

## Session 5: Bearing Witness in the Classroom

### DISCUSSION: Your Experience of Evangelism

READ:

*'Wow, you literally have a Bible study in your seminars! What an opportunity to share Jesus! I wish it was as easy for me'* my CU friend said to me. *'Well, yes...and no.'* was my reply. And then I felt a bit guilty.

*If you're a Christian, perhaps part of what drove you to study theology or religion was a desire to know, live and speak more for Jesus. When expectation meets the reality of trying to speak for Jesus in our theology department we can often feel underwhelmed or discouraged. After all, we're also trying to keep up with the reading, trying to understand the content just like everyone else – as well as trying to be mindful of our course mates.*

(Pete Johnson, 'Speaking for Jesus in Seminars and Lectures')

- What has been your experience(s) of evangelism in the past?
- How do you feel about the opportunities to share about Jesus with other theology students?
- Do you feel confident speaking to coursemates about Jesus or not?

### DISCUSSION: Clarity on the Gospel We Share

READ:

*"So, as Christians we are eager to do evangelism. But what evangel do we tell people? Only theological study, wrestling with the Bible and the great doctrines that Christians have found there, can give us the answer."* (Michael Reeves, "Pursuing the Illogical Studies")

- What are common 'evangels' (gospels/philosophies) among theology students at this university?
- Where do you think they get their ideas from?

*"It is often when you are out of the study telling your friends about Jesus that you find you need to get back there to learn how you can answer them better. Good theology of the gospel means a purer presentation of the gospel to a world that so desperately needs precisely that."* (Michael Reeves, "Pursuing the Illogical Studies")

At the heart of the Christian gospel is 'Jesus is Lord'. But in those three simple words is the whole drama of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. There is the story of the kingdom of God breaking in to the world as we know it. There is the mystery of the one God, wholly unique in being and distinct from creation, who alone is worthy of worship and with whom Jesus is somehow identified (i.e. the mystery of the Trinity). There is the wonderful consolation of our justification, redemption by Jesus' blood, union with Christ by the indwelling of His Spirit, and future hope of eternity with Him.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5 (paying attention to the immediate context)

- Paul writes “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (1 Cor 2:2) Does this mean that the cross is the entire content of the gospel? In what ways *does* the cross exemplify the gospel message?
- In what ways does the gospel seem like weakness and foolishness in the context of academic theology?
- How can you see the gospel addressing the lives of your friends and coursemates as both challenge and genuinely *good* news?

### DISCUSSION: Sharing the Gospel in Practice

#### READ:

In ‘Speaking for Jesus in Seminars and Lectures’, Pete Johnson writes of the twofold danger of both underestimating *and* overestimating our opportunities to share the gospel in the classroom and the challenges that we face in doing so.

There are unique opportunities that discussing theology in seminars provide for transitioning conversations with our coursemates to the content of the gospel. But that doesn’t mean that it is easy, nor does it mean that we will always have the opportunity to do that *in the moment* in the classroom context.

Nothing is a substitute for developing genuine friendships with your non-Christian coursemates which consist of ongoing conversations about the deep things of life, including questions that emerge from your studies.

Pete offers five guiding principles for practically making the most of the opportunities that you have as theology students. These very briefly are:

- 1) See your aim as not to out-argue but to out-love those you’re discussing with.
- 2) Really listen, and listen well.
- 3) Use questions well: ‘What is a good question I can ask to point to the truth and beauty of Jesus?’
- 4) Choose your moment and place: you don’t always have to respond there and then. Sometimes you’ll make a better response having gone away and reflected upon it.
- 5) Pray. If you can do nothing else, make praying for your coursemates your priority.

- What difficulties do you face telling non-Christian theology students the gospel?
- How is your course helping you give a clear explanation of the gospel to your friends? How is it not helping?
- What practical steps can you take in the coming days and weeks to be a witness to Jesus on your course?

#### PRAY:

*Pray for your coursemates to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.*

*Pray for boldness to make the most of every opportunity afforded to you by your studies to bear witness to the good news of Jesus.*