New Word Alive 2011 - Reaching the disinterested – speaker notes

Teaching block 1a. Listening to people of peace

There's a story of an investment banker driving his open top sports car through the city and suddenly he crashes into another car. He gets out and says 'you idiot – look what you've done to my beautiful car.' To which the other driver says 'you bankers are all the same, you're so concerned about your material possessions like your car that you don't even realize in the accident your arm was chopped off.' 'My Rolex my Rolex' says the banker 'where's my Rolex gone.'

It's all about people (Gen. 1:27-28 and Gen. 12:2)
- created in the image of God; blessed with the favour of God; sent with the purposes of God.
- our calling is to get to know people we'll share life in the new creation with (Lk. 16:9)
- our calling is to go with the gospel to other contexts (1 Cor 9)

It's all about living with people in a cultural context (Daniel & Jer 29)
- the gospel compels confident humility: neither religiously scathing of culture nor dependant on it for approval etc
- sin is seen as an idolatry that pervades the whole of culture rather than a series of discrete acts of non compliance to God's regulations (Rom 1)
- Christians inhabit a culture but also re-imagine that culture by inhabiting it with gospel values: in but not of the world (Jn 17:14-15); cultural form based on biblical patterns (Rom 12:2)

Understanding defences
From an early age people are taught to be self reliant and to accept that we are need to take responsibility to protect ourselves and fight for our individual rights. This breeds a society of very defended people who are suspicious of others and their motives – always assuming others have an agenda that could threaten them.

> *The classic demonstration of our suspicion – particularly of free offers – was an experiment conducted by the Evening Standard Newspaper. They employed a man to hand out leaflets outside a busy station in London which said the recipient of the leaflet would be given £5 cash for free if they simply returned the leaflet to the man handing them out. In 3 hours hoards of people went past but only 11 people claimed their free cash.*

These natural suspicions inside us come into play when we first talk to people about Christian things. When we start introducing the topic of our faith into a conversation people immediately think defensive thoughts.

• **I'm out of my comfort zone**
Ie 'hold on a minute this topic isn't something I'm familiar with and might be rather threatening and a bit weird so I think I'd be best shutting down the conversation before I'm asked something that puts me on the spot / challenges the status quo / might involve change of thinking or behaviour / I don't have an answer to.
– different communication styles: hedgehog vs rhino: People don't like being shown up and can find talk of God or morality or spirituality threatening – and when threatened some people act like a rhino and attack / are hostile while some people act like hedgehogs and curl up in a ball, put out their prickles and shut out of the threatening conversation. Ie: no point in talking when people have stopped listening!
• **I've been hurt in the past and don't want more**
One reason people can be hostile to talking about Christianity is that they've had a bad encounter in the past or there's something past down from family or friends which has caused damage and is still a 'live' issue – a bit like an unexploded bomb which is under the surface of the conversation and likely to go off if we move the conversation it it's direction.
This is illustrated by Polly Toynbee in an article on the Narnia Chronicles (The Guardian 5 Dec 05): *"Of all the elements of Christianity, the most repugnant is the notion of the Christ who took our sins upon himself and sacrificed his body in agony to save our souls. Did we ask him to? Poor child Edmund, to blame for everything, must bear the full weight of a guilt only Christians know how to inflict, with a twisted knife to the heart. Every one of those thorns, the nuns used to tell my mother, is hammered into Jesus's holy head every day that you don't eat your greens or say your prayers when you are told. So the resurrected Aslan gives Edmund a long, life-changing talking-to high up on the rocks out of our earshot. When the poor boy comes back down with the sacred lion's breath upon him he is transformed unrecognisably into a Stepford brother, well and truly purged."*
• **It's just a mask**
Oliver James in his book Affluenza: *'In the workplace, the worst infected [with the affluenza virus] are cynical, distrustful, self centred and manipulative. They avoid telling people why they have done something unless it is to their advantage, and perceive others as lazy and deceptive – anyone who completely trusts them is seen as asking for trouble – and feel that lying is acceptable, and chamaeleonism (which is neither sincere nor authentic) is desirable. Such cold-hearted exploitation in the workplace inevitably trickles into personal relationships, resulting in unhappy love-lives and fickle friendships, skin-deep.'*
– different communication levels: • cliché • facts & opinions • feelings • honesty
• **It's all about their agenda and not mine**
People are quick to switch off if they think they are just being talked at and that the agenda is not related to them personally but is the speaker's agenda which they are trying to impose without the love or courtesy to find out what I already think about the topic and what I care about the topic.

The learning cycle looks at how there are three elements to learning – information, processing that information so it becomes understanding in someone and then living it so it becomes part of someone's story. Different cultures tend to emphasise different elements of learning.
- Some cultures are very knowledge based and prize academic wisdom for its own sake – their motto would be 'knowledge is power' (examples include the ancient Greek culture and come of university cultures established in the past few centuries).
- Other cultures are more pragmatic and focus only on knowledge which can maximise technological and thus economic advantage – their motto would be 'superior technology is power' (examples include the Roman Empire, the technological advances of post war Japan and the competitive advantage through technology monopoly of firms such as Microsoft).
- Finally some cultures prize making life better for people in practice. They take the view that knowledge is simply theory and power is defined by what happens in action. One principle of this cultural form would be 'does this application of knowledge improve the life of people' – what is sometimes called 'human centric' or 'customer focussed' design. Their motto is 'user utility and delight is power' (examples include Apple Computers and other dot com firms such as YouTube, Wikipedia, Facebook and Google).

Understanding these three approaches helps us identify the approach of the person we're talking to so we're able to begin conversations based from their agenda:
- the knowledge approach wants to know facts and systematic answers
- the pragmatic approach is far more interested in how it impacts them personally and would prefer discussing ideas and concepts than dry facts.
- the transformational approach focuses on how something will change the world – it's the big picture of us in relationship to society and our planet which is concerned about others and sustainable futures

Teaching block 1b. Growing in listening to people

1. Discover and pray for your people of Peace (Matt 10, Acts 16)
• as churches – analysis of area (walking survey and published data and interviews with key influencers)
• enabling members: prayer cards for PoP – 1:1:1 scheme; prayer for PoP each small group time
2.Show that you love them
• be genuinely interested in them
3. Discover their context
• surveys (door to door so can map an area); prepare profile of target types (unchurched Harry, Saddleback Sam)
4. Develop listening skills – see HO
5. Understand teaching approaches – see HO
- preaching which listens – cultural references, speaks my language
- preaching which anticipates defences
- preaching which transforms (not just knowledge)

Video: Polly Toynbee
Discussion 1. What are some of the defences you encounter?

Teaching block 2a. Asking the right questions

The Journey*: Imagine you're going on holiday in the beautiful highlands 300 miles north of where you live. You set off with some kids in the back (yours presumably!) and a full car looking forward to all that lies ahead. At first the journey goes well but then the traffic gets bad and the weather worsens and your journey slows to a very frustrating crawl. It gets dark and the kids get fractious and when you eventually exit the motorway and navigate the winding roads to the cottage you are desperate to get out of the car and for the journey to end. Imagine when you get to the cottage and it's very late at night and still pouring with rain how do you feel? Your priority will be to throw the luggage and kids inside find a bed and get some sleep. Imagine you do that and actually get a really good night's sleep and wake refreshed in the morning and open your eyes to see the sun is streaming through the curtains. You jump out of bed, open the curtains and 'wow' you see the amazing view of the mountains and the beach and the beautiful landscape bashed in blue sky sunshine. How do you feel now? Presumably different from the night before. Why is that considering that the mountains and beach and landscape were there the night before as well. Why didn't you appreciate them then? Because it was dark but also because your whole outlook was focused on getting to bed rather than looking at the surroundings. Our inner perspective affects our outlook.*

• **Sight is gradually restored (Mark 8:14-38)**
Jesus says 2 things in verses 15, 17-18 and 21. First he warns them of the danger of the Pharisee way of thinking which blinds people to grace and hardens hearts through religious pride. Then he asks them several times to go further than just observing Jesus and hearing Jesus to actually understanding who Jesus is and why he has come. Amazing isn't it that the disciples had seen awesome miracles and heard The Word from The Word but hadn't put 2 and 2 together – the hardness of the propositions they'd been brought up to accept without questioning were stopping them seeing what was in front of their eyes. What Jesus asks isn't 'do you need more

info' but 'do you still not understand.'

At first glance the healing of the blind man in v22-26 seems odd in that it doesn't seem to fit in the flow of the chapter and seems to be unsuccessful at first – as if Jesus was near some kryptonite and was losing his powers. But of course the whole point of this gradual miracle is to show how the restoring of spiritual sight to the disciples is a gradual process. When Jesus encounters continued lack of understanding in Mark 8, we're told that he 'sighs deeply'. Yet in his compassion he doesn't give up on people. In fact, straightaway Jesus provides a model of how their sight will be restored as he heals a blind man. The miracle is unusual in that it is a gradual process:
– Contact: The man meets Jesus as friends bring him.
– Observation: He is led by the hand while still blind.
– First Sight: He regains partial sight.
– Insight: He regains full sight.

Understanding Presuppositions
A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being." – James Sire

A worldview is made up of:1. Presuppositions; 2. Life philosophy which lead to 3. Behavioural code

What are the main presuppositions pumped into people's minds day after day?
1. The material presupposition
The material delusion is the delusion people have in thinking that for something to be true it must be material / physical / provable – in other words they their assumption that Christians are deluded is actually more of an act of faith on their part because they are holding themselves to an unprovable assumption!

People have a tendency to see belief in the supernatural as rather childish and belief in magic as uneducated superstition. It's fine for children to believe in fairies and Santa, but they will grow out of it once their rational minds develop. Or, people are happy as long as it's a vague imagining but doesn't impact on our material reality.

> *Personally, I do not accept the divinity of Jesus. I do not believe that his mother was made pregnant by the Holy Ghost, that he was resurrected after his death on the cross, or that he physically ascended to heaven. But that belief enriches the lives of many. It does not make them stupid, let alone deluded. It makes them human. Their faith gives them a context into which they can fit their lives and a hope of better things to come – if not in this world, then the next. And if the next world turns out not to exist . . . well, they'll never know, will they? (John Humphries. In God We Doubt.)*

It's interesting that people are very suspicious of anything outside their experience but also quite fascinated by fantasy films and paranormal claims and UFO sightings. It's as if we're happy to play with the concept of there being something out there, as long as it doesn't affect anything right here!

Tony Blair on Parkinson – okay to pray privately but not to make decisions based on belief – but surely praying to a non existent God is madness – and someone who is mad could never be PM material!

2. The now presupposition
There's a whole industry out there persuading people to be fools. 'Don't worry,' they say, 'there is no God so just make the most of what you can while you can.' As the British Humanist Association stated on bus adverts in 2009, 'There's probably no God. So stop worrying and enjoy life.' It's the oldest trick in Satan's book: Did God really say? Is God really there? Can there really be a God who loves you?

C.S. Lewis describes the devil's tactics in *The Screwtape Letters from a senior devil to a junior devil:.*
My Dear Wormwood
By the very act of arguing, you awake the patient's reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result? Even if a particular train of thought can be twisted so as to end in our favour, you will find that you have been strengthening in your patient the fatal habit of attending to universal issues and withdrawing his attention from the stream of immediate sense experiences. Your business is to fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it "real life" and don't let him ask what he means by "real"….
I once had a patient, a sound atheist, who used to read in the British Museum. One day, as he sat reading, I saw a train of thought in his mind beginning to go the wrong way. The Enemy, of course, was at his elbow in a moment. Before I knew where I was I saw my twenty years' work beginning to totter. If I had lost my head and begun to attempt a defence by argument I should have been undone. But I was not such a fool. I struck instantly at the part of the man which I had best under my control and suggested that it was just about time he had some lunch. The Enemy presumably made the counter-suggestion (you know how one can never quite overhear What He says to them?) that this was more important than lunch. At least I think that must have been His line for when I said "Quite. In fact much too important to tackle it the end of a morning", the patient brightened up considerably; and by the time I had added "Much better come back after lunch and go into it with a fresh mind", he was already half way to the door. Once he was in the street the battle was won. I showed him a newsboy shouting the midday

paper, and a No. 73 bus going past, and before he reached the bottom of the steps I had got into him an unalterable conviction that, whatever odd ideas might come into a man's head when he was shut up alone with his books, a healthy dose of "real life" [by which he meant the bus and the newsboy] was enough to show him that all "that sort of thing" just couldn't be true.

3. The 'just a story' presupposition
First words of Luke Skywalker to Princes Leah, 'My name is Luke Skywalker, I've come to rescue you.'
First words Terminator says to Sarah Connor in T2: 'come with me if you want to live.'
The delusion people have fallen for is that their longings for rescue and ultimate salvation are just a story. So people love watching fairy stories where a prince comes and rescues the damsel in distress, slays the fierce dragon and wakes the dead princess with true love's kiss. But then they leave the cinema saying, 'Never mind, it's just a story.'

Understanding defeaters
One of the reasons it's hard to start conversations with people is that they've pulled down the shutters on thinking through spiritual realities. One reason for this is that people have beliefs that act as 'off switches' to further debate on Christianity. Tim Keller describes these switches as 'defeaters'*: 'Every culture hostile to Christianity holds to a set of "common-sense" consensus beliefs that automatically make Christianity seem implausible to people. These are what philosophers call "defeater beliefs". A defeater belief is Belief-A that, if true, means Belief-B can't be true.'*
So when someone claims, 'The Bible says . . .' they think, 'But the Bible's rubbish.' Or they hear 'God loves you', and they think, 'He's got a funny way of showing it' and, from that thought onwards, they switch off.

1. Assumption defeaters
Assumption defeaters are views held by the majority of people in a culture. They hold the view as an assumption in the sense that they have inherited it, rather than having spent time deciding it's true.
So, for example, the idea of the 'God Delusion' may have been made popular by a book of that title, but there are a considerable number of people whose belief that God is a delusion isn't based on a thorough examination of Dawkin's theories.
Assumption defeaters include: – Contrary evidence (e.g., suffering and evil); God seen as angry and the Bible as full of violence and wars; Science, evolution and the trustworthiness of the Bible; Harsh actions taken in the name of religion (from crusades to suicide bombs); hypocrisy of corrupt church leaders.
2. Tolerance defeater
Tolerance is a given in our society and becomes a defeater when we're talking about Christian faith when people get a whiff of the fact that we are claiming our way as the only way. In reality the tolerance defeater doesn't just disengage people from discussing further but makes them positively hostile.
3. Slow-burn defeater
This is the parable of the sower defeater - it isn't visible at first, but it subtly chokes the gospel message This defeater causes people to hear the false message: 'Become a Christian and all your problems will disappear and all your dreams will come true.' And then when that doesn't happen or at the first sign of trouble they turn away.

Teaching block 2b Challenging presuppositions and deconstructing defeaters.

1. Preaching which deconstructs presuppositions
Point out holes in the logic *"An argument for God's existence is the impossibility of the contrary.'*
Preconditions
There are preconditions to all our thinking – preconditions of logic and order and expectation that the sun we rise tomorrow as it did today etc.
Eg Paul Davies' book 'The Mind of God' believes in the fixed laws of nature as his 'god': *"the existence of mind in some organism on some planet in the universe is surely a fact of fundamental significance. Through conscious beings the universe has generated self-awareness. This can be no trivial detail, no minor byproduct of mindless, purposeless forces. We are truly meant to be here."*
Inconsistencies
Matrix – about delusions pumped into the minds of people which prevent them knowing the truth. The delusions look very real but as Neo starts to realise, there are inconsistencies – it doesn't add up 'like a splinter in your mind.'
Inconsistencies are thinks an atheism says they believe which don't make sense. This is because their worldview is based on the world being totally random without morality but they use ordered reasoning and moral categories to make their arguments. In other words they try to proclaim a godless worldview using the language of a God-filled worldview! But the inconsistencies are glaringly obvious when pointed out.
Alvin Plantinga: Could there really be any such thing as horrifying wickedness [if there were no God and we just evolved]? I don't see how. There can be such a thing only if there is a way that rational creatures are ***supposed*** *to live,* ***obliged*** *to live… A [secular] way of looking at the world has no place for genuine moral obligation of any sort… and thus no way to say there is such a thing as genuine and appalling wickedness. Accordingly, if you think there really is such a thing as horrifying wickedness (… and not just an illusion of some sort), then you have a powerful… argument [for the reality of God]. Quoted by Timothy Keller, The Reason For God, p26.*

One way to show up inconsistencies is to talk through the logical consequences of the position. A classic example would be Darwinism which has taken the theory of natural selection and been used by people such as Hitler to justify exterminating 'weaker' races.

Arbitrariness

A good question to ask people is 'says who'? Who made us arbiter of what is right and wrong? It's the very first sin to want to take that right out of God's hands which of course begs the question 'if we are the arbiters then where did we get that role and right from in the first place if we're just random bits of matter?'

2. Discussion groups, courses and personal evangelism which challenge defeaters with questions

Jesus uses questions:

– John 4:1–26. Jesus begins his encounter with the Samaritan woman by asking her for a drink and thus depending on her favour. Jesus then has a to and fro conversation with her in which Jesus makes statements that lead her to ask more questions. Jesus' statements begin by connecting to her desires for thirst-quenching water and then link with her personal situation and need for spiritual life.

– Matthew 12:12. Is a man more valuable than a sheep?

– Matthew 22:20. Whose portrait is on the coin?

– Luke 10:25–37. An expert in the law seeks to test Jesus and ends up being tested by the fulfillment of the law!

In the questioning method Jesus begins with what people already know and then helps them to see where their thinking needs to develop by pointing out the inconsistencies in their argument and asking how they could explain logical flaws.

The advantage of this method is that:

– it avoids setting up a confrontation where someone says, 'You're wrong because 1, 2, 3 and I'm going to tell you x, y, z to put you right.' Instead, it uses questions to guide people to the truth of Jesus

The Questioning method walks alongside people on a journey which may take many weeks and keeps pointing them in the right direction and leads them to the foot of the cross and to the threshold of God's throneroom of grace

– the 'student' reaches the logical conclusion for him or herself and therefore will be more convinced by the truth.

– it moves evangelism from being about being an expert giving a linear set of proof answers to the skill of leading a discussion of assumptions behind questions.

– it's tailored to how people think rather than imposing views.

Video: gospel according to humanism

Discussion 2. What are the sources of presuppositions in your context? What defeaters do they build?

Teaching block 3a. Releasing the grip of idols

An idol is a thing or a person or an idea that we treasure with our heart above God. It's a replacement for God that we look to and trust in to save us. It's about turning a good thing created by God into the ultimate thing which replaces God as the object of devotion. Tim Keller: *'Idolatry is anything I look at and say, "If I have that, my life has value." Anything that is so central to your life that you feel you can't live without it is an idol.*

When we cease to trust in God as Saviour we don't trust in nothing but in anything. (Ex 32:1-4; Is 42:17; Is 46:7)

As Bob Dylan used to sing, "it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, But you're gonna have to serve somebody."

Eg In Bridget Jones, the Hugh Grant character says to Bridget. *"You know me, I'm a terrible disaster with a posh voice and a bad character. You're the only one who can save me Bridge, I need you. Without you twenty years from now I'll be in some seedy bar with some seedy blonde."*

• Ezek 14:1-6 – idolatry is about setting something up in our hearts as our source.

• Rom 1:23-25. Idolatry ruins - when we're given over to the desires of our hearts without God we over invest in and over expect from them and make futile efforts to gratify cravings in things which can't deliver (Eph 2:3)

• Ex 20. Idolatry impacts behaviour - the first 4 of the 10 commandments are about idols If we keep first four we'll keep the rest. The reason we lie, steal, covet and are murderous is that we've lost our first love.

- therefore idols stop us looking elsewhere for grace (Jonah 2:8-9)

Like a climber stuck on a cliff but safe if clings on tight needs to let go of grip in order to take hand of air sea rescue winchman, the only way we will be rid of idols is to let go of the meager and very temporary security they offer and hold onto the eternal security of life in restored relationship with Jesus – our sure foundation.

The trouble is that people cling so tightly to their idols (Jonah 2:8-9) that they don't look for grace.

Idolatry is about addiction – wanting more and more, relying more and more, getting less and less.

- therefore idols weary us from expecting anything more from life (inoculation) (Isaiah 46:1) and harden us from God. (Deut 8:10-18)

A.W. Tozer: 'The labour of self-love is a heavy one indeed. Think for yourself whether much of your sorrow has not arisen from someone speaking slightingly of you. As long as you set yourself up as a little god to which you must be loyal there will be those who will delight to offer affront to your idol. How then can you hope to have inward peace? The heart's fierce effort to protect itself from every slight, to shield its touchy honour from the bad opinion of friend and enemy, will never let the mind have rest. Continue this fight through the years and the burden will become intolerable. Yet the sons of earth are carrying this burden continually, challenging every word spoken against them, cringing under every criticism, smarting under each fancied slight, tossing sleeplessly if another is preferred before them. Such a burden as this is not necessary to bear. Jesus calls us to His rest, and

meekness is His method.'

Identifying idols: see HO
Michael McIntyre interviewed in The Week, December 2009:
4 yrs ago he was in the doldrums "I was £40,000 in debt – credit cards, loans all that with absolutely no assets and often no way of actually meeting the rent. I was at the point where they were cutting up my cards in front of me." But he turned things around and now packs out the 02 and countless other venues on his UK tour. Now he owns his house and is comfortably off, but says at the end of the interview: "It keeps me awake at night, I find myself looking at the bricks, touching them, counting them even, thinking 'are there enough?' I suppose it's a metaphor for my life. I've finally got there and am waiting for the whole thing to come crashing down around me."

Teaching block 3b. Suggesting an alternative
Tim keller quote (p2)
What if game
Two methods:
1. Expulsive method (see HO) – be delighted about the gospel and it's power to change (2 Cor..)
Jonathan Edwards (Divine Light sermon – see Therefore Go for refs.)
The mind having a sensibleness of the excellency of divine objects, dwells upon them with delight; and the powers of the soul are more awakened and enlivened to employ themselves in the contemplation of them, and exert themselves more fully and much more to the purpose.
A true sense of the divine excellency of the things of God's word doth more directly and immediately convince of the truth of them; and that because the excellency of these things is so superlative. There is a beauty in them that is so divine and godlike, that is greatly and evidently distinguishing of them from things merely human, or that men are the inventors and authors of; a glory that is so high and great, that when clearly seen, commands assent to their divinity and reality. When there is an actual and lively discovery of this beauty and excellency, it will not allow of any such thought as that it is a human work, or the fruit of men's invention. This evidence that they that are spiritually enlightened have of the truth of the things of religion, is a kind of intuitive and immediate evidence. They believe the doctrines of God's word to be divine, because they see divinity in them.
2. Why I'm glad I'm a Christian (see HO)

Teaching block 4a. Presenting the joy of salvation
- False doctrines – see HO

Teaching block 4b. Answers to false doctrines
- teaching along the grain of Scripture
- teaching what it looks like not just what it says
- knowing the gospel nudges (Nudge theory)

Teaching block 5. Two practical innovations in evangelism

Innovation 1: The Conversation

If there's a missing link in evangelism, it's the link between friendship evangelism and presentational evangelism. The uncomfortable truth is that people may be happy to chat with Christians they know or even attend church events and yet the gospel facts simply wash over them. As we've seen, defeater beliefs and general suspicion of sales pitches and too good to be true offers causes many barriers to people hearing the gospel. People get so far and then seem to move straight to a spiritual jail without passing 'Go' or collecting a gospel understanding. Our challenge in evangelism therefore is to bridge the gap in people's thinking by demonstrating the relevance of the gospel to their daily lives. Establishing gospel relevance is the missing link between building gospel relationships and seeing a gospel response. We don't have to make the gospel relevant but we do have to show people why it's relevant.

That's what is at the heart of an evangelism initiative called 'The Conversation', which is:
- a *Newsnight*-style event where different views are allowed to be expressed i) by leading commentators through pre-recorded video interviews and panel guests, ii) by the public through vox pop interviews and iii) by the audience in a question time. The Christian view is also clearly outlined in a slot called 'the view from the Vicar.'
- an informative event where a topic is presented in a well-researched, coherent way and where the biblical framework is clearly given and shown in attractive contrast to opposing views.
- a conversational event which starts with the issues people are already talking about and allows them to pose questions to the panel during the question time and then continue discussions over a meal afterwards.

Topics covered so far include advertising, American politics, architecture, building lasting friendships, the Credit Crunch, Darwin and The Dark Knight.

Many people today need to get past their defeater beliefs or suspicions about Christianity before they will seriously explore it or consider any sort of response to it in their own lives. The Conversation aims to show the distinctives of a biblical perspective in a way that opens people's eyes to life with the God of grace. It provides a biblical foundation, which helps people understand the evangelistic course they're invited to go on next.

What are the benefits of The Conversation?

1. It takes unbelievers and their defeater beliefs seriously. At the Conversation, we make a point of inviting secular experts from the industry to have a say, either through pre-recorded video interviews or by coming to the event itself to be a speaker and/or panel member. As a result, we've had people on our platform stating quite clearly their belief that all human beings are apes, or that God and politics should never mix, or even that there is no God. It's perhaps not what you'd expect as a church event and, as such, it certainly grabs people's attention! And it's a great opportunity then, through the 'view from the vicar' talk slot and during the question time, for us to show the contrast of faith in Christ and how that holds true in the face of accusation or differing beliefs.
2. It equips church members to engage in similar conversations with their colleagues and friends. The Conversation deliberately runs on the same night as our home groups so the whole church alternates between meeting in homes one week and coming to The Conversation the next. By engaging with these issues as Christians, we learn how to apply biblical knowledge and answer the questions our friends and colleagues are asking.
3. It makes our Christian life visible. After the hour-long presentation, the evening continues with a professionally catered meal and people break into their home groups to sit around tables and continue the discussion while they eat. As well as building community and relationship between our members, it also creates a relaxed and easy atmosphere into which our unbelieving friends or colleagues can encounter our Christian family that we share life with.
4. It puts faith back in the public arena. Inviting a friend to The Conversation on an evening where the topic is of interest to them not only shows that we're interested in the things they are interested in but also demonstrates that, as Christians, we live every aspect of our life in the context of our faith.

Could The Conversation be of benefit to your evangelism strategy?
If you'd like more information then we'd love to send you an information sheet and a DVD with all the video clips for an episode as well as the talk outlines and PowerPoint slides so you can run this event yourself by mixing in your own panel of guests etc. Episodes we have to offer so far include The Credit Crunch, Darwin, The Advertising Industry, Image, TV (you are what you watch), Spirituality and Architecture. More information on episodes available is at www.becauseapproach.com. For a copy of the DVD clips for an episode please email andrew@jc-church.org.

Innovation 2: Refresh (tasteandsee.me)

There is a growing sector of people in society who have no interest in attending church and no meaningful relationships with Christians – they are the disconnected generation who won't be reached by invitation to events or even by conversations outside of a church setting. The most they will hear about Christianity will be a passing comment or brief witness from a Christian they meet. So the challenge is how to enable them to hear more in an accessible and contextual way. Refresh aims to meet this challenge by providing a website of resources people can look at in the comfort of their own home which includes the opportunity then to go further by finding Christian discussion groups and evangelistic churches locally. Refresh is an ideal first taste of church for people unused to attending church on Sunday. It aims to open people's eyes as to how knowing the grace and truth of Christ impacts life day by day – challenging the defeater beliefs of sceptics and proclaiming the contrasting excellency of Christ.
• In the first part of 2011 Refresh has been run at St James Clerkenwell as a fortnightly series of talks with panel discussion and interviews. A summary video is available on the internet and viewers are invited to the Refresh live events where relationship can be built. Following Reresh iGod will be run. See www.tasteandsee.me
• Refresh is currently being developed as a separate project by Andrew Baughen and will combine two elements:
- multisite live evangelistic events (a multisite Hall of Tyrannus - potentially with live speakers as well as shared 'live' video feed, skype links etc and pre-recorded elements)
- an interactive website of videos, blogs etc which enables unbelievers to explore faith and interact via web 2.0 social media etc. The website will also act as a gateway inviting people to live events, evangelistic courses and local churches they can connect with in their local area.
The plan is to involve lots of local churches as sites for the live events as well as sources for speakers and short film makers and bloggers for the website. These churches would also be key to the strategy as they would be the church communities where people who've connected via the website and a live event can continue to explore Christianity and then find support as new converts.