

Ben Best, co-host

Welcome to *Defragmenting*, a podcast of Cairn University, promoting biblical integrity and thoughtful Christianity.

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In this episode, recorded at the Gospel Coalition's 2025 National Conference, Keith Plummer talks with Cairn alum, John Biegel, lead pastor at Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church in Annadale, Virginia, and TGC Council member, Bill Kynes, who for 36 years, preceded John in that role, about what it means to be a pastor-theologian. Next, Keith talks with author and lead mentor and trainer at Australia's EVQ School of Evangelism, Sam Chan, about how to have natural gospel conversations and tips for addressing skeptics' hard questions about the faith. Let's join their conversations now.

Dr. Keith Plummer

I am here with two men who I hold in high regard. They're friends of mine, friends of each other. And just wanted to say a little bit of words of introduction so that you know who I'm talking with. Dr. Bill Kynes is a Council member for the Gospel Coalition. And until recently, He's served for many years as a senior pastor at Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church in Annandale, Virginia. He's authored a number of books, including *Seven Pressing Questions: A Christology of Solidarity* and *Wrestling with Job*, which he co-authored with his son, Will. And Pastor John Biegel has been serving as a lead pastor at Cornerstone since July 2022. And before that, he served from 2013 to 2022 at Riverstone Church in Yardley, Pennsylvania, first as an associate pastor, then as an interim lead pastor. He was one of my pastors because my family and I attend there. And in addition to that, he was also my Starbucks partner, where we would get together at Starbucks from time to time. That until he was whisked away by Cornerstone, largely with Bill's help. But I have since gotten over that. There's no grudging. But we are seriously proud of John, because John also earned his MDiv and his ThM from Cairn University.

Dr. Keith Plummer

He is the author of *Offering and Embracing Christ: The Morrow Theology of Colquhoun* of... I should have asked you how to pronounce this

John Beigel

Colquhoun of Leith.

Dr. Keith Plummer

Colquhoun of Leith. Okay. Well, we won't be editing that out. But thank you both for taking the time to be with me. It's good to always hang out with you, but I wanted to talk with you about some things, because it's a unique situation. Predecessors, successor in terms of pastoral ministry at the same church. Long history for you, Bill. I remember years ago when Greg Waybright, I think he was president of Ted's at the time, he told this story, and he told this story of a grandfather and his grandson who were walking through a cemetery, and the grandson was shocked when he read one of those tombstones, and he said, "grandpa, come here. There's two men buried in this grave." And when the grandfather came over, he read the tomb stone that said, "Here lies theologian and pastor." It's humorous because the little child didn't understand that these were two titles for the same person. But the point that he was making that in the minds of many people, pastor and theologian are distinct roles. When I think of pastor-theologian, you or two guys that I know are committed to that. I respect you both in that regard. I wanted to talk to you about, number one, what do you see as the significance of those two terms being necessarily put together?

Dr. Bill Kynes

Yeah, well, I think the reality is those two terms necessarily go together. Because if you think of a theologian as someone who is thinking about and talking about and teaching about God, if you're a pastor, you're necessarily going to be a theologian. The question is, are you going to be a good theologian or a poor theologian? I think when we use the term pastor-theologian, we usually mean it to me someone who cares about being a good theologian and wants to teach the Bible well, teach an understanding of who God is and how he's worked in the world well. I think that's what we mean when we talk about being a pastor-theologian.

John Beigel

Bill stole everything that I was I was going to say. Well, I was thinking about it because so, Ephesians 4, God gives gifts to the church. One of the gifts that he gives to the church are meant to be shepherds and teachers. Really, grammatically, the way that it works is he gives them to be shepherd-teachers. This is one role. If a shepherd is going to be a teacher, and actually teaching is one of the principle ways that shepherds shepherd, that pastors pastor, then it's imperative that pastors be not just theologians, but good theologians. Because otherwise, what are you teaching? Every time you teach something from the Bible, every time you teach something about who God is, you're pastoring your people. So are you going to teach what is true or what is right, or are you going to teach something that you've come up with yourself? So it's necessary. Like Bill said, it's necessary that pastors are going to be theologians. It's just a matter of whether or not they're going to be good theologians, biblical theologians.

Dr. Keith Plummer

There have been some encouraging movements concerning making an emphasis of the pastor-theologian, but both of you mentioned teaching, and I would imagine that a lot of people, when they hear about teaching, they think, first and foremost, in terms of preaching. In what ways is theological acumen informative to other dimensions of pastoral ministry as well. So certainly, you want to be making sure that you are proclaiming sound biblical doctrine. But what other ways do you think that that relationship is necessary for the other facets of shepherding?

Dr. Bill Kynes

Yeah, I think one of the main tasks of a pastor is to administer the medicine of the gospel. We have a medicine that no one else has, and we believe this is the medicine that God has given us for the healing of the world in Christ. And so we want to, first of all, know that medicine well and then know how best to administer it. And it needs to be administered in the right way, in the right context, in every situation. Knowing the gospel well and all its implications and all its applications is part of what being a good theologian is about. But then a theologian also examines the culture and seeks to exegete the culture and understand the culture and what are the issues that are drawing people in the culture and then trying to show the relevance to the gospel in all of that. That takes, I think, what we would call theological acumen. It takes reflection, it takes understanding. It takes historical understanding to know how the church has done in the past, and then a cultural awareness today. So all of those, I think, are aspects of being a pastor-theologian.

John Beigel

Bill contributed to a book written maybe 15 years ago, something like that, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*. I think that idea is something that Bill is getting at, this idea that we're not just exegeting the Bible for the people. We're also helping to exegete the culture for the people in light of what the Bible teaches. I think, too, just... I mean, everything that happens in the church is theological. It's not like theology can be compartmentalized to what we say for 40 minutes on a Sunday morning with the Bible open. I mean, that certainly should be shaped theologically, but just on Sunday morning, everything else that we do in the service is theological and is forming people. It is teaching people something about who God is. The way we think about the shape of our worship, the songs that we sing, the way that we pray, how much do we pray? What is that teaching people? I think everything. That's just public worship. But then also the Ministry of the Word can be personal. It's counseling. It's the way that we meet the sheep in their need and bring them the balm of the gospel. I think it's much, much more. Teaching is far more than just an expository sermon. It's not less than that.

Dr. Bill Kynes

I think I would correct a misunderstanding that theology is simply an intellectual exercise. It is much more than that because we're not only teaching the truth about God, but we want to communicate the goodness of that truth and the beauty of that truth and the kind of life that flows out of that truth. I think that's part of what it means to be a good theologian.

Dr. Keith Plummer

It's not just a targeting of the intellect, but it's also, and maybe even more fundamentally, of seeking to

move the affections-

Dr. Bill Kynes
Absolutely.

Dr. Keith Plummer

In response to the apprehension of God and the beauty of the gospel and so forth. I've told you this, John, because I sat under so much of your preaching, there were so many times where that was the impact. I appreciated the care that I know that you put in in terms of the study and how it is that you organize it. But there were many times where my heart was just really moved, and so very grateful for you for that.

John Beigel

It's very, it's very you. It's encouraging. I certainly pray that that continues used to be the case for those who regularly get to listen to it.

Dr. Keith Plummer

Who were some of the influential figures on both of you that have been formative in your concept of the pastor-theologian, whether historically, contemporarily, people from your own church experience?

Dr. Bill Kynes

Several names just pop in my head. One was Francis Schaeffer. Francis Schaeffer I was given one of his books as a freshman in college. I was a young Christian, and just the notion of thinking Christianly was very important to me through Francis Schaeffer. Another very strong influence was J.I. Packer. I was given his book, *Knowing God* as a freshman in college. That was such a rich, warm understanding of particularly Puritan theology. It just opened my heart to. Then one other influence that was very strong was John Stott. John Stott's ability to expound the Bible became a model for me. His clarity, his application, his just accuracy. He would preach a passage, and I would say, How can you preach it any other way? Then John Stott preached it. But he would communicate theology in the midst of his biblical exegesis. Those are some names that immediately stick in my head.

Dr. Keith Plummer

I resonate with all of them, but particularly Schaeffer had the same influence on you. Yes. What about you, John?

John Beigel

I think as a self-professed nerd for church history, I feel like I have to go back further to be on brand. Two that come to mind right away would be Charles Spurgeon and J.C. Ryle, certainly because of their theological conviction, but their example of taking that rich theology and making it accessible to the people that they're ministering to. Ryle, especially, I think, if I Paul correctly, began his ministry, and he attempted for the first couple of years to preach like the preachers in London, with all the flower language and impressive rhetoric, and soon realized that as he's preaching as a vicar out in the countryside of England, that the coal miners that he's ministering to, it's not connecting with them. So he has to figure out a different way to preach, to bring these weighty truths to bear in their lives. His example is one that is very encouraging. He's taking just rich theology and he's distilling it with such clarity that it can serve the people that he's been called to minister to.

Dr. Keith Plummer

Yeah.

John Beigel

He and Spurgeon did something very similar, I think, and they just become a plain man speaking to plain people.

John Beigel

Another that sticks out, again, I have to be on brand, was John Colquhoun. Maybe just because I studied him so much, but at the beginning of his books, he wrote seven, eight books all toward the

end of his life. So he pastored for 40 something years before he started writing books. Then he wrote them all in quick succession, the last 10 years of his life. In the beginning of almost every one of his books, he basically says something along the lines of, I wrote this book for the people I'm pastoring because I want them to understand these things. That was very encouraging to me as I read through it. He wasn't writing a book to get it published. He was writing this book to serve his people. I think that's a good example. But I would also say Bill. I also say Bill would be an example. As we got connected through being in the EFCA, every time we were at a conference together, I thought to myself, I want to get coffee with Bill because I want to be like him when I grow up. I didn't realize it was going to be quite this much like him at the time.

Dr. Keith Plummer

That was a prayer that was answered.

John Beigel

Yeah, in more ways than one. But I was thinking, here's a man who's faithfully shepherded this church, fed them on the word of God for more than 30 years, and is doing so with that same rich theology. I see the fruit of it in the ministry I now get to shepherd.

Dr. Keith Plummer

Yeah, that's really unique.

John Beigel

It's like I have a congregation that is largely has a desire to hear those things and has the capacity to receive them. That's not something that I've done. It's, of course, people would say it's not something he's done either. It's what the Lord has done through him. But he's been... I mean, his faithfulness is evident in the congregation that I inherited.

Dr. Bill Kynes

I would say this. I don't think when you think about theology as a pastor, you're not just teaching systematic theology to people. You're applying theological themes and principles to the situations of life. I think that's one of the great joys and challenges of being a pastor is you can be engaged intellectually with these grand theological ideas, but you have to make them come down to Earth in the lives of people. It's that combination that makes, I think, preaching and pastoring so challenging and rewarding. It really is.

Dr. Keith Plummer

You both have talked about the importance of understanding your people. As I was listening to you, I was thinking, there's probably a that we all have to mimic, particularly in the reading that we do, the style of the people, or maybe it might even be the speech of the people. But it requires our being able to translate the truth that may have been communicated in a particular way by someone else in a particular context, and now being able to take that truth and convey it so that the people that I'm standing before sitting with, ministering to, that they understand it, which is really challenging now, especially in the age of the internet. We're very tempted to think more globally than locally.

Dr. Bill Kynes

Yeah. Well, it's understanding the situation in life of the people you're ministering to. And that's why embodied presence is so important and just being being engaged in people's lives, visiting them in their workplaces, understanding their family life, talking about their challenges, and then being able to show how the gospel applies to their situation. I think that's, again, part of the joy of being a pastor is that personal connection with people that you don't get in any other context. You're invited in to the most significant moments in people's lives. What a privilege that is, really is. Then being, in a sense, the presence of Christ in those situations and seeking to express the grace and truth of the gospel in those situations. It's a great privilege.

John Beigel

I think what you're talking about requires that pastors die to the idea that they're going to be really important, influential voices outside of their congregation, which I'm afraid there's probably a lot of

pastors that that's what they want.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Yes.

John Beigel
Build a platform. I think if you're going to be a good pastor-theologian and speak to your people in such a way that it connects with them, it means that you have to give up that thought that I'm going to build this bigger platform.

Dr. Keith Plummer
They're not a stepping stone.

John Beigel
That's right.

Dr. Keith Plummer
This is my ministry.

John Beigel
Yeah. That means I'm going to speak to them in such a way that I might not get noticed because this is what they I mean. I have to look at myself in that. There are times where I'm like, Am I saying something this way because I think it sounds impressive? Is this actually going to serve me?

Dr. Keith Plummer
Is this tweetable?

John Beigel
What if you heard me laughing because you've heard me do that?

Dr. Bill Kynes
No, I understand in that.

John Beigel
It's tough. It requires that you know that you're not just you have the privilege of being invited into people's lives, but that you actually spend time with them, that you know them, that you know what your congregation is able to hear. I think of it as when you're a parent, you know the food that your children need to eat. You know what they can handle, what they can't handle. You need to be able to give them that food in due course. And not everybody in the congregation is going to be at the same level. So it just requires that you know people.

Dr. Bill Kynes
And they know you. And this is a thing in today's world where there's so many voices to those out there, what voice are they going to trust? And to have a pastor whose life they know and who displays the fruit that verifies their confession is so important. It's so important.

John Beigel
Well, so Hebrews 13, remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you. It's interesting that he doesn't say, and remember all the lessons they taught you. Perhaps that's implied. It's consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. There's more than just pull out all the notes that you took during their sermons. It's also look at how their theology was lived out in their life or not lived out in their life.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Yeah.

Dr. Bill Kynes

Your theology is not going to mean much if your life is in shambles. Yeah.

Dr. Keith Plummer
That's very true.

Dr. Bill Kynes
Yeah.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Well, let me I'll close with this. When I was in pastoral ministry, the senior pastor who first hired me, when he retired, he said, "Ministry today is a lot harder than when I started." I wanted to ask... First, I wanted to ask you, Bill, do you think after your decades of ministry and now your continued involvement in the lives of those who are in the pastorate on various ends of the spectrum, do you think that ministry is harder now, just different now, or harder and different?

Dr. Bill Kynes
It's hard to say that it's harder. I mean, it's always been hard in a certain sense because you're dealing with sinners, and we're all sinners. The church is an association of sinners as well as a society of saints. It's both at the same time. So in that sense, it's always been hard. But the difference is in make it harder. I think the voice of the pastor has less authority today and probably less respect. I know of medical doctors who feel the same way, that everybody just goes to the internet and diagnosis their problem and comes to the doctor and explains it to them. That can happen to pastors, too. People can go on the YouTube and have their own favorite voice that they listen to, and that can diminish the role of the pastor in their life. I think that's a difference that can make it harder. Life can become more polarized because of the influence of media today. I think those are some things that can make it harder. It's always been hard, but I think the difference can make it harder in certain ways.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Yes. When I heard him say that, I was a neophyte pastor, and I was just thinking, you're old. But then toward the end of my time, I had understood a little bit more what he was. But I do think it was a matter of there were differences. Now the differences come at such a break-neck speed. John, I'm not going to ask you if it's harder because you're just doing it.

John Beigel
It's plenty hard. I don't know if it's harder, but it's hard.

Dr. Keith Plummer
As you think decades ahead, what are some of the things that you, I don't want to say fear, but that you're just mindful of and you want to stay mindful of in terms of pastoral ministry?

John Beigel
I think one of the things that was probably already on the horizon, and COVID accelerated it, was the loss of presence. So all the technology that we had was already trending that direction. And then COVID, everything shuts down and everything goes virtual. And then we come out of that and everything continues to be virtual. I've heard it said before, and this is certainly an exaggeration, but one that may be based in reality is that 50 years from now, the only people who are going to get together regularly are Christians because they value it. Whether or not that's true, I think it makes a point that I think we are. We are having to push against this gravitational pull to everything becoming virtual, digital, and it's a matter of convenience. Going to church on Sunday morning is inconvenient. Being with people that you don't choose to be with and don't necessarily even share anything in common with except for Jesus is inconvenient. It's not something that we would choose. When everything moves digital, everything moves online, there's just so much more that is lost.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Yup.

John Beigel

trying to explain to some people what's lost and what...Even if it doesn't feel like it's lost right now, it's going to be lost 20 years from now if we make that decision is challenging. And I think it's only going to get worse.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Yes.

John Beigel
So do I fear it? Well, not necessarily, but it's a concern.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Sure.

John Beigel
And not knowing what's the next thing that is going to come down the pipe that's going to challenge us in this regard.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Justifiably so. Well, as I said, I really have such appreciation for both of you. As Christian men, as pastors, I am just really grateful that you took the time out, accepted the invitation to talk about these things. God bless you, and thank you again.

Dr. Bill Kynes
Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks to be with you.

John Beigel
Yeah. Thanks, Keith.

Ben Best, co-host
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Dr. Keith Plummer
We're at TGC 25, and while we were here, we thought we would talk with some folks about some of the things that they're working on. One of the people that we managed to get is a classmate of mine from years ago, Dr. Sam Chan. He is the lead mentor and trainer at EVQ School of Evangelism, a Ministry of City Bible Forum based in Australia. He is the author of several books, including *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* and *How to Talk About Jesus Without Being That Guy*. Sam speaks at conferences around the world in storytelling, apologetics, and the practice of evangelism in a post-Christian culture. Sam is a bundle of energy, but particularly a bundle of evangelistic energy. Sam, thank you so much for taking time to be with us today.

Dr. Sam Chan
Hey, Keith, so good to be here.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Tell us a little bit about what EVQ School of Evangelism is and what you do there.

Dr. Sam Chan
Sure. It's the EVQ School of Evangelism. Actually, it's EVQ, School of Evangelism. Just like Facebook, it's not the Facebook. It's playing on the idea that just like you have IQ, maybe EQ, we also need EVQ when it comes to evangelism. It's also understanding that information alone doesn't lead to transformation. We can all get informed about how to do evangelism, but really that alone won't quite do it. In the end, we need a cohort of evangelists and also some one-on-one mentoring and training. It's a bit like fitness. We all want to get fit. We all want to get healthy, but information alone doesn't

get us fit. We need to probably sign up for a gym, an exercise class. Now we have a cohort of people trying to get fit with us. Also, there might be a personal exercise trainer, and that's how EVQ works. You sign up and you end up in a cohort of other people doing evangelism, and you also have one-on-one training, one-on-one mentoring as well. Also understanding that there are different sorts of evangelism. There's personal evangelism, and there's also public speaking evangelism. Often when you do evangelism in seminary, Bible College, or on college campuses, you do the walk up to a stranger evangelism, and That's great.

Dr. Sam Chan

There's a time and place for that. But there's personal evangelism. How do I tell my friends and family about Jesus? People who I see every day for the rest of my life? There's also public speaking evangelism. How do I speak to a room full of 20, 40, 2,000 people in a monolog about Jesus? But also where I am in Australia, often when I speak, I'm speaking in secular places to secular people. There's a type of public speaking for church, like on a Sunday where you do a sermon where the audience, they're Christians, they're believers, and it's in a sacred setting. It's a church. They're expecting you to talk about Jesus in the Bible. But how do you talk about Jesus in secular settings? For example, I come in in DEI settings as a person of faith. Sometimes I go to workplaces to explain what Easter or Christmas means to Christians. Sometimes I speak in coffee shops, movie cinemas, secular settings to secular people.

Dr. Keith Plummer

Well, that's what I wanted to know about that. How do you get invitations into secular settings to have these conversations?

Dr. Sam Chan

That's right. So you need a top-down and a bottom-up approach. I work for City Bible Forum. So what City Bible Forum does is very unique. It's more than just workplace ministry. It's more than just faith in work. It's actually networking Christian workers in the workplace with other Christians so they can work together in the workplace, not just to see value in their work because there is, but also to pray for their non-believing work colleagues, and also to organize events where someone like me might be able to turn up and talk about Jesus in a workplace setting.

Dr. Keith Plummer

Yeah. Now, most people hearing you are probably thinking, I'm never going to be talking to that many people about Jesus, particularly in a secular setting. They might even think about the idea of the cold call evangelism, and a lot of people are intimidated by that. What are some of the things that you would recommend to people about being a gospel influence, having spiritual conversations with friends and family? Naturally, what are the kinds of things that you coach people in and train them in about that?

Dr. Sam Chan

The best thing you can do is go straight to our website, evq.org.au, and at the top of the page, you can click on something to test your EVQ. We call it the EVQ barometer. And you can see the areas that you might be good at in evangelism and the areas that might be holding you back that we could work with. And it's not just, do I know how to talk about Jesus? Because deep down, we all do. We have enough information about Jesus. But we look at character, we look at community, like how many non-Christian friends do we have? We look at experience. We look at wisdom. So there's five or six categories that we work with. And maybe the best thing you can also do then is just go straight to my book, *How to Talk About Jesus Without Being That Guy*. He suddenly arrives, it's actually not It's not about talking about Jesus. It's building social capital, having non-Christian friends, getting your non-Christian friends to meet other Christian friends that you have. So they suddenly think, Hey, this thing's believable, because a lot of the people I know and trust also believe in Jesus.

Dr. Sam Chan

It's about going to their things so they will come to your things. It's about the art of hospitality. You can't talk about Jesus until you've at least done coffee with your friend and then done a meal with your friend, and then asking what we call nudge questions, questions that nudge people from

interests to values and to worldviews. So simple questions like, what religion did your parents have? Because that's a very safe question. Or also another question is, what was church like for you growing up? Or you could even be more direct and say, do you have a faith? Tell me about your faith journey.

Dr. Keith Plummer

Now, that title, which I love, How to Talk About Jesus Without Being That Guy, tell us a little bit, who is that guy?

Dr. Sam Chan

It's interesting because I was at TGC in 2019, just before COVID, and I thought, what's the best title to give my seminar on personal evangelism? And I thought, well, let's call it How to Talk About Jesus Without Being That Guy. And I must have touched a nerve because the session was packed. It was hundreds of people standing room only. I think we all know what that guy is, and we just don't want to be that guy. But at the same time, we do want to talk about Jesus.

Dr. Keith Plummer

Give us one characteristic of that guy.

Dr. Sam Chan

I think it's someone who doesn't have EVQ. They're deaf to what's going on. It could be as simple as at work, your colleague is busy. Now is not the time to talk about Jesus. And also understanding that in the Western world, like it or not, rightly or wrongly, for the last several hundreds of years, maybe it's changing, we've had a very strong sacred, secular divide. So in secular settings, you're not meant to talk about sacred things. So it's interesting. Even as Christians, we know if I have a prayer meeting in the privacy of my own home, that's very comfortable. But if we did it in the public library, that's very uncomfortable. And it's about knowing how to read the room, like knowing that, okay, this is probably not the most appropriate place to do this. And maybe knowing, okay, reading the room, when and how can I talk to my friend about Jesus? And we always talk about in America, we joke about Thanksgiving, how everyone has that uncle that you don't want to sit next to. And I think as Christians, we feel like, well, I don't want to be like that uncle at the Thanksgiving dinner when I bring out Jesus.

Dr. Sam Chan

So it just in insensitive ways, not reading the room. And that's what we call EVQ, how to know when and when not to talk, and maybe learning the power of the question, because they talk about how Jesus himself asks 300 questions. Jesus got asked 200 questions. He only directly answered those questions eight times. The rest of the time, he answered with a question. So in medicine, we make a joke about our psychiatry and counseling colleagues. We say, it doesn't take that much to be a psychiatrist. You only have to ask two questions. How do you feel? How are you really feeling? And so it's that power of the second question. Just, well, I'll give you an example. I was at work, and a young nurse asked me, what book should I read? And she had migrated to Australia from China. And that was my chance to be the big, powerful doctor and mansplained to her, Well, this is the canon of Western literature you must read. Instead, I said, Why do you ask? And she said, Oh, because I actually just feel really young and naive. I feel I need wisdom. I said, Well, I also work for City Bible Forum. I have a female colleague who has a lot of wisdom. Would you like to talk to her as a mentor? And she said, "Yes, give me her number." So rather than answering her question directly, I decided to follow with a question. And so sometimes the best two questions are, Why do you ask and tell me more?

Dr. Keith Plummer

I'll explain for folks who are listening the medical reference because you are a double doctor, an MD and a PhD. You're not practicing.

Dr. Keith Plummer

Do you still practice?

Dr. Sam Chan

I still work part-time as a medical doctor.

Dr. Keith Plummer
Oh, my goodness.

Dr. Sam Chan
It is so much fun.

Dr. Keith Plummer
You are a bundle of energy.

Dr. Sam Chan
Thank you.

Dr. Keith Plummer
But I know I know that you're going to be doing a breakout session with Rebecca McLaughlin, and you are going to be talking about answering the skeptic's hardest questions. I'm sure there are a whole bunch of questions that we could bring up, but as you think about this, as someone who's had the experience that you do, what rises to the level of among the hardest questions that you think Christians have to be prepared to respond to?

Dr. Sam Chan
I love that. I think it's interesting. Context is everything. Maybe 20 years ago, the hardest questions were, how do I know the Bible's true, the problem of miracles, the problem of other religions, how do I know Jesus rose from the dead? But it seems like they're not the questions people are asking right now. Ten years ago, the questions were on sex, gender, marriage, equality, all that. And fortunately, Rebecca McLaughlin has written books on that, and I'm hoping she'll have those covered. But I also want to say those questions are hard, not so much on a factual apologetic debate level. They're hard on pastoral levels. So when people say, My child is asking these questions, how do I answer that? How can we pass to people who are living through those experiences and questions? But I want to say right now, maybe the hardest questions are, I'm perfectly happy right now. Why do I need Jesus? And we may say, well, because in all of us is a God-shaped vacuum. We hunger for Jesus. Our friend will say, no, actually, no, I'm perfectly happy right now. And that's a problem with Australia. And I'm sure the USA could be similar, and maybe the majority of the Western world, we own more things, we live longer.

Dr. Sam Chan
So somehow we seem very content. In Australia, life is good. In Australia, life is good. We have beaches, we have great food. And the hardest thing is people living in content culture saying, Why do I need Jesus?

Dr. Keith Plummer
Yeah. And on that point, we're both involved with the Keller Center. Something like Tim Keller's *Making Sense of God*, where he is interacting with the cultural narratives related to things like meaning, satisfaction. Do you think it's helpful and necessary rather than to try to convince people first about the truthfulness of Christianity, to get them to become a little more critical about some of the things that they're assuming that really either don't make sense and/or are impractical, and then show them how Christianity addresses that?

Dr. Sam Chan
I love it. I think, yes. The cultural apologetic thing that people like Tim Keller has championed, that other people got onto like Dane Strange with magnetic sticking points, Josh Chatraw telling a better story, just showing people that your lived narrative actually requires Jesus to be true. And if Jesus is true. That's actually a better story than the one you're living right now. So one way I do answer that question when people say, Why do I need Jesus? I say, Because you're living as if Jesus is true. Everything that you hold to be dear and true actually requires Jesus to be true. Without Jesus, you have no ontological, no metaphysical foundation for all the things that you believe and that you live for right now.

Dr. Keith Plummer

So you're living as though the biblical story is true on many levels, though you reject it.

Dr. Sam Chan

And you see that right now with someone like Tom Holland. Tom Holland, not the Spider-Man. That joke gets old, doesn't it? Tom Holland, the UK secular historian who is exploring the Christian faith. He's not a Christian yet, but when he wrote the book *Dominion*, this 900-page thing on how everything that we love and hold to be dear and true in Western civilization actually requires Christianity to be true. Things like human rights, equality, freedom, compassion. We live as if they're true. Well, they need Jesus to be true. They're not self-evident truths. They're truths that require Jesus to be true. I think a lot of Christians are using that as an apologetic. And maybe a helpful way to push that further is to say Western civilization needs Jesus, but Jesus doesn't need Western civilization. So we can all find our own cultural ways of living out Jesus. It doesn't have to be a return to Western civilization.

Dr. Keith Plummer

That's a really good point. Well, I mentioned a number of the books that you've written. You working on anything else?

Dr. Sam Chan

I have. We have a tiny Christmas book coming out. It's called *The Missing Peace*. It's only 60 pages. It's coming out with a Good Book Company. It's called *The Missing Peace: How Christmas Gives us the Peace We Crave*. And it's designed to be a book you buy and give your non-Christian friends at Christmas. So buy 10 or 20 for yourself. Give them out to all your non-Christian friends at Christmas time. It will show them not just the Christmas story, but why Christmas gives us the peace we to crave. And then churches should get hundreds of them so that they can hand them out at the end of the service to all the people who walk out. So the Good Book Company has designed it to be small and cheap so that we can hand that out to our non nonbelieving friends, both personally and at the Christmas Church service.

Dr. Keith Plummer

That's excellent. Well, Sam Chan, thank you so much for taking time out. I know your schedule is busy, but it's always a joy to talk with you and look forward to your ministry in the future.

Dr. Sam Chan

Thanks again. Awesome. Thank you so much, Keith.

Ben Best, co-host

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