

371 Yes, but what do YOU think?

I'm starting on a new tack this morning, and I do genuinely want to know what you think. So if you have time, maybe a few of you would tell me, and we can learn together. This is a journey, after all. All I have to offer today is a feeling about a general direction.

What I'm thinking about is: how do you lead someone – a friend or family member – to faith in Jesus? They are interested, so you want to encourage them in the right direction.

I know how I would have answered that up to, say, 10 years ago, but my thinking about what the good news is has changed. I would have taken them to some sort of 'gospel presentation', hoping and praying that they would respond and 'give their hearts to Jesus'.

Suppose for a moment that 'faith in Jesus' was about *knowing a person* (well, that's what Christians *say* it is). How might that change our thinking?

The old model is that there's an 'expert' who reminds you about your sin, tells you about Jesus and his death and resurrection, and then asks you to say a prayer of acceptance, OK? And when we had a mission, if we felt confident, some of us would be trained in how to be that 'expert'; we were given Bible verses to use and told how to bring the person to a point of commitment. (Sorry, but I cringe at the thought of it.)

But suppose for a moment that 'faith in Jesus' really *is* about knowing a person. How might that change our thinking?

My first thoughts are more about *listening* to my friend. *What do you know about Jesus? What do you think about him?* Maybe we'd ask: *What do you think about God? How do you feel towards God?* (Different from their thoughts about Jesus, I'm sure.) Maybe it might then be appropriate to share something about what happened in AD whatever?

I mentioned last time about people who are more sinned against than sinning^[370] – like the person who was in my thoughts when I started this journey ('Jenny'^[1]). How do we help them? Might God prompt us to ask what they felt about the existence of evil? Not sure.

I'm short of my (self-)allocated 500 words, but these are genuine questions – what do *you* think?

I guess it's different for different people, but my main feeling is that we need to listen to them – we need to know where they are at. What do they actually know about the person of Jesus, because 'Jesus', to a growing number of people, is just a swearword. And many people of my generation only know what they were told, all those years ago, about a scary, disapproving God.

We've got work to do, folks! Let's at least talk to our beloved fellow believers, about how we might share the good news – but, yes, *listening* is key.