

How to Avoid Being an Undercover Christian: Practical Tools for Sharing Your Faith Without Fear

Many Christians hide their faith at work or university, afraid to be public about their faith in Christ. This session examines a few of the reasons for those fears, before introducing delegates to some very powerful practical tools for conversational evangelism/apologetics that can be used by anybody.

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I. Introduction: The Undercover Christian

- A. Andy's personal story of hiding his faith in the workplace.
- B. What was I (and what are many Christians) afraid of?
 - 1. Fear of looking foolish
 - 2. Fear of making God look bad
 - 3. Fear of standing out
 - 4. Fear of the implications for our career
- C. The cultural pressures to silence on Christians
 - 1. Stephen Bullivant's (St. Mary's University, London) survey of young people in Europe
 - a. Majority aged 16-29 in twelve countries have "no religious faith"
 - b. In the UK, it's as high as 70%:
*Christianity as a default, as a norm, is gone, and probably gone for good – or at least for the next 100 years.*¹
- D. Given our increasingly secular culture, the temptation is for Christians to be silent.
 - 1. (Those of us in full-time Christian ministry can sometimes forget the challenges that Christians in the world of work or the university can face.)
 - a. The baggage associated with Christianity (e.g. politics)

¹ Cited in <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/21/christianity-non-christian-europe-young-people-survey-religion>

- b. Christians are fearful of being labelled things like homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic etc.

II. Tools for Evangelism:

- A. Case study: The Christian GP (family doctor) in Toronto, Canada
- B. The power of good questions
 - 1. Questions help the other person think, ponder, and consider their position
 - 2. Jesus used questions all the time
 - a. Matthew 22:15-22
 - b. Applying Jesus's technique to a real world conversation
 - i. The *right answer* to the *wrong question* is often unhelpful

III. Three Powerful Questions for Evangelistic Conversations

- A. Question 1: What do you mean by that?
- B. Question 2: Why do you think that?
- C. Question 3: Have you ever wondered?
 - 1. The “ghosts of transcendence” (Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*) that haunt our secular culture and which we use to open up spiritual conversations:
 - a. Joy
 - b. Hope
 - c. Beauty
 - d. Meaning
 - e. Truth
 - f. Love
 - g. Consciousness
 - h. Free Will
 - i. Justice
 - j. Ethics
 - i. Case study: the magazine editor in Washington DC
 - ii. Case study: the professor at University of Toronto
 - iii. Case study: the pub/café events that Solas runs across the UK

IV. Conclusions

- A. There are *huge* opportunities for Christians in the workplace or at university (not least because of how much time they spent there!)

- B. How work reveals our idols and the things that all of us (Christian or not) are sometimes tempted to worship. As the atheist postmodern novelist David Foster Wallace wrote:
- In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And an outstanding reason for choosing some sort of God or spiritual-type thing to worship ... is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things — if they are where you tap real meaning in life — then you will never have enough. Never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly, and when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally plant you ... Worship power — you will feel weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to keep the fear at bay. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart — you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. And so on.²*
- C. All of us make something the centre of our lives—and for many people it's work: that's where they find identity, significance, purpose, and so on.
- D. By contrast, the gospel says that work is a good thing (after all, God invented it) but it is not the ultimate thing—for human flourishing, we need to orientate our hearts correctly on the right thing. And I think the message that work is *not* the ultimate thing is a message that people are very ready and open to hearing.
- E. Case study: “The Pursuit of Happiness”
- F. The gospel and only the gospel offers answers to the deepest questions our friends are asking: about purpose, about meaning, about significance, about identity, about hope.
1. I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

² David Foster Wallace, *This is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009) 100-110.