

Craig Dyer Testimony/chat with David MacLeod

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Preacher: Craig Dyer

[0 : 00] This is not my idea, this is more Craig's idea. I'm not holding the microphone, but he thought it would be helpful for us to maybe ask a few questions. So I'll begin with the questions, and then you'll have the chance to ask a few questions on your own, just when we get to the end of the first wee bit.

So maybe Craig, you could begin by telling us a wee bit about yourself, where you're from, your family, your wife, that kind of thing. Certainly.

Yeah, thank you David. So I live nowadays in Renfrew, just very close to Glasgow Airport, the outskirts of the city. I'm from that area, really, from Manachar, born and brought up in Hamilton. And we moved a little bit when I was young, just a little bit around the area, but essentially just south of Glasgow most of my life. And went to Northern Ireland to study, met my wife there, she's called Margaret.

I shot that to Meg, because it's much easier when you're texting. And we are blessed with three daughters. Claire is... I shouldn't give her ages anymore, actually.

[1 : 10] It used to be relevant when they were young, but they're all in their 20s, and I've been 20s. Claire, Jennifer and Gillian. Jenny and Gillian are twins. And Claire is the oldest. And we've been living now in Glasgow for...

Since 1995, associated with the work in Harper. And maybe you can tell us just a wee bit about the work in Harper that year.

No, we'll come back to that. We'll come back to that. So that's a wee bit about yourself, where you grew up, and Meg and the girls. Maybe you can tell us just a wee bit about when and how you came to faith.

Yeah. Yes. Well, I was asked this question last week, and here's the truth of the matter, and you'll recognise the first part of this.

I'm saved because at some point in eternity, in the stunning wisdom of God, he chose me in Christ before the world began.

[2 : 24] I'm saved because in history, God the Son came, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life. As we said this morning, the Lord's table suffered under Pontius Pilate, gave his life on the cross, praying for my sin, one Friday, 2,000 years ago.

And then, about 1975, on the 1st of March, having had the privilege of being raised in a Christian family at the age of eight, that became very real to me.

And that was a night when, actually, my brother and I both said that we wanted to trust the Lord. We'd been at a missionary meeting, we'd heard a remarkable story and testimony, and it really had a bigger impact on us.

And was the thing that God used in space and time to particularly awaken me to that. So I tell that story not to be smart or facetious or just to be, kind of, theological about it.

I tell that story because that is the reality of how I'm saved. And I tell it that way because I've now had that test piece since I was eight, and I'm well over 15 now, as you can see.

[3 : 45] And I need the Lord as my Saviour as much today as ever I did, and I need his grace in my life today as much as ever I did. And I need his strength in my weakness as much as ever I did. And I keep reminding myself of how vast the salvation plan is and how great everything is.

So that's the way I choose to do it. So I came to know him early in life, and therefore, you know, you have to, you have the teenage years and you have to work out what that's going to look like. And I'm sure I dropped him all many times, but in his grace, he's never let me down.

I perpetually let him down, but he is faithful, and I keep coming to him every day. I'm like the supermarket trolley with a buckled wheel.

You know, the one that always drives him to the left, and you've got to keep hauling it back. Every morning I wake up, I've got to haul myself back to the Lord.

I've got to pray, Lord, incline my heart to your testimony. It's a nervous, selfish game. Every day. And in his grace, he does that. So that's my testimony. Thanks, Craig.

[4 : 51] Maybe just picking up on that, there are some here tonight that are young. Some who are eight, some who are a wee bit older than eight, some who are slightly younger than eight.

Some who may be trusting the Lord, some who may not be. Some who may not be sure whether they are or not. Could you maybe just share a wee word for the eightish year olds, and then thinking through your teenage years, and the reality of dropping the ball, as I could testify to as well in my life.

Could you maybe just share a wee word of encouragement and instruction to the eights and the eighteens? Yeah, that's good. That's a good question.

I wish I'd thought the question before. I've never thought the answer before. Well, I'll tell you, if you're eight or something, I'll tell you my experience. Earlier than eight, I definitely knew deep in my heart, deep in my being, I knew that I needed to be forgiven.

I remember many nights going to bed, and in the darkness, having a sense of not being right with God.

[6 : 12] I was six or seven, and asking the Lord to do something about that. And I promised him in the morning I'd tell somebody. And the morning would roll in, and the light and the sunshine, or the bucket and rain as it was more often.

And I didn't tell anybody. And so I tell you that, because if you're a little one here tonight, if you're under 10, or under 12, or something, and you've got that sense that you really should trust the Lord Jesus, and you're a bit afraid to do so, because you're a bit embarrassed.

Or you're a bit, I can't make a fuss, and I don't want people crying all over me and telling me how good this is. You know, that was the thing I dreaded. I dreaded my mum and my granny and everybody crying and being happy.

I just thought that was unbelievable to make your old boy. But the point is, if you feel that way, you should just talk to somebody that you know and trust about the Lord Jesus.

Because what that means is, he's working in your life. Isn't that amazing? He's working in your life. And that's a glorious thing to come to him early.

[7 : 24] And if you're 18, well, you've got to decide who you're going to live for.

There is no way you can be free to live entirely for yourself. You're going to serve somebody. You're going to be dominated by something.

Something is going to be God in your life. I know the young people, you know, they all say, no, no, no, I don't buy that. I'm nobody's food. No, it's impossible. You cannot be human and not be a worshiper.

You will worship something. You will worship someone. You will give your life for something. It might be the games and the gaming machine.

It might be a girl or it might be a boy or it might be a career or a course in university or a hobby or music or something like that. You will give yourself to something.

[8 : 25] And you've got to work on what that's going to be. And the reason that I would plead with you to see who the Lord is is because everything else is like trying to find satisfaction by going out into the car park tonight and finding a muddy puddle of mine face down and suking it up and trying to refresh yourself with that.

Everything else goes like that. But when you come to the Lord Jesus, he's described in the Bible, God or heaven, the Father, the Spirit, as a fountain of living water.

And all of us long for that. And your young, cool friends who laugh at you for being here, they're not as cool as they appear. On the inside, all this is going on.

And you're in an amazing position because people here love you and pray for you and speak to you of the Lord Jesus. And if you want to know the reality of what makes life worth living and what makes life tick and what's at the center of the universe, then you should be unafraid to trust in the Lord Jesus and cast yourself on him and build your life on his word.

And you'll be satisfied. And others too will come to know him. Thank you, Craig. So you've told us about your childhood and that awareness of God working on your life and giving your life to him.

[10:02] And in the teenage years and the ups and downs, you got to the end of school. I don't actually know what happened in your life. I did get to the end of school. You got to the end of school, I presume.

And then was there university? Was there employment? Or did you go straight into ministry? Or what? No, I got to the end of school. And in the church firm that I grew up in, in Hamilton.

There were opportunities in my teen years to get involved in the youth fellowship and things like that. And I would sometimes be asked to, as a carrier attorney, I had to speak or something like that.

And people would say, oh, you're going to be a pastor. And I would say, not on your nelly. That's the last thing I'm going to do. Not because I didn't think it was amazing work or important work. But because I knew it was a tough gig. And there was just no way. And I kind of went into 14, 15 years of age, even 16, being fairly serious about the Lord in my life.

[11:05] But sort of doing deals with the Lord and saying, the Lord, when you, when I've, you know, done whatever I'm going to do study-wise. And I've got myself established in business. And I said, you will not be sorry because missionaries who come home unfurlable have the use of my villa in Monte and the estate in a wheelchair.

And they can have the helicopter anytime you need to get around. And you'll be glad that you let me do that. And, again, saved at a missionary weekend.

Really convicted about the direction of my life. And the first of the weekend, a guy came to preach. And he just said at the end of the weekend, if anybody's prepared to go anywhere at any time and do anything for the Lord, they should make it known.

And there's a sense in which everybody ought to be able to say, of course, I will. But there was another sense in which it was a kind of crisis night for me. I was about 16. And I remember just thinking, right, Lord, I don't, this is nonsense.

If you're God, I don't tell you, you tell me. And I was a bit spooked because I thought, I don't think I'm going to like this. But there's a wee verse in the Bible that says that he knows that if we being evil will allow to give good gifts to our children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

[12:24] In other words, you'll never be sorry you ask God and put things in his hands. You'll never regret that. And so that's when I was 16.

I went home at this and told my dad, I said, look, that was a bit significant, I think, for me. And there was no flashing lights. It was a very emotional thing. It was a kind of reality check.

So, finished school, not in a particular blaze of glory, but got through the hires and so on. And I had begun to think quite seriously we were going to do some kind of theological training.

I thought I might be a youth worker or something like that. I didn't think I could be a pastor, but I decided I would do that. But I think I was pretty clear on the fact that I wanted to get some working life experience, first of all.

So, I had a range of jobs and it was a brilliant university experience. It wasn't real university, but what did I do first?

[13:23] I worked in, do you remember John Menzies? Well, that was a security man at 16 in John Menzies. Can you imagine? In Glasgow. And then I worked, I sold meat from a little van.

And then I worked with British Gas as a salesman in the Hamilton showroom. And then I got a job with Stagecoach, the bus company. And they put me through my class 1 PSV and I drove bussing up and down the country.

And I loved that. Did that for about three years until I was 20. And then having had that kind of working life experience, all very jobs, but gave you a sense of how life worked.

And how things fitted together and what a hardship was like and all that kind of stuff. It was really helpful preparation. Then at 20 I went to Northern Ireland, to Belfast, and did my theology there.

And that's where I made my work. And then, to start, how did you, did you, you went from there to Hartford, did you? No. So, so we, I graduated in, went to college in 86, graduated in 89.

[14:35] And I got a call to Bells Hill Baptist Church, just south of Glasgow. And we went there for six years.

And then in 95, or 94 we got a call to Hartford, moved there in April 95. And was there 13 years full time. And the last 10 years as associate pastor, I've been working with Christianity's schools.

And maybe just tell us a wee bit about that work, now that you're involved, you've taken us up today. Yeah. A Hartford, or a CEM? A wee bit of both. Ah, you will.

What are you doing just now, really? So what I'm doing just now is, I'm a training director with Christianity's Board. So I've been a pastor for about 20 years at that stage. Christianity's Board ministries were developing a little team.

And it's a funny story, I don't really have time to tell you, but they kindly invited me to go and take that role. And I spent about a year thinking and playing about it.

[15 : 38] I was reluctant to leave pastor at the local church. Not because there wasn't many a day when I watched the postman get up the path and thought, I wish I was you. And would have gladly done something like that.

But just because I'm a local church guy, I'm utterly convinced that this is what the action is. This is what God is using. He uses his word in the hands of his people, in the lives of the church family. And so I was reluctant to step away from that. The Lord made it really clear. And then in 2008, I moved to take up that work with Christianity's Board ministries. And essentially the work is to develop usage of the materials globally.

And to encourage those who are using it to provide training for them. And if I can't do it myself, to arrange for others to go and do the training. And that involves us in getting translations organised and publication.

And warehousing and distribution and all that kind of stuff that you would expect. We have a wee interest in that. And so as someone prayed, it's been amazing to see how it's grown.

[16 : 48] Used over a hundred countries now. We've got about 40 translations. And it's really just quite thrilling to see churches all over the world taking the word of God seriously.

And taking everybody in the church family taking their responsibility seriously. It's not just this guy's job to do the evangelism. He's in the supplies department. He's in the equipping department.

And everybody has a responsibility to be able to say something about the gospel of the Lord Jesus. And we just think if we can train our church families to go through Mark's gospel. And show people who he is and why he came and what it needs to follow.

And then the Lord will use that as we proclaim his son, God will complain to us. So that's what I'm doing. Is that all right? Yeah. Thank you, Craig. I wanted to just see if there is anybody who has questions.

You know already, Craig, from even a few conversations over the course of this weekend. That Christianity Explored has been used here for a number of years.

[17 : 53] Certainly longer than I've been here. Longer than this church has been in existence. And it has been used with a great sense of blessing. There's one, two, three here anyway tonight.

And there were others here earlier who I know came to faith through Christianity Explored. So, we know and recognise the name. And there is an interest and there is an appreciation of it.

So, I wonder if there are people who might have questions for Craig. But Christianity Explored, what about anything? Anything. What football team do you support? I just support the local team, let alone team Colour Rangers.

There's a fair point. There's still some work of sanctification to be done here. Well, that is the sanctified work. So, hopefully we need to be done.

Any questions for Craig? Anthony. Just Craig speaking to us earlier a bit about the latest version of Christianity Explored. Yes. And the way it seems to relate more to the younger generation in a very secular style.

[19 : 05] Can you have a question? Yes, certainly. Certainly, Anthony. So, we have three courses in a number of guises. The youth edition, the prison edition and so on. There's three of them.

Christianity Explored, which is seven weeks going through the Gospel of Mark. Discipleship Explored, which is eight sessions through Philippians. And we've added just in this last year or so, Life Explored, which is seven sessions, taking groups through the drama of the history of the Bible. Creation, fall, redemption, new creation, and the consistency of the Bible.

And we've added just in this. And we've added just in this. Now, that sounds a bit unpalatable for non-Christians. But the way that we've packaged it and the angle that we've attacked it at is to identify, as Anthony was saying there, that there is now a generation who have no sense of there being any absolutes.

No sense of there being any standard. And therefore, if we talk about sin only in terms of falling short of a standard, which it is, they are blind and deaf to that.

[20 : 26] It has no resonance with them at all. But if we use the other biblical picture of sin, one of which is the wrong worship of our hearts, the idolatry of our hearts, the making of good things God things, then in God's kindness, that seems to be awakening people to the reality of their sin.

And we see that people, you know, I guess especially what we would call the millennial generation, have an intolerance to anything that's factually based.

But inside they are screaming for meaning. And they're screaming for relationship. They're screaming for authenticity. Which is a wonderful reality when we hold out the ultimate reality in Christ.

And so we've developed this little course that seeks to address these issues by presenting people with a number of ways in which we worship their own thing.

Whether it be in relationships or in something material in our lives or whatever it may be. And shows them the compelling superiority of the living God and what it is to know and love and trust him.

[21 : 45] So it's a little bit different from Christianity for the obvious reasons. But it is evangelistic, it is expository and it is engaging in that sense. It has two films.

There's a short little silent movie in the beginning. There's just a general settle down, watch this, enjoy it, make it what you will. A couple of Bible readings and then a Bible study and a film presenting some aspect of the gospel.

So it's our effort to try and reach out to the people that we're not getting to with Christianity. And do a profile act and you can get it online and have a look at it and see the thing.

Thank you Craig. We haven't used that one yet but we hope to soon. Any other questions? Okay. Maybe you've got questions. Would you like to tell us how your local church came to be called Harper Baptist Church?

Oh that's a good question, yeah. So, yes, we've truncated the name to Harper Church but it is fully Harper Memorial Baptist Church. We've dropped Memorial because that's really smacks the non-Christians of a cemetery.

[23 : 04] And Baptist is largely meaningless unless you're within the Christian groups. And we're trying to be, we're trying to do all we can to think about engagement with the lost world around us.

So to make it easy we'll just close it down to Harper Church. But it was so called because the founder pastor of the church, John Harper, his story is quite well known but he was on the Titanic with his little girl on route to Chicago to return for the second time to preach at the Moody Church in Chicago.

We think he might have been about to be called the pastor there. He'd moved from Glasgow to Walworth Road in London. His wife had died in jail, but he was with his little girl. And obviously you know the events of what happened in the Titanic.

He hit the berg and he put his little daughter into a life belt. And we know that he went into the water without a life belt. And was preaching the gospel of the water because there was a Canadian who heard the gospel and got saved.

Can you imagine a Canadian of all people? And he got saved and survived to tell the story. That's the only reason we know what happened. And as you can imagine, there was a massive outpouring of grief in the UK after the loss of the Titanic.

[24 : 31] And many memorials were set up. And the people of Walworth Road in London sent a gift to the people of what was Paisley Road Baptist Church in Glasgow.

And they decided to rename it, Harkin Memorial Baptist Church. Which is lovely but dangerous. Because it's the church of Jesus Christ.

And I don't know that John Harper would be that pleased about it. God will not share his glory with another. I'm sure John Harper did not want to share his glory. But there is a lovely story to it. As long as we don't exist today in the morning to John Harper.

He would have hated that. We want to put our people to Christ. Thank you. Any other questions? No. Okay.

They want to know, can they go home? Yeah. Go home and be with it, yeah. Last question. It's just, how can we pray for you? You know, yourself, your family, your work, anything in particular you'd want us to remember as you go from here.

[25 : 39] It's been great to have you. And we'll endeavour to remember your prayers after you will. Yeah, well, the, you know, we as a family in the ministry, Harkin and the ministry, internationally with CEM.

We need all the things that you need. So whatever you're asking for yourself and finding you need, you can be sure that we need that. We've got challenges in the family. We've got challenges in the church. We've got challenges in the ministry.

God willing, a week today are we, and this time are we heading to Kenya for a week. And things have been unsettled in Kenya at the moment. So certainly pray for that. But I think that it's a lovely thing to be asked, and I do appreciate that.

I think more than anything else, if you were to pray for me as a husband and a dad and a pastor and a sort of travelling touring director or evangelist or whatever, I think the biggest thing to pray for me is that I would find myself happy in the Lord Jesus.

That's the thing we all need most of all, to be just so content in him, that he is so real to us every day, that whatever the issues that we face are, that we're not on our own and he's with us, and our ultimate joys are all in him.

[27 : 07] So that would be the thing to pray, that I just find my ultimate contentment in Christ, that God in us with contentment would be great gave to me. So that all the other ups and downs of life that we all have, and we've got them exactly as you do, then we would face them to his glory and by his grace and with his strength.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Amen. Lord, we pray that as we go from here now, that we would go knowing the presence of the Holy Spirit going with us.

And we pray that we would know the joy of your salvation on us. We thank you for the cost, the price that has been paid by Jesus and all that we have meditated upon today.

We thank you that all our transgressions, all our sins can be wiped out if we look in faith to Jesus and receive that cleansing.

And Lord, we pray that each one of us here would know as we walk out this door that we have called upon the name of Christ, that we have asked for that cleansing, and that we are saved from the penalty of our sin, and saved for and into a relationship with God which is everlasting life.

[28 : 40] Lord, we pray that we are saved from the Holy Spirit. Hear us, Lord, help us, lead us, guide us, bless Craig and bless each one of us as we go from here. And enable us to go and to know your presence.

In Jesus' name, amen.