

SPRING 2022

# IGNITE

SPARKING PASSION FOR THE GOSPEL  
ACROSS THE UK



## TALKING JESUS IN MOSQUES

COUNTIES EVANGELIST EXPLAINS HOW  
GOD IS OPENING DOORS TO MUSLIMS



ALSO WHY CHILDREN'S MINISTRY MATTERS  
GSUS LIVE – THE NEXT STAGE

# WELCOME TO IGNITE



"Counties – Making Jesus known across the UK," our mission statement reads. So why are some Counties evangelists on mission trips to Moldova, and why include a piece about it in Ignite (page 6).

David Brown, one of the contributors, told me in person that since the trip he has had a greater boldness in preaching the Gospel and asking for a response in his own evangelistic work in the West Midlands.

David's comments remind me of a statement made by a well-known Christian leader some years ago:

*"Every Christian minister or pastor should endeavour to be involved in mission overseas on a regular basis, particularly in the developing world."*

I couldn't agree more, and we are delighted that some Counties evangelists not only take these opportunities but have discovered the freshness and vitality that such a trip can bring to their work here in the UK.

Stephen McQuoid is a good friend. As well as being a Trustee of Counties, he leads the work of GLO Europe, a sister organisation to Counties.

Stephen's piece on answering difficult questions (page 20) is reason enough to pick up and read this copy of Ignite.

My prayer is that through these pages God may stimulate and encourage you to continue to share the Gospel of Jesus wherever you go.

Martin

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

Counties (Formerly Counties Evangelistic Work) is a Registered Charity No. 264278 and a Company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales No. 1041761  
Address: Counties 30 Haynes Road, Westbury, Wiltshire BA13 3HD  
Telephone: 01373 823 013 Email: [office@countiesuk.org](mailto:office@countiesuk.org) [www.countiesuk.org](http://www.countiesuk.org)  
Thank you for your valued partnership. We are glad to make Ignite available free of charge. It costs approximately £5 per year to produce and distribute this newsletter to you. Every additional contribution will help us continue in our mission.  
Editor: Rachel Rounds - [communications@countiesuk.org](mailto:communications@countiesuk.org)  
Design: Hullo Creative - [www.hullocreative.com](http://www.hullocreative.com)



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 6 How a trip to Moldova informed the work of three Counties evangelists here in UK
- 10 Counties Evangelist finding radical new ways to reach prisoners and ex-offenders
- 12 How God used social media to solve a problem with mums and toddlers
- 14 Why children's ministry matters and is often overlooked
- 18 Talking Jesus in mosques – the remarkable ministry of a Counties evangelist
- 20 Counties Trustee, Stephen McQuoid, shares about how to tackle the hard questions
- 24 GSUS LIVE – the new phase is up and running successfully
- 26 Just a Minute with Stephen and Debbie McQuoid



## MARCUS RASHFORD INSPIRES GLOUCESTERSHIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAPLAINS

AS ANDREW CONLAND, PARTNERSHIP SOUTH WEST COORDINATOR, EXPLAINS



The Man United footballer, Marcus Rashford has been the very prominent face behind the push to get the government to provide free school meals for those who need it.

Here, at Abbey Church in Gloucester, Neighbourhood Chaplains have been involved in trying to help stop people going hungry.

We set up Neighbourhood Chaplains to try and make links to the people in our community, to find opportunities to show God's love in action and in the Gospel.

So, because of seeking to help in 2020, during the pandemic, we were asked if we could assist with the Holiday Activity & Food program in the summer holidays, which we did.

It was a challenge but by God's grace it went well. The week before

Christmas, we were asked if we could provide meals with indoor and outdoor activities. This was an even bigger challenge not least because of Covid.

But, for two days, we served a Christmas meal, enjoyed craft activities and played games.

We were delighted that Counties evangelist, Paul Willmott, who works in schools, came along with his friends, Kato and Twist, and made us all laugh - and no one caught Covid! Coming up - the Easter holiday programme as we look to continue to build our links with these families.



Paul Willmott

## SEEING GOD DO MIRACLES WITH THE HOMELESS

As a community pastor in Oldham, Lee Marsland, Counties evangelist, regularly goes out with members of the local church onto the streets to share the Gospel.

Recently, a rough sleeper, Nick Taylor, was referred to Lee's church, looking for food, shelter, clean clothes etc.

They help him with his practical needs and shared the Gospel with him.

A group of them prayed with Nick, that a door would open and within 24 hours, a self-contained council flat

came free. Nick came to church the following Sunday and gave his life to Jesus. He now helps at the soup kitchen in Oldham.

Last week, he asked Lee and a few others to pray for an ongoing, severe pain. Lee says:

*"He felt the fire of the Holy Spirit. He didn't know what it was because he's new to the Holy Spirit; but he felt this burning sensation all over his body and pain completely left him instantly. God has done an amazing work."*

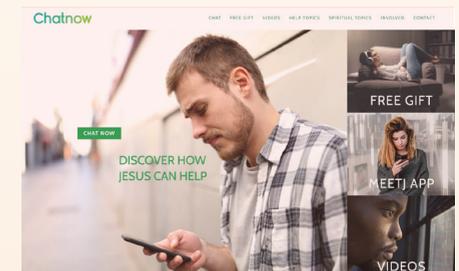
## COUNTIES EVANGELIST MATT RICH IN CUMBRIA RE-LAUNCHES CHATNOW.ORG

The new [Chatnow.org](https://chatnow.org) website is now up and running. Chatnow provides people with the opportunity to chat live, anonymously, and privately at any time of day or night with a Christian volunteer.

It was set up to help people with questions, fears, and worries. And people, who are feeling lost, addicted, sad, confused and in pain. Pointing them to the hope and peace that can only be found in Jesus.

**Matt says:**

*"The previous website was still serving us reasonably well, but five years without a re-fresh is a long time online."*



*"The new website is designed specifically with the mobile version in mind, although it now looks and works well on all devices - mobile and desktop."*

Visit the website now as it's offering a free gift of a one-year subscription to the Bible listening app Dwell (normal cost £30).



## HOW A TRIP TO MOLDOVA INFORMED THE WORK OF THREE COUNTIES EVANGELISTS HERE IN UK

**Bob Telford, Gordon Curley and David Brown** tell Ignite how their recent trip to Moldova has informed and inspired their work as evangelists here in the UK.

### What led you to Moldova initially?

**Bob Telford:** I was invited by the leader of the Moldovan Mission to preach at the missions he was arranging in the south of the country, about six years ago. I have been back several times to preach since then, and it has been incredibly fruitful.

**Gordon Curley:** Because our remit is to go into all the world and preach the Gospel and take the opportunities that come along. Our emphasis is in the UK, but doors open up elsewhere.

**David Brown:** It's the first proper mission trip I have done abroad and initially I thought: "They have great pastors, who are very evangelistic, over there so why do they need us?" But the reason given by the Moldovans is "Because they often respond really well to foreigners!" And it is a bit like the verse: 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own town'.

### What do you do when you go there?

**Bob Telford:** The evangelistic missions are called FRANKs Missions (friends, relatives, associates, neighbours and kids). Church believers are encouraged

to pray for 12 people, for 12 weeks. Then they are invited to come into a private home to hear the Gospel - which we preach (with a translator).

We then invite people to make a prayer of commitment out loud and indicate they have done that. Local pastors then invite those who have, to start attending a series of discipleship classes, which take them deeper into Christianity. On our last trip over 1200 people heard the Gospel and over 500 indicated that they wanted to follow Christ.

**Many people might think that culturally Moldova is very different to the UK, so the lessons you have learned are not applicable here, how would you respond?**

**Bob Telford:** If we were to say what happens in Moldova can solely be attributed to cultural factors then there isn't much we can learn from that.

When I have been out there and people were responding in significant numbers, however, I asked some of the pastors: "Is this normal for Moldova?" They said it wasn't. That really encouraged me, because if it's not a cultural thing, then it's a God thing, and that means it can also happen in this country.

### So how has it impacted your ministry here in the UK?

**Bob Telford:** It has made me a better evangelist. It sharpens my cutting edge. I believe that when the Gospel is crisply and sharply presented, God will work. We have a culture of reflection here in our churches where we ask people to go away and think about what they have heard, which is important. But we also need a culture of response where we say to people: "Stay here and do something about it".





**David Brown:** Seeing the responsiveness of people to the Gospel was phenomenal. The Bible was preached so clearly and obviously I try and do that here, but it was seeing people so responsive that I am not so used to, and it really helped me.

The first service I preached at when we came back was a Christmas Carol Service and I asked people to respond. Two children indicated they had. It gave me that confidence to go for it and not feel embarrassed if no one responds because, ultimately, it's

down to the Lord. If I look stupid, too bad. I'll live with that.

**What lessons are for us all here?**

**Bob Telford:** On the past trip I found that one of the people who had prayed a prayer of commitment, had died two days later. I felt so blessed that I hadn't just said: "Go away and think about it".

So, I would say the lessons are: Soak everything we do in prayer; have the courage and the faith to reach out to others and invite them to do something; and use the simple,



uncluttered Gospel, stripped down to the basics, because it is tremendously powerful.

**Gordon Curley:** Personal preparation and adaptation. Counties evangelist, Ivor Cooper told me not to worry about preparing sermons because I knew the Gospel. Instead, he said I needed to prepare myself to adapt to whatever situation I found myself in.

So, for example, when I go to Speakers' Corner, in London, there is always an unpredictability. I usually talk to Muslims, but I may end up talking to an atheist. I know the Gospel, but I ask God to help me to seek to apply it to whoever comes my way that day. Prepare, do your homework, and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in whatever situation you get into.

**David Brown:** Pray more because we don't pray enough, and that's a challenge to me. We need to be more committed and consistent in praying specifically for specific people.





## Counties Evangelist, Kim Hobbs, tells Ignite how he is helping convicts to find Jesus in radical new ways.

**The rehabilitation of prisoners is a divisive issue and what Kim Hobbs calls: "Tabloid newspaper politics – where a widely held but lazy idea is to 'lock 'em up and throw away the key'".**

Kim, however, says: "The terrible acts of some offenders are incredible and yet simply show the ugly side of humanity". Reminding us of Mark 2:17 where Jesus teaches: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners".

Kim's work began as a befriending and mentoring service for ex-offenders in 2013.

In the course of this work, Kim began to realise that for those prisoners who were nearing the end of their term: "There were some real missing elements, without which, we would all struggle to build a life of contentment and satisfaction".

This led Kim and his Christian colleagues to offer a local prison, what they are now calling: 'The

Resettlement Course'. It was piloted with four prisoners in November 2021.

*"We teach and explore with prisoners these significant issues about life and then we support them as they leave prison and start their lives in the community. Prison authorities have been positive about the programme and supportive of the pilot."*

*"Over the years we have seen how chaotic and ill-prepared for life many prisoners are. Their upbringing can often make them ill-prepared for life."*

*"I have spoken to so many prisoners who have no connection with one or both parents; who have bitter relationships; or who have mental health problems, no education; or who have drug, gambling or alcohol addictions."*

The course is designed to help inmates cope with these kinds of issues upon their release.

They cover issues like: 'Who am I?' 'What do I believe?' and 'What are the things that motivate me to build a positive relationship?'

*"Having established this we then talk about what tools are needed to help a prisoner live a productive and fulfilling life."*

The course then looks at employment, building social skills, relationships, negotiation, and confrontation.

Kim says, "We talk about regret and saying 'sorry'".

Kim says that recently the team of volunteers went off to a café to get lunch after a resettlement session in the prison. They were chatting about how the course was going when a young man, Jon, shouted over to them: "You guys are amazing!"

He said: "I wish I had known people like you when I was there."

The team chatted to Jon and gave him a contact card. Later, the team tried several times to meet up with Jon and eventually he admitted his job had fallen through and he was slipping back into drink, but he has been in touch several times so we are maintaining the connection and hopefully he will eventually accept friendship and help.

Kim is now considering a session around the topic of 'Brave Love'.

*"Love is something we all crave, and we can't live without it. But we need to understand that love is imperfect. So, we need to understand how to handle love and succeed in love and connection with people which is an important tool for life."*

*"We never thought we would talk to these guys about love. One of them said to us: 'No one has told us we were worthwhile.' And another said:*

*'I feel brand new.'"*

These opportunities allow Kim and the team to talk to prisoners openly and outside of prison about Jesus. If he is sitting with someone for an hour, in a café for example, he will always talk about his faith.

On Monday nights Kim invites ex-offenders to his local Christian men's group and they are blown away by the integrity, honesty and kindness that Christian men show to each other in an informal way. This helps them to explore Christianity casually because it is threaded through the whole evening.

Kim willingly shares his own faith with anyone who asks, and many are invited to church. Kim says that over the last few years several people have come to know Jesus because they have got to know him and other Christians in prison and when they leave.

*"In some cases, this instantly changes their lives. They become less chaotic, they will embrace Christian thoughts and beliefs and often find work and stability through Jesus."*

Kim is now setting up an addiction recovery group with friends called 'Living Recovery'.

*"We will seek Jesus together, worship the Lord together, look at our Bibles, and understand that because of Jesus we are loved and accepted by God. We will also celebrate Jesus and ask Him for resilient recovery in our lives."*



## Reaching out to new mums provided Mike Strange, a Counties Evangelist in Somerset, with a problem – God found the answer.

**Mike and his wife Su attend the church plant, Meare Community Church. When they began their ministry, they decided the strategy would be to get involved in village activities, rather than start up new ones of their own.**

Meare and the neighbouring village of Westhay, however, didn't have an existing toddler group and the church soon discovered that a neighbour to the chapel, and a lady already attending the church, both have pre-school children. This gave them the impetus to set up a toddler group, as they could see there was an unmet need within the community.

Mike says: "I had been to an activity called 'Music with Mother' with our grandchildren in the past. It's a time of interactive singing with pre-school children and their parents or carers.

*Everyone sits in a circle, and somebody leads the music and singing. I had done something similar many years ago with my guitar, so we decided to do that and call it 'Music with Mike'".*

The idea was for Mike to lead the group with a mixture of traditional nursery rhymes and songs, along with Christian songs: "You need a phenomenal number of songs to fill the time" laughs Mike.

*"We launched it, put up posters and advertised in our village magazine and website. We also put it on our own church website. So, on Monday 6 September 2021 we got ready and waited for people to turn up. Nobody came that day or for the next two Mondays. It was so disappointing. All the work we had done setting up made it a real blow".*

Mike adds that they had been additionally excited because of the two years' work that had gone into radically overhauling the Chapel which hadn't been updated since the 1850s.

*"Electric lights had been installed at some point but even they had been condemned by the electrician. The building simply wasn't fit for purpose. During Covid, however, the Chapel had been repainted, we had new doors, rotten wood removed, the fixed pulpit removed, and the pipe organ had been rehomed elsewhere.*

*"This meant we had a useable platform space at the front for our worship group and other uses. We also installed a new projector and screen, and, most importantly, a new heating system and lighting which didn't come from the ark! So, this was the first time we got to use the building for community purposes."*

Mike admits the church hadn't used Facebook to make parents aware of the new group. He had come off the social media site because "I found that I was taking photographs of stuff I was doing just to put on Facebook. That's not good".

But Mike decided to go back on site and a new church Facebook page was

set up. The church also used the village Facebook group.

The moment they did that, people starting to ask about the toddler group. Mike says there was a lot of interest and the following Monday nine people, and their children turned up. "That may not sound a lot, but for a little village like ours, it is a big deal." Mike says.

*"Since then, we have had a good number of people turning up every week and new people also joining because word has got around. We have wonderful conversations as there is a Christian lady in our group who is, frankly, a better evangelist than me. The two of us run the group together. Anyone, who comes across her path, sooner or later is going to be told about Jesus."*

Mike adds: "The big lesson for me was that I had to come down off my high horse and use Facebook because this is the way our community talks to each other."

And God is now using Mike's new found enthusiasm to share Jesus with parents and children in their community - sowing seeds for the Lord to grow.





## WHY CHILDREN'S MINISTRY MATTERS AND IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED

**John Hardwick, Counties Evangelist based in Cambridge, tells Ignite why children's ministry is so important and often overlooked.**

**John, share with us a bit about your background.**

My dad was really into drama, and I performed as a teenager. I followed my father into the construction industry but decided to join the Saltmine Trust drama group for five years. I always loved music and drama, and as a child I learned to juggle. I always had a 'funny face'. One day I was asked by a head teacher in my church if I wanted to take a school assembly and I did because I realised that I could use all these skills that I'd developed over the years. The children loved it and I discovered I had a gift that enabled me to perform in front of up to 400 children.

**So where did it go from there?**

My overall aim, for my ministry, has always been to present the Gospel in an exciting and engaging way which will appeal to children and people of all ages whether they have a long background of church or none. So, after my time with Saltmine, Counties approached me to join them, and I did.

**So why are you so passionate about children's work?**

Because Jesus was. When his disciples were squabbling over who was the greatest, he didn't say "Moses" or "Elijah", he said unless you change and become like children, you'll never enter Heaven, or he said: "And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me".

And somehow the church doesn't always seem to focus on the fact that

these children, at the very beginning of their lives, should be the key focal point of our ministry and sometimes they get totally overlooked. I have had the privilege of leading all-age worship at Spring Harvest, where two men also became Christians. I know that you can engage people of all ages together if you learn to communicate. So, children should be very much engaged in the first twenty minutes of our church services before they leave for Sunday School.

**What other inspiration do you take from Jesus?**

One of the most wonderful pictures in the Bible is all the religious leaders in the Temple eagerly sitting and listening to a twelve-year-old boy. How many times have we all been blown away by profound things our young children say to us?

I often ask people: "When Jesus was sharing the story of the Lost Sheep, who was his audience?" And they will say "children" or "parents" or even "shepherds". But Jesus shared a story about a lost sheep with the religious leaders. We wouldn't dream of doing that now. But if you look at that simple story, you have the whole message of the Gospel in there. Simple is often very powerful. Everyone engages with stories on their own level – children, teenagers and adults – including the businessman who got saved at Spring Harvest.

**What other work do you do aside from live shows?**

Over lockdown I invested in a Green Screen – which they use in the movies

and allows me to project myself onto any background – I produced a video of the story of Jonah. I dressed as him and had a big fish swallow me. For 25 years I have also been producing DVDs and musical CDs because the songs you learn as a child stay with you for the rest of your life and I lead a lot of seminars on the importance of music for children. I have hundreds of mainly Bible verse songs on YouTube. The whole idea is to teach them to children. I had a parent get in touch to say that her child had got through the A level RE because of all the Bible verses they had learned at my holiday clubs.

**So, sum up how you see your ministry?**

The whole idea of my ministry is to try and guide people at the beginning of their lives to God's path and to lay a firm foundation upon which God can work. It's not necessary to convert them, although ultimately, I'd love to, my job is to show them God's way. I teach them Bible stories and songs, and engage them, so that as they move on in life that firm foundation is there for them even if they might wander away at times. That's a real privilege.

For resources or to book John in person please contact: [www.johnhardwick.org](http://www.johnhardwick.org)





## TALKING JESUS IN MOSQUES

It's hard to believe that a Christian regularly talks about Jesus in mosques but that's exactly what Julian Gutteridge, East Riding Counties Evangelist, does every week. He tells Ignite the story.

**Julian grew up as an atheist in Sedgley in the West Midlands. He hated anything related to Christianity, faith or church. At school he was taught the theory of atheistic evolution which led him to the conclusion that there was no God, even though he had gone to Sunday School as a child.**

Julian used to argue with his mum, who prayed for him to become a Christian for 17 years. The Lord answered her prayer when Julian went along to a youth conference at an Evangelical Methodist Church, only because his friends, who were going to play table tennis, called him a "coward" for refusing to go.

*"It was the place the Lord had ordained it for me to hear the Gospel and come to know the Lord through an ex-drug addict, on a cold February morning in 1980 or 81. There was no minister there to pray for me, so I got on my knees one night and prayed:*

*"God if you are there, come into my heart and change me. I want to trust in Jesus. I don't know how you do this but please change my life." And the Lord answered that prayer. I felt completely washed inside."*

Julian's prayer was certainly answered. He began working with Muslims in 1994 whilst serving with London City Mission. He was "thrown in at the deep end" working with the Pakistani and other Muslim communities to reach out with the Gospel.

*"God gave me such a love and passion for them that now it doesn't matter where they are coming from, somehow I am able to establish relationships and always share my faith with them."*

Julian now shares his powerful testimony of an atheist becoming a Christian, with Muslims in the mosques he visits which he says is amazing.

He adds: *"What makes it more powerful is that I was racist before. I didn't want any Muslims or Asians in our country, but I am able to share that with Muslims in the mosques now. It helps me to build up friendships with them and let them see Jesus shining in my life and they can see the Christ-like character in me. I am not perfect, none of us are, but that's good because then it becomes more truthful."*

The fact that, as a Christian, Julian is even allowed to talk about Jesus in a mosque is remarkable. Julian emphasises that normally he would never go in a mosque and relies on door-to-door visits, but the Lord opened a door:

*"I was very reluctant to start with because it's an occult religion but there was a local Sunni Islamic leader who got into a debate with a local minister. The Islamic leader challenged him to a debate on the Crucifixion: fact or fiction."*

*"However, the minister didn't feel he knew enough to do it. But he knew*

about me and asked me. So, I prayed about it, and I met up with a local Sunni Muslim to chat about it. He got into what I call "verbal Jihad" with me - shouting Islam at me.

"That led to the first dialogue meeting about the Crucifixion which was about ten years ago now. I asked them that rather than have a debate, which would end up in 'theological ping-pong', why didn't we choose a subject and each talk separately about it, and then have a Q and A session afterwards."

Since then, there have been around 12 more dialogue meetings. The penultimate meeting was on the message of the Quran and the Bible, and it was attended by 25 Muslims and 10 Christians. Julian and his team took 35 Gideons Bibles with them and 25 were taken away.

Three dialogue meetings have also been held in a Shia mosque and with Sufi Muslims, with whom there have been four dialogue meetings. Julian is now doing some secret Bible studies with some of these men and two have started coming to church because they want to know what Christianity teaches.

For the last three years, Julian has also invited some of the men from the local Turkish centre for a meal to celebrate



the birth of Jesus, who they believe was a prophet. Julian's wife, Ella, is a great Middle Eastern cook and makes Halal food. Last Christmas, twenty people, including women came along and heard Julian talk about the Wise Men. They gave out presents, played silly party games and some of them were asked to play Turkish music.

"We just wanted to enjoy Christmas with them. And, in turn, they invited me to a men's Turkish breakfast. And Ella has a Turkish breakfast with Sunni Muslim women every Wednesday. She also helps them with conversational English. What a privilege to have a Christian woman in their centre doing that. They really want to talk, and she is able to pray for them."

Julian also attends their centre every Friday.

"Obviously, I don't participate in any of their acts of worship because that could be dangerous. But the number of conversations I have and the questions they ask me is amazing. They know about the apostles, and once they said: 'We know that some of them used to live in Turkey so could you do a message on that, and I did. One of the men was fascinated that Paul came from Antioch because that's where he was from. So, it connects with them.'"

Julian says he is regularly asked the same questions: "How can you say Jesus is the Son of God?" as they think it implies that God had a biological relationship with Mary, which is blasphemy to them and to us. But he adds that they are always really surprised to learn that the word 'son' doesn't mean that, but that he is the eternal Son of God, the Messiah.

He is also asked about what Muslims call the 'corruption' of the Bible. Julian uses passages from the Quran to show them that it hasn't been corrupted and emphasises to them that Mohammed tells Jews and Christians to stand by it: "So, if it had been corrupted, why would he tell them to stand fast by it?"

Julian also quotes from the earliest Islamic scholars and

points out that they never charge the Torah and the Gospels with being corrupted: "Quoting from their sources is very powerful" he adds.

Julian is also adamant that if Christians are going to reach Muslims, we need to know what they believe and why they believe it. We also need to know our scriptures well. But being able to share his testimony and the love of Jesus inside is still a miracle for Julian.

"I never thought that this would happen in the middle of a mosque, but it does and that's down to God."





## COUNTIES TRUSTEE, STEPHEN MCQUOID DELVES INTO HOW, AS CHRISTIANS WE TACKLE ANSWERING LIFE'S DIFFICULT QUESTIONS.

**A big part of the work of an evangelist is to answer questions. As we engage with people and share the good news of Jesus, it provokes questions which need to be answered. Some of these questions are straightforward, others are much more difficult, and it is these that we need to be very careful with. So how do we tackle thorny questions?**

### What kind of Question?

Firstly, it depends on the motivation of the questioner and the nature of the question. When it comes to the motivation of the questioner the reality is that we won't always know exactly why they are asking the question, so we need to be cautious and listen carefully.

However, it is true to say that while some people ask genuine questions, others ask questions just to trip us up.

Jesus himself experienced this many times in his ministry (Matthew: 22:15-17).

In such a situation, rather than falling naively into the trap, it is better to challenge the validity of the question and then respond in a way that does not compromise or weaken your position. Maintaining control of the conversation in this way is exactly what Jesus did (Matthew 22:18-22).

Then we come to the nature of the question. Assuming the questioner is genuine, the question itself can vary greatly. It could be a question about theology, e.g. What did Jesus do between his death and Resurrection? Or it could be intellectual, e.g. Did Jesus really feed 5,000 people with a small lunch? Or it could be emotional, e.g. Why did God give me a daughter only for her to die of leukemia at 18 months?

The difference between the first two and the third is the emotional baggage it carries. It is a question I was asked by a lovely lady after she had listened to me preach about the love of God in an open-air outreach on the streets of Malta.

### I'm Hurting

I will single out the emotional type of question because it is the most difficult. Intellectual debates can be conducted on a purely rational basis devoid of emotional heat. However, if someone asks a question that stems from a deep hurt, they have experienced, we need to approach it in a very different way. This is not about winning an argument, but rather winning a person, and we will not do so if we just add to their hurts.

We need to answer such questions with real empathy, just as Jesus did in John 11:32-35, when he went to visit the grave of his friend Lazarus. When he saw the agony of the two sisters and listened to their struggles, he was deeply moved and wept. We also need to avoid any shallow answers because they do not help. Indeed, sometimes it is better to admit that we don't have an answer that will satisfy than come out with a platitude.

What we can do, however, is acknowledge that the world is broken and full of hurts and injustices that are inexplicable and that is precisely how the Bible describes it (Romans 8:22-23) and why Jesus died (Isaiah 53:5).

His death was to ultimately deal with the hurts of our world. In the meantime, God understands our suffering and cares about it (Psalm 56:8) and because of the incarnation He knows what suffering feels like.

Indeed, in that conversation I had with the lady in Malta, I assured her that God understands what it is like to lose a child. Above all God loves us and acts on his love (John 3:16) and we need to hold on to that truth in our darkest days.

### Tough Questions

We now turn to the other questions that come up. While that may not be laden with emotion, they may contain some and they can still be difficult questions and varied. Just a small selection of questions I have been asked would include:

- My neighbour died last week and was a wonderful man, but he didn't believe in your God, so is he in hell?
- Why does God hate gay people?
- Why is the Bible so sexist?
- Why did God demand ethnic cleansing in the Old Testament?
- Is it not dangerous to be blindly obedient to your imaginary friend?
- Why are some Christians so horrible?

How do we even begin to tackle such questions?

## Tone

The starting point is to consider our tone. Again, we are trying to win a person not a point. So, we need to start off on the right footing which is our attitude towards the person. Without sounding glib, I want to state that we need to be people who clearly believe in hope.

We have all experienced struggles and doubts in life, but if Christians can't be full of hope, then who can? Jesus is King, He is our friend and has guaranteed us an eternal future!!! How can we not be hopeful in the face of that reality?

Peter recognized that true Christians have hope (1 Peter 3:15) and that will draw people's attention and curiosity. But note, he also states that in the face of questions, we not only need to 'revere Christ as Lord', but that is also, be resolutely committed to Christ.

We also need to respond to people with 'gentleness and respect' (1 Peter 3:15). That must always be our tone. Never belittle, never embarrass, never raise your voice and never be intimidating. Instead smile, be warm, love and be joyful. Also reach out relationally.

When Jesus began his important and thorny dialogue with the ostracized and hurting woman at the well (John 4) He began just by asking for a drink of water (v.7). His gentle relational approach opened a door.

**1 Peter 3:15** *"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."*

## Answer the Question

The question still needs to be answered. Space would not allow me to give sample answers to the many difficult questions people ask, this after all is an article not a book. What I will do is lay down some principles that I think are important.

Firstly, don't fall into the common evangelical trap of being culturally illiterate. I have sometimes been embarrassed to hear well-meaning Christians ham-fistedly spouting verbiage about their view of the world

and its questions when what they say does not address what is really going on in the world.

It is interesting that when Paul was in Athens (Acts 17) he quoted the great poets and thinkers of Athenian culture (v.28) as well as referring to their cultural and religious icons (v.23). In other words, he understood the heartbeat of the culture. It pays to spend a bit of time reading good newspapers, magazines, blogs, books by non-Christians, follow key thinkers on Twitter and YouTube and listen to workmates and neighbours.

Secondly, make sure in answering the question that you immediately correct and nuance. For example, God doesn't hate gays he loves them and so should we, but we need to nuance the answer by talking about the best that God wants for us. Likewise, the Bible is not sexist and neither does it support ethnic cleansing. We just need to read it properly.

Thirdly, be honest with people. If you hide behind inadequate answers people will conclude you have something to hide. Some biblical answers are hard and even unpalatable but be honest and

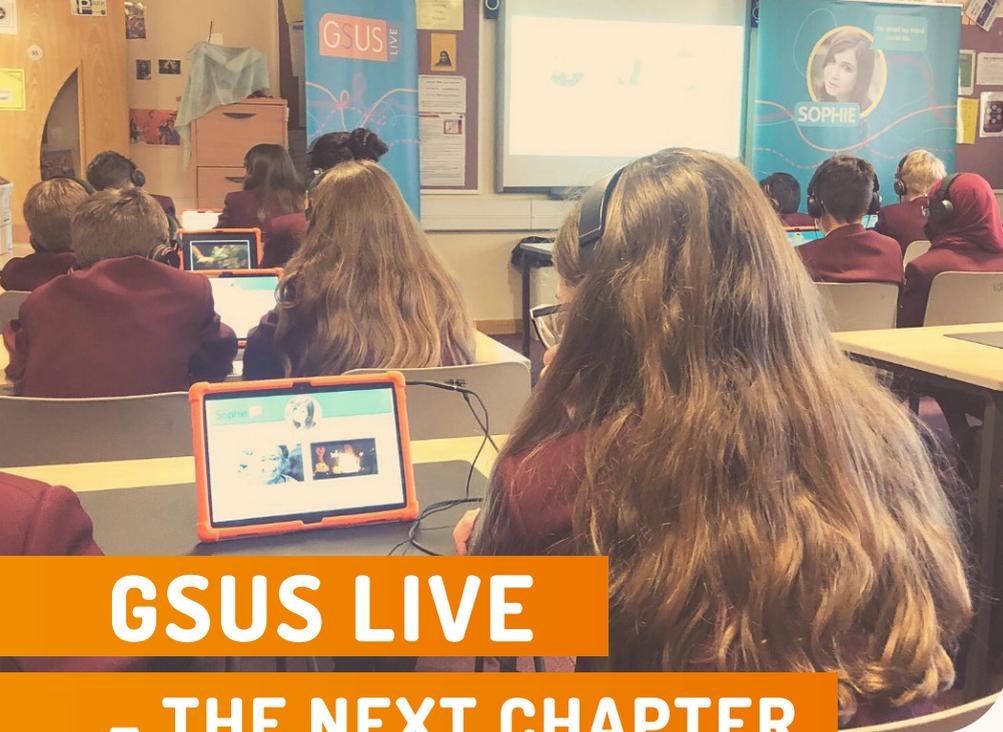
gentle, as well as careful to convey the truth of scripture.

Also, be honest if you don't know the answer. Lots of people don't know things, but it doesn't stop them from acting on what they do know.

Fourthly, be willing to be vulnerable. Personally, there are things I read in the Bible that I am uncomfortable with. There are even things that I cannot justify. However, there is still enough to assure me that God is love and that is enough.

Fifthly, be biblical. By that, I mean, say what the Bible says, but don't go beyond what it says. If someone asks: "Is my neighbour who didn't go to church now in hell?" I cannot just say yes. I believe in hell, I believe that Christ is the only way of salvation, and that God will always be just (Genesis 18:25) but I don't know what went on in that person's life at the end, so I can't answer that question hypothetically.

Finally, include in your answer God's plan to save and bless. However hard the question, our faith rests on the goodness of God.



# GSUS LIVE

## – THE NEXT CHAPTER

**Dave Thomas, GSUS Live co-ordinator, shares how the next stage is developing in schools.**

**Dave – now the old units have been decommissioned GSUS Live is moving into an exciting new phase. Tell us about it?**

We are now piloting using 16 tablets in schools. They are essentially mini-computers which all run the same programme. It is like you are talking to someone on the tablet with three characters called Ben, Sophie and Jack. Each of the characters are struggling with a problem: fear, rejection or forgiveness and the students respond by pressing on the screen.

**So then what happens?**

The students engage with each of the characters alongside Bible stories such as Jairus daughter. Then the stories of women like: Malala Yousufzai, who was targeted and nearly killed by the Taliban for supporting education for girls, Florence Nightingale, Rosa Parks and Corrie Ten Boom – which all relate to fear.

With the topic of forgiveness, we look at the story of the paralysed man alongside Nelson Mandela, Gandhi,

William Wilberforce and Judge Greg Mathis.

The students are then asked by the characters: *"Should I forgive my brother? Should I hit him? Should I ignore him? Should I follow a different path?"*

So, it's helping them to engage with Christian themes in an innovative way.

**Sixteen tablets cost a lot of money but may not reach that many students, so how do you arrange it to maximise the amount of young people who engage with GSUS Live?**

The tablets can be in one school for a week or just a couple of days. It's up to the local churches, who arrange the visits, to decide. So, they will either go into one school for the whole week or multiple schools and focus on a particular year group. The church group will have the tablets for between three to six weeks depending on the size of the location. For example, we will be in Swansea for seven weeks, visiting seven schools.

On average we can get 500 students through the programme every week. The students use the tablets in pairs which enables them to discuss how they are going to react and respond.

**How does this compare to the big articulated lorries?**

The tablets are much more flexible. Historically we would have been in

one school for a week and an area would have to be able to arrange six to seven weeks; now churches can have them for just three weeks one year and agree to have them back the following year.

**So, what kind of feedback has GSUS Live programme had?**

**Recent quotes from pupils,**

*"This has made me think that I'm not an atheist".*

*"I liked learning about the stories from the Bible. As someone who is not a Christian, I felt it helped me understand Christianity more".*

**Feedback from local churches**

*"The tablet form of GSUS Live gives so much more flexibility in moving between split-site schools and even between different schools in the time that we have it booked. The resource has such a good reputation locally that it is in huge demand and the new format offers us more flexibility in covering more schools".*

*"I've now hosted GSUS Live a number of times in the Shropshire region and I'm excited to have the resource again, in this new, easily transportable version. I'm confident that schools will welcome the chance to engage with the programme again".*

For more information about the new GSUS Live contact Dave at: [gsuslive@countiesuk.org](mailto:gsuslive@countiesuk.org)

# JUST A MINUTE

WITH

TRUSTEE STEPHEN AND, HIS WIFE, DEBBIE MCQUOID



Stephen is a Counties Trustee and has been involved with the organisation for 35 years. He and Debbie have 3 children and live in Motherwell.

Stephen, we read a fantastic article from you earlier in the magazine about tackling the hard questions non-Christians might ask us. So how did you become a Christian?

**Stephen:** I went to a conference in Dublin because I'd heard Dublin was a great city. It turned out, however, that it was County Dublin and we ended up in the middle of nowhere with a couple of hundred young Christians. I didn't want to be there and didn't go to the sessions but, over the four days I was there, I saw such genuine Christianity and loveliness from my peers. My desire to become a Christian was seeing Christ mirrored in the lives of all those young people. I was desperate to have what they had.

**Tell us about yourself Debbie:**

**Debbie:** I have been a Christian since I was 13. I grew up in a Christian home, in the Rhondda Valley, South Wales. My Christian life only really started when I was nursing in my mid-twenties. I went on Oak Hall Holidays to Zimbabwe and that had a huge impact on my life and what I was doing.

**What's impacted you the most during your time as a Trustee?**

Being with Counties people, I love the conferences. There is such a diverse group of evangelists doing different things. Evangelism is quite tough. So, to be part of an organisation where everyone is specifically focused on evangelism, and

have a passion for it, makes me so invigorated – especially when I go and meet evangelists individually. This percolates through to my work as a Trustee. We are massively focused on evangelism and never losing sight of what Counties is trying to do.

**What does being part of the Counties family mean to you?**

It's intriguing because evangelists tend to be rugged individuals. They will have strong opinions and argue the most because they are on the frontline and have to be strong people. And yet they do care deeply for one another. When I phone evangelists and ask to meet there is a real genuine warmth. Counties has a great sense of family and respect for each other's ministries.

**What is your favourite Bible verse and why?**

**Debbie:** Deuteronomy 32:2

*Let my teaching fall on you like rain;*

*let my speech settle like dew.*

*Let my words fall like rain on tender grass,  
like gentle showers on young plants.*

My passion is discipleship. I have been running a Precepts Bible study group and seeing how the word of God needs to settle and take root. This verse encapsulates everything I feel passionate about. It's also my own personal prayer that God would really impact and change me.

**Stephen:** 2 Corinthians 5:17

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

That has always been a massive reminder of what my salvation involves.

# YOUR LOCAL EVANGELISTS

## NORTH OF ENGLAND

Julian & Ella Gutteridge  
Martin & Angie Korchinsky  
Lee & Lesley Marsland  
Matt & Nicola Rich  
Aaron & Rachel Shah (AE)  
Rob & Sarah Watson  
Phyllis Jenkins (Senior)

## MIDLANDS

David & Lindsey Brown  
Ivor & Angela Cooper  
Tim & Katrina Cracknell  
Andy & Isobel Hodson  
Paul & Vanessa Willmott  
Roger & Hazel Chilvers (Seniors)  
Bob & Rita Telford (Seniors)

## SOUTH EAST

Charles & Elizabeth Addoco  
Shaun & Livi Almond (AE)  
Will & Lynne Andrews  
Tim & Joy Ayrton  
Mark & Amanda Bingham  
John Hardwick  
Kim & Jo Hobbs  
Tony & Ruth Hood  
Colin & Linda Johnson  
Caleb & Adanesh Mathewos  
Andrew & Rachel Mugford  
Madelene Bathgate (Senior)  
Lionel Clargo (Senior)  
Ray & Carol Dadswell (Seniors)  
Wendy Iliffe (Senior)  
Victor Jack (Senior)  
Andy & Miriam Jelfs (Seniors)

AE – Associate Evangelist  
ETP – Evangelists' Training Programme

John & Jane Martin (Seniors)  
Betty Saunders (Senior)  
Gladys Whittern (Senior)

## SOUTH WEST

Jacque & Tim Bodman  
Steve Ellacott (AE)  
Mike & Su Stange  
David & Katie Symons  
Jean Campbell (Senior)

## SOUTH CENTRAL

Jonathan & Heather Brain  
Jamie Broadey (AE)  
Ian & Sally Carr  
Gordon & Penny Curley  
Steve & Dawn Loader  
Stephen & Jean Gillham (Seniors)  
Hettie Hall (Senior)

## WALES

Clive & Fiona Cornish  
Paul & Laura Davies  
Phil & Sheila Davies  
Janet Hawking (AE)  
Mike & Jan Thomas (AE)  
Steve & Gwyn Treseder (AE)  
Grace Anderson (Senior)

## EVANGELIST TRAINING PROGRAMME

Keith & Sarah Baker  
Gabriel Bennett  
Stevie & Natalie Walker

PARTNER WITH US AND THOSE WHO LIVE BY FAITH

## SUBSCRIBE

Please send me:

- Ignite Magazine and Praise & Prayer diary by post (please fill in address)  
 Monthly newsletter by email

## MY DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other
Name
Address
Postcode
Telephone
Email

Your details will be kept on our database and may be shared with a local Counties Evangelist, but with no other persons or organisations.

- Please remove me from your mailing list

## MY GIFT

I would like to partner with Counties. Please find enclosed my/our gift of

£
---

(please make cheques payable to Counties)

To give online by debit or credit card visit [countiesuk.org](http://countiesuk.org)

## Gift Aid

- This is a Gift-Aid donation (We will send you a gift-aid declaration, if you have not already completed one).  
 I would like to set up a regular standing order.

Your feedback is always appreciated.

THANK YOU

# TEAM

Training | Evangelism | Mission

## DON'T MISS OUT ON OUR NEW TASTER SESSION

ARE YOU, OR DO YOU KNOW, AN 18-25 YEAR OLD  
WITH A PASSION TO MAKE JESUS KNOWN?

WOULD YOU/THEY LIKE TO BE IMMERSED IN A  
YEAR OF TRAINING IN EVANGELISM AND MISSION  
WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH?

TEAM is a unique opportunity to lay a foundation of structured discipleship training and relevant practical placement for future evangelistic ministry wherever God calls you.



*"I would recommend  
TEAM to any young  
person who wants to  
experience more deeply  
and intentionally their  
calling to engage in the  
Great Commission in  
a practical way"*

*Zac Whitehouse,  
TEAM student 2020-2021*

Why not join our  
taster online event  
to find out more:

15 March,  
7pm – 8pm

**TEAM | Training**  
[www.counties-training.org/team](http://www.counties-training.org/team)

**Contact:**  
[beverley.bedford@countiesuk.org](mailto:beverley.bedford@countiesuk.org)