

WINTER 2019

# IGNITE

SPARKING PASSION FOR THE GOSPEL  
ACROSS THE UK



## CLASS ACT

HUNDREDS OF BIBLES DONATED  
TO ISOLATED SCHOOLS



**ALSO** CONNECT CONFERENCE 2020 - SPORTS CHAMPION TURNS TO GOD  
GOSPEL BOOKS FOR CHURCHES - ANSWERING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

# WELCOME TO IGNITE

As you receive this copy of Ignite, we are on the verge of a General Election. Claim and counter claim, debate and argument, uncertainty and the unknown.

However, standing in complete contrast are the claims of Jesus. In the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18 Jesus declares "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." On page 16 Tim Cracknell writes "The UK stands at a key moment in its history and needs the Gospel more now than at any other time." It is with confidence that we can stand on the authority of Christ and continue to hold out this life changing, nation shaping Gospel.

Enjoy reading Ignite, there are many stories to inspire. But why not JOIN US? In February 2020, we are excited to be hosting the Connect Conference in Daventry (page 16-17). Together there, we hope to be inspired, encouraged and become better equipped to reach our nation for Christ.

May you be blessed as you make Jesus known in your community.

**Martin Erwin,**  
*CEO Counties*



**Counties exists to make Jesus known across the UK through our evangelists, exhibitions and resources, in biblically faithful and culturally relevant ways.**

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# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WITNESSING THROUGH CANCER

**Facing cancer, and its often gruelling treatment, hasn't stopped Herefordshire evangelist Will Andrews from sharing his faith with fellow patients and their families.**



Will and Lynne Andrews say they continue to be impressed with the evangelistic opportunities Will's cancer journey has opened up.

Lynne said: "Will was asked to speak about his faith at a cancer group meeting, at the request of a lady in the group. We are aware that these moments to witness to totally non-Christian people, who are in a difficult period in their lives, can come about in no other way."

"Several of them are now friends with Will on Facebook and reading all the Christian posts, prayers and best wishes is having a positive impact on them and causing them to enquire about faith."

## MEET OUR NEW TRAINING OFFICER

**Counties' North Devon evangelist has been appointed as the new Training Officer and says she is looking forward to inspiring others to be confident in the Gospel.**

Beverley said: "I applied for this role with an increased sense of calling from God and with a desire to see evangelists and trainees supported, encouraged and equipped in their various ministries. I hope to inspire others to be confident in the Gospel as it has the power to bring transformation to our nation.

"I hope to help individuals to catch the vision and craft the skills they need to sharpen their effectiveness in the work of making Jesus known. I'm also looking forward to recruiting, training and deploying a growing number

of evangelists whom God has called and gifted for such a time as this. I am always excited to be part of the body of Christ and see its beauty when it fully functions as God intended."



"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ".

Ephesians 4. 11-13 NRSV

## PRISONER TURNS TO JESUS

**A prisoner who previously followed Satan, and whose wife described herself as a witch, has turned to Christ.**

Cardiff evangelist, Clive Cornish, is thrilled to report about inmate Terry, who he visits as part of his prisons ministry in South Wales.

Said Clive: "Terry has been a Satanist for 22 years, he walked into the chapel and sat alone. He went back to his cell and said a prayer: 'Lord I've been walking on the dark side too long, about time

*I turned to the light.'*

*The change in Terry's life is a total turn around to who he was.*

*His wife was a witch and the cellar of his house was used for Satanic worship. Now he's a gentle man, quoting scripture and defending Christ and the Gospel. What amazing grace the Lord has!"*



## FIND OUT WHAT DIFFERENCE YOUR SUPPORT IS MAKING IN OUR NEW ANNUAL REVIEW

**It's been another amazing year of testimonies and lives changed thanks to people across the country getting to know their Lord and Saviour.**

Counties' new 'Year in Review' has been published to highlight the difference gifts and prayers have made to the charity and its work over the last year.

Highlights include:

- Counties' schools resources welcomed **44,543** pupils on board
- **10** new evangelists were trained by Counties
- Counties Planting Network was established
- Counties' network of evangelists gave over **30,000** hours of outreach in their communities
- Over **700** people enjoyed Counties Family Fun Day on one of the hottest days of the year.



Martin Erwin, CEO of Counties, said: "What an amazing year it has been! We hope the new Year in Review gives our supporters a taste of the work of Counties and highlights the difference their support has made to this ministry."

**Call the Counties' office on 01373 823013 for your printed copy of the 'Year in Review'.**

## BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO CHINA

Sharing the good news of the Gospel with Chinese students in Hull has long been part of Counties' evangelist Julian Gutteridge's ministry. And thanks to connections through this work, Julian and wife Elizabeth went on a unique journey to China this year.

Julian said: *"We met lots of lovely people and though in China you cannot openly share the Gospel in public, the Lord gave us opportunities to do so more-or-less covertly, during a wedding reception which we attended. Also, with some friends and family of our hostess.*

*Even more amazingly, we were able to share a bit of my testimony with a Chinese police officer, who came*



*with his colleagues to check on us. He was asking some questions about Christianity and I challenged him to meet for a coffee off-duty so we could talk more. God gives us wisdom what to say and when!"*

## CHURCH PASTOR JOINS COUNTIES TRAINEE EVANGELIST SCHEME

Church pastor, Mark Bingham, left school without any qualifications and couldn't read as a young adult. That's until he reached the age of 30 when he taught himself to read through a daily Bible study notes book and later went on to do a degree in evangelism.

Now married to Amanda with five children, they live in Maulden in Bedfordshire, and have joined Counties as trainee evangelists.

The couple are originally from Northern Ireland but have lived in Liverpool, Southampton and now Maulden, where Mark is the Community Pastor at Maulden Baptist Church.

Mark said: "We became Christians in our early thirties when we got married and

started going to church, and we felt God was calling us to do more in the church. After a while we felt a calling to move to England and reach out to the lost and broken.

"We're looking forward to our work with Counties. We admire that Counties' evangelists live by faith and fully trust that God will supply their needs in their ministry and family life."

Mark and Amanda decided to join Counties to help further their evangelism tools as well as enjoy fellowship and prayer support with like-minded evangelists.



## BIBLES DONATED TO SCHOOL CHILDREN IN WEST WALES

Children in isolated schools in West Wales are being given the chance to read God's word – thanks in part to the work of Counties' associate evangelist Janet Hawking.

Janet visits over 200 junior schools to share what Christians believe through Bible teaching lessons and assemblies. She has worked with the charity Bibles for Children and local churches to supply all the pupils with a copy of their own Bible.

She explains: *"I first rang the charity in 2006, when an 11-year-old lad*

*interrupted my first ever 'Walk Through the Bible' lesson and said: 'Miss, I have never had that book'. The charity sent Bibles for every pupil from year 2 to year 6. That set the standard. Now in every school I teach, all the pupils from Year 2 upwards are offered these Bibles to enhance their reading skills, and further their understanding of the Bible and God's big plan. Head teachers feel valued and supported when told their Bibles are already paid for!"*

Janet says she spots the children eagerly reading their Bibles in the playground. She continued:

*"There have been many encouragements from the children recently. A year 6 girl asked for an extra Good News Bible. Why?"*

*"Her 15-year-old brother wanted one after losing a Gideon's Bible he was given. I could not give her one, due to the charity's rules as they only work in primary schools, but I went to my car and gave her a Gideon's Bible for her brother. She had been a good witness to her brother!"*

*"A class had finished their Maths lesson with 15 minutes to spare, so the teacher asked her 25 children what work they would like to do next? She was amazed when they eagerly chose their Bibles! And when I was in a local supermarket a little boy poked me and said, 'Thank you for my Bible, I love it and my favourite is Gideon.'"*



# tes

Counties continues to manage and promote the grant-making trust TES (The Evangelization Society). Here we look at a pioneering project to benefit from a TES grant over the last year.

## HUNDREDS OF PUPILS HEAR RAPPER'S TESTIMONY IN CONCERT

**A multi award-winning Christian rap artist shared his story with hundreds of school pupils from Warminster as part of a concert organised by churches from the Wiltshire town.**

The Lighthouse Youth Project received a £250 grant to help pay expenses for the Guvna B concert at Kingdown School.

Guvna B, 26 and from London, became the first rapper in UK history to top the official Christian and Gospel charts, and his song 'Secret World' was the UK's highest selling urban Christian album in 2015.

He said: *"My upbringing helped me find my faith. The negative things I saw around me inspired me to do better and inspire people to be the best they can be instead of becoming stereotypical products of a negative environment."*

A youth worker from the Lighthouse Youth Project said: *"The Guvna B concert was a fantastic opportunity*

*for over 100 young people to hear the Gospel, many of them for the very first time.*

*"Guvna B not only connected with the young people via his music, but also was very clear in sharing part of his own story of faith and his testimony. The weekly Friday night youth club was even more popular following this event."*



Photo: GuvnaB.com



## GOD ON THE STREETS OF BIRMINGHAM

A £1500 grant from TES helped to fund a Passion Play project and bring the story of Jesus to the people of Birmingham.

The Saltmine Trust partnered with the Passion Trust to bring more than 65 actors from the community to deliver the Passion Play to thousands of people.

Rachael Orrell, Chief Executive of the Saltmine Trust, said:

*"The play was unprecedented in scale and ambition, not only in artistic vision but also in demanding the time, energy and commitment of a huge team of professionals and amateurs to bring this vision to life.*

*"Ultimately it provided a powerful glimpse of the reality of God on the streets of Birmingham, empowering the community to transform their city with immediacy and, hopefully, long lasting impact.*



*"With all the high hopes we had for the Passion Play, we could never have foreseen the way God superseded all our wildest expectations for it. All of the risks we took paid off and considering all the things that could have gone wrong, it was a genuine miracle that nothing actually did. It was an absolute privilege to have been part of such an amazing project, and one which we believe will continue to inspire change in the spiritual landscape of Birmingham."*





# MORE THAN GOLD

## HOW FAITH TURNED A NATIONAL CHAMPION'S LIFE AROUND

**Winning at sports was all teenager Jamie needed to experience a meaningful life and his natural talent at javelin throwing and his competitive spirit helped him do just that.**

At the age of just 14, Jamie won the National Championships and dominated

the Under 15s category for the season. But the competitive world of sports took its toll on his character, causing him to be obsessive and self-seeking.

An accident, and subsequent circumstances, forced Jamie to quit his beloved sport as a student and then, whilst looking for a new direction in life,



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**THE GLORY THAT  
I ONCE CHASED  
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I FOUND IN GOD  
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an encounter with God changed his life for the better.

Now a decade later, Jamie is a Community Evangelist at Velmore Church in Chandler's Ford, Hampshire, and has joined Counties as a trainee evangelist. Here, he shares his amazing story:

*I grew up in Fleet, Hampshire and was a talented javelin thrower in my youth. I won a few local competitions, began*

*being coached and almost before I knew it - I'd become the National Champion within two years. The next step was obvious to me: Gold at the London 2012 Olympics. My life was sorted.*

*My Mum was extremely proud of me. In assembly I was asked to stand up in front of everyone as they announced my achievements.*

Everywhere I went people would ask me about how javelin was going.

At this point in my life, I would describe myself as a human-doing. All of my identity came from my own sporting achievement. Because I was doing well, I thought I was living right. Conversely, I viewed those who were not confident in life as being of less value. I was intensively competitive and strong-willed.

## I'D REALLY BECOME A BIT OF A MONSTER.

Ironically, however, my strength was used against me. I still played football as a goalie and one day I broke my elbow from landing awkwardly on my right arm. The doctor told me I'd never be able to throw again. I resolved to certainly throw again - and continue with my dream to win an Olympic Gold

At this point I was furious about life - my world had been turned upside down as everything that I was, was related to my athletic performance. Eventually, I did make it back to throwing a javelin again and I managed to scrape my way into the Under 17s National Championship team, this time as the second-choice competitor for Hampshire. On the day, I pulled out a personal best and came away with a bronze medal. This meant so much more to me than my first gold medal, as it was so much harder to achieve.

Behind all this story of sporting success - I'd really become a bit of a monster. I was so fixated on being successful in the sport that I was addicted to it.

I craved to compete and win. If I was not competing, or winning, or winning bigger - I could get no satisfaction. I would always want more.

I upped my training at university, but by this time, athletics was much more about sustained hard work, science and commitment than the talent, intensity and confidence which I had been surviving on. So, one day, without warning, I totally quit athletics.

When I was at university, I liked to debate with my Christian friends who claimed that they did not follow a religion but had a 'relationship' with God. They said they knew God and could speak to Him through prayer.

As a 19-year-old logical thinker, I thought the Christians had mistakenly exposed themselves here - because the claim that people can speak to God is a testable claim; I could go and try this for myself, God would not 'be there', hence I could disprove the existence of God. My Christian friend stood by this and in fact encouraged me, saying: 'Jamie, if you take a step to God, he will run a mile towards you.'

With my interest peaked, one night I did go to pray, I had never anticipated that I would have a profound encounter with God - and not just any God - but He communicated to me that He was 'the God of the Bible'.

I had gone to bed in my parent's house and sensed there was someone else in the room. I saw a light, like no

## WITH MY INTEREST PEAKED, ONE NIGHT I DID GO TO PRAY

# I SAW A LIGHT, LIKE NO EARTHLY LIGHT, IN THE CORNER OF THE ROOM.

*earthly light, in the corner of the room. This light-presence-thing communicated with me on a deep level and gave me an experience of 'awe' which I could only compare to winning a big competition. I can only begin to put the experience into words. But what struck me is the sense of awe and meaningfulness I experienced through God without doing anything myself, other than hostile praying!*

*My reality was shaken and I had two options: either I had to declare myself as mentally ill (I seriously considered this) or I needed to understand what this God wanted with me. Over the next six months I began to learn about God from Christian preachers, in secret. The mystery and miracle was that the God who I had encountered was consistently somehow the same as the God of scripture; the God who sent Jesus. Eventually I realised that God was not a concept given by irrelevant religion, but that he was real, I could experience and be in awe of Him - and that He came to this world, incarnate, as Jesus, to save me from the consequences of my sin.*

*When I was a young Christian, God began showing me about what to do with my life and I understood that I needed to serve. Throwing the javelin was my best skill - so when my old*



*coach retired, I began to coach the squad with the help of a team.*

*Over time, I found I became less concerned with the squad's ability to throw - and more interested in their lives as people. I was developing a passion for Christ and this led to a job as a schools' worker which then led me to Moorlands Bible College and now I am here with Counties and Velmore Church!*

*God has redeemed His church and called us to His mission field as His beloved sons, worshipers, disciples. I serve as an evangelist, as part of a bigger team. He is showing me that there is such beauty and subtlety to how he establishes His Kingdom and draws people to himself.*

*The glory that I once chased through sport, I found in God who found me while I was still far away.*

Photo: Meare Community Church  
<https://mearecommunitychurch.org.uk>

# DYING VILLAGE CHURCH GETS A REFRESH WITH ENCOURAGING RESULTS

**A small village chapel, close to a well-known centre for the occult, was in danger of closing its doors earlier this year but thanks to an intervention from Counties Planting Network it is now welcoming new people from the community.**

Meare Community Church, which sits three miles north of Glastonbury in Somerset, was on the brink of closure earlier this year after the trustees decided to close it. That's when Counties' Somerset evangelist Mike Strange stepped in, with the support of Counties Planting Network.

He explains: *"I had been preaching at the church in Meare for over 30 years and at the end of a service, in the early spring, members told me with great dismay that the trustees were closing the church against their wishes.*

*"They were citing lack of leadership*

*as a reason. I offered to come and help as Pastor on the understanding that we would be doing certain things set down in a document called 'Vision for Meare.' They agreed."*

Trusteeship was handed over to the Western Counties and South Wales Evangelisation Trust and a programme of renovation and modernisation of the Chapel building is underway.

Mike continued: *"Our evangelistic strategy was to close all the old activities down and wait on God to open the doors. One very big existing open door is the local school.*



# planting network

revitalise | plant | grow

*"Our old midweek meeting was poorly attended with just four regulars, but when we moved it to a Monday morning and called it 'Brunch', serving bacon rolls, we were pleased to see 16 come along and many non-Christians sometimes come. We have renamed ourselves Meare Community Church to reflect our commitment to the community of Meare and we now have a new website."*

*"Counties is treating this as a Counties' Church plant. I and my two fellow leaders attended the recent M4 training course in Cinderford, which we all found absolutely invaluable. It was immensely practical, and I learnt things I wish I had known 30 years ago!"*

*"We are pleased to say that every week brings fresh encouragements as new folk arrive and as the Holy Spirit blesses and moves in our services. We were delighted to have a baptism recently, and another pray a prayer of commitment. Please pray for God to guide, provide and bless us all in this step of faith."*



Glastonbury Tor,  
a nearby tourist attraction.

**Counties Planting Network aims to work alongside local church leaders to identify opportunities to plant and grow churches and replant where a previous church had existed and is coming to the end of its current life.**

The Counties Network will provide support and encouragement for planters as part of the wider Counties' family. The new M4 training programme, which currently runs in 14 other European countries, also offers training to church planters from across the evangelical church in the UK.

Find out more, visit:

<http://uk.m4europe.com>

# REACH YOUR COMMUNITY THROUGH EVANGELISM

## DO YOU WANT IDEAS TO HELP YOUR CHURCH REACH OUT TO ITS COMMUNITY AND SHARE THE GOSPEL?

**Then consider going to Counties Planting Network's Connect Conference in February and be equipped to evangelise your community and grow your church.**

The weekend event, at De Vere Staverton Estate Hotel in Daventry, promises to bring a much-needed stimulus and practical encouragement to re-energising evangelism and church growth across the nation.

Multiple church planter, evangelist and author Dietrich Schlinder will be the guest speaker at the conference. Worship, children's and youth groups will also be on offer, as well as leisure activities at the four-star hotel.

Tim Cracknell, speaking on behalf of the Connect Conference team, said:

*"The UK stands at a key moment in its history and needs the Gospel more now than at any other time. But how do we bring this glorious message of hope at a time when churches are closing, and secularism and indifference has taken such a hold?"*

*We hope this conference will encourage and inspire local churches to learn from the Bible and each other on how to effectively engage with their communities."*

## CONNECT CONFERENCE 21-23 FEBRUARY 2020 DE VERE STAVERTON ESTATE HOTEL, DAVENTRY

**Come and hear stories of new life in secular Europe.**

Seminars and workshops on evangelism, leadership, growing churches, church planting and replanting by highly experienced and gifted leaders.

Hear from Dietrich Schindler, one of Europe's leading church planters,

bringing a message of hope and challenge for the UK church.

Practical advice on reaching out to neighbours, friends and colleagues.

A full children's and youth programme throughout the conference.



## WHO IS GUEST SPEAKER DIETRICH SCHLINDER?

Dietrich is a well-known speaker on church planting, church development, evangelism and leadership, having ministered in most European countries, the USA and Canada. A first-generation German American, the son of German immigrant parents. He is the author of 'Good to Great Church Planting: The Road less Travelled' and 'The Jesus Model: Planting Churches the Jesus Way.'

Dietrich and his wife Jan have been ministering in Germany as church planters and leaders of church planters since 1985 and have planted five churches.



## HOW TO BOOK

Visit [www.connect-conference.org](http://www.connect-conference.org) for more details.



# FROM BOOK

# TO BAPTISM

## HOW ONE WOMAN FOUND PEACE THROUGH JESUS

**A market worker from North Devon says she has found supernatural peace and calm after giving her life to Jesus.**

Vanessa, from South Molton, was brought to church by a friend and met Neighbourhood Chaplain and Counties' evangelist Beverley Bedford at a newcomers meal. She was given the Jesus book and other literature to read and, following several Discovery Course sessions, committed her life to Jesus.

Vanessa said: *"I was brought to church by my friend and at that time I had lots of questions about forgiving difficult people in my life. I was encouraged by the Neighbourhood Chaplain to sign up for the discovery course to have my questions addressed.*

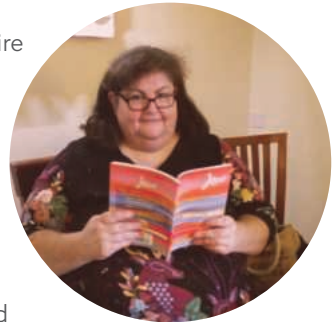
*"Following this, I gave my life to Jesus. I have received supernatural peace and calm when meeting Jesus for the first time. This made a real impact on my life following many years of suffering*

*emotional upset and tension in difficult relationships."*

Following a period of Bible study and learning about prayer on the apprenticeship course at church, Vanessa expressed a desire to be baptised to declare publicly the inner change in her life.

North Devon evangelist Beverley Bedford commented:

*"From receiving the Jesus book to being baptised, Vanessa has encountered and experienced the peace that Jesus has promised to all who trust in him. It's so encouraging to witness this, and we will keep praying for Vanessa as she grows in Christ."*





EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR IGNITE READERS:

## OVER 80% OFF BOOKS FOR YOUR CHURCH



The Bible Trust, who produce the Jesus book and other Christian literature, have teamed up with Counties to offer your church fantastic resources.

The Jesus book, given by Neighbourhood Chaplains to non-believers who enquire about their faith, features 30 carefully chosen selections from the four gospels with inspirational reflections from Michael Green.

The colourful 64-page book also features original watercolour illustrations by Roger Chouler. Robert Hicks, from The Bible Trust, commented:

*"It's a book to share, again and again. Our prayer is that churches will see many opportunities to give out these books to people in their communities and they will discover Jesus and experience faith, just like Vanessa from North Devon did."*

Examples of resources available:

- *Jesus* book pack of 1000 Gospels, only 75p each (+ £10 shipping cost).
- *Easter: A fresh retelling of the Easter story*, boxed in 200s normally retailing at £4 each, on offer at 75p each (+ £10 shipping cost).
- *The Jesus Book: A Fresh Retelling of Mark's Gospel* pack of 100 Gospels, normally retailing at £4 each, on offer at 74p each (+ £10 shipping cost).



To order your resources visit:  
[www.bibletrust.org.uk/evangelic](http://www.bibletrust.org.uk/evangelic)  
and use Promo code 'Robert25'  
when ordering

# ANSWERING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

BY DAVE SYMONS



*Always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect', is for many of us a daunting scripture.*

**1 Peter 3:15**

Always be ready, always! What about if you are just not feeling close to God or worse still if someone asks you one of the questions you can't answer? Best thing you may think you can do is to stay quiet, so you don't make a mess of it and leave it to others to do the evangelism.

Struggling to answer those tricky questions we may be asked, is one of the main reasons Christians give as to why they are not confident about sharing their faith and yet with a little thought and prayer I believe all of us can be ready to give an answer for the hope we have.

The good news is we don't have to have all the answers, but the even better news is that the answers to the most commonly asked questions are fairly straightforward to give.

Today with amazing resources online and in the form of Christian books and tracts, the information we need

to defend our faith from sceptics or enquirers has never been so easy to obtain.

It is so important we all take the chance we have to engage with people's questions otherwise we risk non-Christians coming to the conclusion we are 'pie in the sky spiritual people who have blind faith', rather than believers who have put our faith in a God who has revealed Himself in Jesus and given us plenty of evidence to back up all we know to be true.

Apologetics websites such as: **Gotquestions.org**, **Carm.org**, **Alwaysbeready.com** and **Chatnow.org.uk**, as well as **thegoodbook.co.uk** and **10ofthose.com** have lots of wonderful resources to help us in our witnessing.

**To start with why not challenge yourself to think through or look into answers to the following commonly asked questions:**

### **Is there more to life than this?**

A searching for meaning is so common in a society devoid of hope. A great chance to talk about eternal life but also the differences God makes in our day to day lives.

### **How will Christianity help me and is it relevant to me?**

In essence, this question is to do with happiness. Testimonies are good for this question, speaking about the freedom, hope and the forgiveness Jesus brings.

### **Isn't faith just psychological? Where's the evidence?**

There is of course so much that can be said about evidence for God but I usually just give someone a Bible and say here's 66 books full of evidence! Our faith is not based on feelings or a philosophy but a person, Jesus Christ. Christian faith is not 'all in the mind' it's rooted in history.

### **Isn't Jesus just one of many spiritual leaders? How do I know which faith to follow?**

A great question for focusing on Jesus, his unique claims and his unique life, death and resurrection.

### **Aren't Christians just hypocrites?**

I will usually say, if by hypocrite you mean they don't live up to the standards set in the Bible, then yes absolutely! This gives a great chance to speak about God's grace and forgiveness.

### **Aren't Christians intolerant?**

I usually ask what people mean by intolerant with this question. Christians of course are not to be intolerant but to love people and accept them as they are. This is the second greatest commandment in Matthew 22:39. However, if by intolerant they mean not agreeing with liberal values/lifestyle then I say yes, we are 'intolerant'. As Christians we have a very different way of viewing right and wrong. Our values come from God and are not based on what's politically correct according to the media or government.

### **Hasn't the Bible been changed down through the years?**

Easy one, no, our English versions are translated from the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts not from later translations. I usually ask people how they think the Bible could have been changed, by who and when? In fact, such a task would have been impossible with hundreds of manuscripts, spread over three continents held by groups of Christians who would have certainly taken exception to someone trying to change their Bible manuscripts!

### **Hasn't science disproved God?**

Here it may be helpful to speak about scientists who are Christians. Issac Newton, Louis Pasteur and modern-day scientists Frances Collins, William D Phillips or John Polkinghorne.

It may also help to ask these tough questions of sceptics. In the beginning what happened? What exploded? Why did it explode? Where did it come from in the first place? Where did the laws of the universe/ physics come from? How did the first

life originate? How did the caterpillar/ butterfly possibly evolve? This should be enough to sow seeds of doubt in the 'science has all the answers' idea.

### **If I'm a good person, won't God let me into heaven?**

Great question for talking about the standard of heaven, perfection. Romans 3:23 shows us that we are all in the same boat, sinners, imperfect people in need of forgiveness, in need of a Saviour. Entry into heaven is not about being good enough, but about being willing to accept the forgiveness Jesus offers us all.

### **Finally, perhaps the biggest question of all: Why does God allow suffering?**

First of all, I usually ask people why they are asking the question. If they have experienced the loss of a loved one, then the nature of the answer will be focused on the peace and comfort God brings; the God who meets us in our place of need. Sharing about Jesus' own suffering may also be helpful.





If, on the other hand, the question is more generic than I usually ask people, what would they like God to do about it? The answer is often - stop all the suffering and the follow-on question is therefore, how might He do that? To which the answer often is, punish all the bad people. In this case, I usually share something about the fact that I can be 'bad' sometimes, so am I a bad person, how should God punish me? Recognising that solving the problem of suffering is

not straightforward is a good first step. Helping people to see that God cannot deal with suffering without dealing with the causes of suffering, namely the Devil, the fallen world and the human race. Of course, one day he will deal with all of this when Jesus returns and makes an end of all suffering and evil but in the meantime *'he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance'* (2 Peter 3:9, NIV).

If you would like more information on how to answer these, or any other questions non-believers may ask us, please do take a look at the links given or contact me on [symons@countiesuk.org](mailto:symons@countiesuk.org)

**May God help us and empower us to be His witnesses, sharing the good news of Jesus with those around us.**

# GSUS LIVE CREATES REAL BUZZ AMONGST STUDENTS

**Teenagers are downloading Christian music onto their playlists and talking to their friends about real-life issues through a Biblical perspective – thanks to visits on board Counties' schools resource GSUS Live.**

**The award-winning unit has been touring schools in Hampshire, West Sussex and Surrey recently and local church volunteers have been reporting on the impact the schools resource has had.**

Darren Phillips, Schools and Outreach Worker from Wycombe Youth for Christ, said: "We had a young person come on the unit who we previously recognised from church-based activities. This young person said they recognised that one of the characters' stories was a modern version of the Prodigal Son. They commented that, because the story had been updated, it meant that they could, for the first time, see how that story could be them or one of their friends having to deal with the story."

"They thought the story made so much more sense to them now. It's great to see a Bible story that this young person had been familiar with and heard many times before, become much more relevant to this young person due to their experience of GSUS Live."

He added: "My favourite part of the programme was the music video! It created a great conversation starter with the young people, with many of them wanting to know whether they could find it online. It's so exciting to know that as a result of GSUS Live, Christian music is making it onto the playlists of these students!"

The hiring of the GSUS Live unit has also helped volunteers from Chichester Baptist Church develop their relationship with local schools. Andy Morgan from the church said: "We have had lots of great chats with staff about faith and it has really helped us with our role in the school."







*"We will now build on both the content of the week and the relationships formed this week. It has also been great for the RE teachers to see us provide and deliver a great programme for the school."*

When the unit pulled into the car park at Perins School in Southampton, volunteers reported that it created a real excitement amongst students and staff. Neil Maddocks, from Riverside Family Church, Southampton, commented: "GSUS Live certainly has the wow factor."

*"Visitors to the school may have wondered what the giant articulated lorry trailer was doing. They'd have*

*been forgiven for thinking it was a giant robot transformer too, as it doubled in size and grew arms and legs in the process!"*

*"For me, when I first saw the scale of it, it's pretty impressive looking piece of kit and the branding of it attractive and stands out. When I went inside it was the layout, simple but it was going to be really exciting. When the computers rise, and the screens come alive with all the sound, it is really impressive."*

For more details about GSUS Live visit: [gsuslive.co.uk](https://gsuslive.co.uk)

# JUST A MINUTE

WITH STEPHEN GILLHAM

Senior evangelist Stephen Gillham and wife Jean officially joined Counties in July 1973 and are well known throughout the network for their involvement in Christian camps and schools work. Ignite finds out more about this remarkable ministry.



**What made you join Counties all those years ago?** I had been brought up in Dorset and went to university in Manchester where I met Jean, we were married and we worked in Lancashire for seven years. At that time the Dorset Counties' evangelists, Nelson & May Walker were not well and the marquee was not being used and we felt a real exercise to come back to Dorset for evangelism. This exercise was confirmed by our local church, by many churches in Dorset, and by the Counties trustees of the day.

**Has there been any highlights in your ministry?** Probably the most fruitful ministry was the commencement of Christian Camps in Dorset, which we began with the tremendous encouragement and help of Reg & Gladys Whittern. Jean and I led the camp work for 37 years and over 10,000 children came to our camps. We know of many who came to the Lord and a number are involved in full-time Christian service. I was also involved in the launch of the Postal Bible School Work in Dorset, which has developed into Bible Educational Services. I am now the Secretary of the Trust and our 'Bibletime lessons' are now used in over 60 countries in at least 30 different languages. It is thrilling to be part of that great ministry.

**You are known for all your schools work – why this particular ministry?** Being a teacher, I saw the potential of offering to take school assemblies and when we arrived in Dorset one of the Elders of our Church was a Head Teacher, he gave me some contacts and we had opportunities in most Infant and Junior schools across Dorset. We are still involved in the local schools for regular assemblies.

**Favourite Bible verse and why?** In our early days together, we tried to follow Hebrews 12:1-2 "... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus" and that has been our motivation ever since, during our 53 years of marriage.

**How do you relax?** We enjoy walking, reading, and spend most of our spare time either working together in our garden, or spending time with our son, daughter and two grandchildren in London.

**What does it mean to you to be part of the Counties family?** We were greatly influenced in our early days by Counties evangelists, such as Reg Whittern, David Wilcox, and David Iliffe. In the past, when trainees have come to us, we have tried to be a help and inspiration to them. The fellowship of evangelists over the years has been a great blessing to us. It was also a tremendous privilege to work with fellow evangelists for over 25 years on the Counties exhibitions.

# YOUR LOCAL EVANGELISTS

## ESSEX

Charles & Elizabeth Addoco  
Shaun & Livi Almond (ETP)  
Andrew & Rachel Mugford

## HERTFORDSHIRE

Will & Lynne Andrews  
Kim & Jo Hobbs

## HEREFORDSHIRE

Craig & Georgie Dowling

## SUFFOLK

Tim & Joy Ayrton  
Tony & Ruth Hood

## NORTH DEVON

Steve Ellacott (AE)  
David & Katie Symons

## CORNWALL

Jacquie & Tim Bodman (ETP)

## WILTSHIRE

Jonathan & Heather Brain

## WEST MIDLANDS

David & Lindsey Brown  
Andy & Isobel Hodson  
Paul & Vanessa Willmott

## DORSET

Ian & Sally Carr

## GREATER

## MANCHESTER

Tim & Charissa Cooke  
Martin & Angie Korchinsky  
Lee & Lesley Marsland (ETP)

## WARWICKSHIRE

Ivor & Angela Cooper

## CARDIFF

Clive & Fiona Cornish  
Mike & Janet Thomas (AE)

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Tim & Katrina Cracknell

## HAMPSHIRE

Jamie Broadey (ETP)  
Gordon & Penny Curley

## SWANSEA

Paul & Laura Davies  
Phil & Sheila Davies  
Steve & Gwyneth Treseder (AE)

## EAST YORKSHIRE

Julian & Elizabeth Gutteridge

## CAMBRIDGESHIRE

John Hardwick

## PEMBROKESHIRE

Janet Hawking (AE)

## BEDFORDSHIRE

Mark & Amanda Bingham (ETP)  
Colin & Linda Johnson

## BRISTOL

Steve & Dawn Loader

## LONDON

Caleb & Adanesh Mathewos  
(ETP)

## CUMBRIA

Matt & Nicola Rich

## SOMERSET

Mike & Su Strange

## WIRRAL

Robert & Sarah Watson

## SENIORS & WIDOWS

Grace Anderson, Tom & Madelene Bathgate, Jean Campbell, Roger & Hazel Chilvers, Lionel Clargo, Ray & Carol Dadswell, Stephen & Jean Gillham, Hettie Hall, Wendy Iliffe, Victor Jack, Andy & Miriam Jelfs, Phyllis Jenkins, John & Jane Martin, Ruby Powell, Betty Saunders, Bob & Rita Telford, Gladys Whittern.

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