and a joy which is overwhelming.

And that should all be together. It will be expressed in different ways at different times. And sometimes, I think, the durness is cultural.

To me, Calvinism without Christ is purgatory. But Calvinism with Christ, it's, you know, John Plankton's stuff about Christian joy and so on.

[73:35] Sometimes, I think, he comes across to me as we would do. It never meant. It's just the accent, I think. I have to say this.

I mean, I've been in the free church for over 30 years. And, yeah, I've come across some pretty miserable people. But I've come across some other churches as well. And I haven't seen all that much during this.

And part of that is, maybe I've been in ministry for so long and it's there from a time to a particular congregation and style. I do remember being in one free church in Easter Ross where I went out and afterwards I said to the minister, do you know this?

If I was a Christian and I came in here, there was nothing that would make me doubt my faith more. Because he was allowing all his frustrations and anger and everything. There was nothing of Christ. It was just law and hammering and hammering and hammering and frustration and anger and everything.

And I said to him, you need a therapist. You know, you need to go and get some help. You should stop preaching until you get back to the word of God. Oh, I am teaching the word of God. No, you're not. You're picking and choosing bits out of the word of God to express your frustrations.

[74:36] So, I think the joy and how we express joy and what's involved, we're glad to see one of them. You have to be quite careful with that. My wife's not here so I can tell the story now.

When I hitchhiked here one time, as I told you, I went to the story, a feature at prayer meeting, it was packed. And Murdo Alex stood up and asked people to pray.

And he said, Robert's in. Edinburgh, please. So I'm standing up. And as I was hitchhiking, I didn't know, I was in my jeans and a t-shirt or something. So I'm standing up waiting for this guy called Robertson from Edinburgh.

And I heard this, Robertson, Edinburgh. I'm sorry, I wasn't going to pray. You know, I didn't realize it was me. It never crossed my mind that I would be asked. So I'm standing there. And one of the elders came up and tapped me on the shoulder and said, it's you.

And I thought, oh no. But I do. So I started praying and I started using these and those, which I didn't normally do. And I got it all wrong and my tenses all wrong and everything. And then I started using you's and then, oh, it's all over the place.

[75 : 38] It was just a nightmare. Finished. Sing a psalm, benediction. I headed for the door. I was getting out of there because I thought they're going to lynch you. You know, this is my judgmental attitude. So I saw these two old ladies dressed in black from head to toe.

Honestly, the Taliban would have been credited. The only thing they liked was the burqas. And they were headed for me. And I thought, I'm in so much trouble. I've got to avoid them. So I was sprinting through that door in the seminary.

And they cut me off. I mean, they were quick for an old age. And they said, Mr. Robertson. Yes? And they put their hands up and shook their hand and said, lovely to see you.

And they gave me a big kiss. And you'll come back to the house where we screwed back. Bacon and eggs. I mean, we screwed back nothing. It was like a three quarts meal with a cup of tea. But they just took a cup of tea.

And do you know, they were so lovely and they were so kind and they were so nice. And they were so full of joy. That I do think there's a tendency at times for us to judge by our appearance both ways.

[76 : 40] But I still think that we need to deal with that perception that people have. That people will come in and say, you know, one, they really believe this. Two, they love the Lord.

And three, their chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And I think we need to remember that. You know, and I think it's a problem.

I do think it's a problem. And I love our churches in different ways. Fake joy and no joy. And lots of things in between. But if you really enjoy something and enjoy being with the Lord's people.

I mean, we have a Greek family coming to us just now. And they were refugees, kind of. And they were economic refugees. And they said to me, do you know, David, we can't wait for Sunday.

The Lord's Day is the best day of the week for us. All the hassles we have at work and everything else. It's the Lord's Day. And they tell people that. Wouldn't that be great if in every church on this island, what are you doing this weekend?

[77 : 43] Oh, football on Saturday, going for a walk, doing the car, whatever. And then I'm going to church on Sunday and I'm so looking forward to it. I think that would transform the witness. Even having that attitude.

But to genuinely have that attitude, you need to. So, it's a great question. I had a black coat and a black hat. I put my black hat with me.

And somebody said to me, dude, that's perfect. Now you'll get invited to the Lewis Communion. I hope your criteria's changed. Anything else before we do?

I think we still want a couple of minutes. Yes? A few questions. I don't know what you would have to ask. Well, I'll go for both. We'll see what you do quickly. We'll do the first one quick.

The first one is the stuff that we're talking about. Yeah. If you had a conversation with someone about going by what they've wanted to love.

[78 : 39] Yeah. And those strengths of it, I guess. Yeah. Start from going in and people. How do you deal with that sort of value? Okay. Well, it's not an argument I come across with a lot except for new atheists, and I mean this quite sincerely, drunks in Stornoway.

Because I've ever been in a public toilet in Stornoway, and it's the only time it's ever happened to me in my life. I was in the toilet and do your business and washing my hands, and this boy beside me came up to me.

He's a bit the worst for wear. And he said to me, do you go to church? I said, yes. What do you think of predestination? So I had a discussion about predestination in the Stornoway public toilets with a

Lewis drunk.

It was interesting. Personalized question like that, one of two things. They've either got a church back there and actually read the Bible, and therefore it's a serious question, or they've just read about it on an atheist website, or something like that.

So to me it would depend where they're coming from. I was in Northern Ireland two weeks ago, I don't know if that's the question I will ask, but it was a mokey accusation rather than a sincere question.

[79 : 43] I think I would go into that with somebody and just simply say, you do realise that is the Old Testament civic law under Moses.

And I tend to use the argument about divorce and Jesus saying, you are allowed this because of the hardness of your hearts. In other words, Calvin teaches this wonderful principle that the Bible uses as accommodation, that God accommodates himself to the culture of the time.

And we're not allowed to do that, but in the word of God, that clearly does happen. And the Mosaic civil law for the culture of its day was incredibly fair and just.

And also that thing about stoning for Sabbath breaking and so on, it wasn't because he collected sticks on a Sunday, it was the covenant was hugely important. And the person who's asking that question, I want to say to them, wait a minute, how do you work out what's important and what's not important?

So I try to get them away from a very simplistic understanding. If they're really interested and serious about it, I'm prepared to do a Bible study with them. But I would also say that the civic law is done away with now in Christ and that does apply, apply to the Mosaic tribes and the nation of Israel at that time.

[81 : 04] And you also look at how it was implemented as well in Jewish history. So most people, I don't think, if someone's serious about it, I'm prepared to take time with them.

If they're just making it as an accusation, the trouble is you answer that accusation and they come back with another table. So they're not really that interested. And I would tend to ask the bigger questions of how do you know what's right and wrong?

How do you work things out? And actually that shouldn't, that verse shouldn't be a problem for you as a non-Christian, it's more a problem for me as a Christian. Because how is this the God of justice and mercy who I worship and love?

And so for Christians it's actually a bigger problem. For a non-Christian it's an excuse, not a problem. Second one. I was talking about somebody that might be more than the same.

She'd be doing this conference. Yeah. I'm sure maybe that person was probably unbearable in the majority of life. And that viewpoint, that's the viewpoint that I am.

[82 : 06] There's a stumbling one. Now, what does a congregation do if there is a sizable number of Christians having the eldership or the congregation serve?

who have that view and whenever a new suggestion is made, say to do evangelism or something else, do the culture of the church it's a no overnight any point.

How far should we push an idea before the peace and the unity starts to suffer? Should we let it go or should we push it?

Oh boy, that's a great question. I'm happy to finish with that question. Just let me start around. Just let me get where I'm at. First of all, if someone says to me over my dead body, my response is that can be easily arranged.

You know. Secondly, I remind people of what my friend David Meredith says that he's seen people weep over the movement of a communion table who don't weep over lost souls.

[83 : 07] Thirdly, I think that people like me and elders and leaders in the church, we need to stop trying to have government in the church by unanimous consensus on every issue.

We have to be mature enough to allow disagreement within our current sessions. We had a problem in St. Peter's and because of that problem, every new elder we ordain, as well as making sure that they actually do mean it in terms of the Westminster Confession and vows, we also visit them and talk about their families because their families need to be on board.

I think that's a biblical requirement. That was one issue. But the second issue was this. We tell them that on the Kirk session, you can say what you want and you can argue for what you want.

But when you leave the Kirk session, you do not create disunion and division within a congregation. If you do so, you're in breach of your ordination vows and you will be removed from office.

If you think that something that we're doing on a Kirk session that we decide is wrong, then the proper procedure is to go to presbytery and make a formal complaint and let the presbytery deal well. But you don't create disunity within the congregation.

[84 : 19] Because what I've seen happen is this, that because especially in a smaller church, you don't want to upset a key elder or a key person, you let them have an effective veto on absolutely everything.

And so the status quo always remains. And to me, that is profoundly unbiblical and profoundly unpresbyterian. We have collective leadership in a church.

We do not have a situation where you have a dynamic minister and a Kirk session whose job is to restrain the minister. You're meant to, the elders are meant to be showing a leadership involved in that as well.

So, back to your scenario of, well, what Alistair was saying. First of all, I think that's really bad theology. So, scripture says those who oppose you, you must gently instruct.

I'm having to learn the gentleness, because I would automatically say, if someone said that to me, I would automatically say to them, well, you better stop praying then. And I'd better stop preaching.

[85 : 18] Because the Holy, you know, we can't do anything. We can't do God's work for him. So, what we instead should be asking is, what has God commanded us to do? He has shown the amount of what is good, and what does the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God?

Well, what other things has God required of us? And my problem, and with this whole conference, not with the conference here, but I think it's a key issue for this conference, it's a key issue for the free church overall, it's a key issue for every evangelical church in Scotland, is this.

Evangelism is not a kind of extra for the weirdos. Evangelism should be in the DNA. I was listening to Alistair this morning, I was thinking of this.

Evangelism, and this is what he was saying, evangelism should be in the DNA of every congregation. It's just what we do, it's what we are. We believe in Jesus, and we want him to be glorified.

I think our church history is full of that. We glorify and praise people like William Carey, who was told when he went to the Baptist Union and said, I want to go to India, and he was told by one of the elders there to sit down and shut up.

[86 : 27] If God wants to heave and convert, he'll do it himself. But actually, no. God has sent us into all the world. And I feel a burden in this because my responsibility is not to convert the people around St.

Peter's or in Dundee, or I feel a particular burden for Scotland. My responsibility is not to convert anyone. I can't convert anyone. But my responsibility is to tell people. And I think that God will hold me accountable.

Not for whether people believe, but whether they have heard. And I think every Kirk session and every church, every minister should be on their knees, confessing our sin before God in this respect.

And this is where I want to finish with your question because coming back into what I said at the end of last night, I do believe God has richly, richly blessed this island. But we are richly blessed in order to give.

And when we try and contain and keep it for ourselves, then there's an honest problem. I have a lovely problem you'd think just now. All the problems in my church are problems of growth, which is great.

[87 : 40] But one of the biggest problems is when there's seven of you and ten of you and twenty of you and forty of you in a city of 150,000 people, you know that you've got to reach out and you're not comfortable.

When there's 250 of you and Sinclair Ferguson's your supply preacher and Dominic Smart's your substitute supply preacher, you know, and we've got some tremendous people in the church and it's really buzzing and the Sunday school's grey and all that kind of stuff.

You know what happens? Christians go, this is grey, this is comfortable. It's back to your question about when non-Christians feel comfortable. What about when Christians feel comfortable? people. And I, my desire, and why I'm so encouraged by all you guys here, is that we've got to get that burden of the Lord back.

We've got to see the world as Christ sees the world. We've got to long for the glory of Christ to be revealed. Not just in this island.

You know, sometimes islands can be quite parochial. Again, since animals are not here, I'm allowed to say this. I came here to Corker, basically, but we were going out, but I had to, you know, meet all the in-laws and things like that.

[88 : 50] And parents were great, but I went to visit one of her aunties up in Pointe. And it was just, for me, one of the most surreal experiences of my life. You know, you go in, and it was a typical Lewis house, and lots of, you know, Spurgeon and Sandbooks and Auntie Mary Ann with the knitting and the wee hat and everything.

See, I remember just talking very politely to me, and then, Ella, Ella, come in the kitchen and help me make tea. Well, I knew what that was going to be about.

Let me talk about this young man. And I heard words in Gaelic, you know, in Gaelic. And then I heard the magic words, student, college, free church.

Well, Auntie had been sitting across at the other end of the room from me, just staring at me, just looking me up. And what Annabelle told me, what she said was, well, I know he's a Christian, but he's not from the island.

Could you not have got a Christian boy from the island? You know. And anyway, after she heard, I was a free church ministerial student, she came, and honestly, she sat beside me, and she could not stop rubbing my leg.

[89 : 57] Oh, cry, oh, cry, oh, cry. It was just one, you know. But, in a way, she's a lovely, lovely lady. But the sort of mentality, which I didn't blame her for, was, if you weren't from the island, then somehow there was something wrong with your Christianity.

Not helpful. Not really. And I think that, that's, if you like, an extreme example. I think what we've got to think about here is not just how does God bless us in this congregation, or these congregations on this island.

But it may be that there will be people who will be converted here, who will go and be used to bring the gospel in other parts of the world. And what a blessing that would be.

And that's really what we need to think of. You know, I, sometimes people say, well, you know, there's, the one thing where I would disagree with Tim Keller, or at least the people around him, is you go to the city centres, and that's how you get people, and so on.

Well, not really. Jesus came from Nazareth. It'd be possible to come from locks and turn the world upside down. You know, and I think that's what we should be thinking about. We should be thinking, even from here, not as Lewis has been some on the remote northwest, or the other hand being basically the remains of the Garden of Eden.

[91 : 11] We shouldn't be thinking of either of those things. We should be just thinking, well, maybe God can use me, my small congregation, in this context, to help bring his gospel, not just here, but throughout the world.

And I think that's what this conference is about. So I'll leave it there. Thank you. Thank you. . . ? . Thank you.