



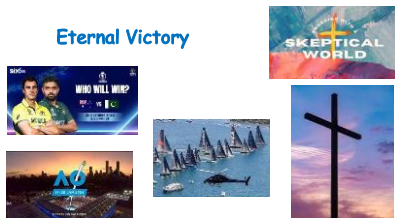
## “Engaging with a skeptical world!”

Readings: Colossians 1:3-14; Matthew 5:1-15, Proverbs 18:1-4, 12-15



Last week we commenced our series, ‘Engaging with a Skeptical World’. Thinking about the analogy of the trellis and the vine, this week we will explore ways to strengthen and link the vines so that our relationships deepen and expand as we share Jesus.

I am humbled by the profound challenge of engaging with a skeptical world. In navigating this conversation, we again draw inspiration from the practical wisdom of Sam Chan as we apply the eternal truths written in Scripture.



I am aware that January is all about victory! The cricket, sailing, tennis, but this series has really made me ponder the hollowness of these sporting victories and how important it is that we prioritise our eternal victory, won for us through Christ. This is the message we must be compelled to share.

Pray that you are confident in God. Pray that you care enough about people that you want their future secure for eternity with Christ. Pray that you would be patient as you build bridges into people’s lives, listening carefully so that you can hear the source of what a skeptic is saying. Pray that you would be humble and non-judgemental, gracious without being condescending, yet clearly representing Jesus as the eternal truth.



Let’s look at four ways to engage with others, having the attitude of “**Yes, and ...**”, rather than “**No, but ...**”

### 1. Engaging others within a Skeptical World

#### A. Authentically Spirit led

Most of us know what it’s like to be around a truly authentic person or someone trying to be someone or something they just aren’t. Authentic people instil a sense of trust. You trust that what they say and do is based on how they really think and feel.

I think together, when we are authentic, we create a sense of community. This thought took me back to my rugby union team, (aged 8). Our coach taught us a move called, “Authenticity”. When the half back at the scrum called “authenticity”, we all knew our part in the manoeuvre. We were each a step in a bigger process. We were all linked and each of us were indispensable for the move to work. The move was awesome, whether it worked or not, because we were all part of it. Isn’t this what we do here at KAC? We are the vine reaching out to make a difference.

Authenticity comes from knowing what’s important to you and remaining true to these values in the face of external pressures and expectations to think and behave a certain way. So, the bottom line is really, ‘How authentic is your faith? How much do you trust God? Do you really put your faith in Him? Is the Spirit of God transforming you?’ An authentic relationship with God

## Engaging with Others in a Skeptical World      Colossians 1:3-14, Proverbs 18:1-4, 12-15

transforms our heart, soul, and mind. We are compelled to love God first and love our neighbour as ourselves. Matthew describes this as being salt and light.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:14–16)

Jesus calls us the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt preserves, flavours, and brings out the best in what it touches. Light dispels darkness and reveals the truth. Our evangelism is an act of preserving and flavouring our community with the Gospel. Summerlife has been a great example of this. Let us be a light that dispels the darkness of despair and ignorance, revealing the truth found in Christ.

As we step into the realms of skepticism, we must recognise the fragility of not being authentic. The Spirit's role is indispensable, for genuine, Spirit-led transformation which shapes an authenticity to our testimony. In every conversation we must be the light of the glory of Christ who dwells in us. Jesus emphasises that we shine His light in our dealings with others.

Yes, and ...



1. Engaging others within a Skeptical World

B. Faith that is humble

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

### . Faith that is humble

Proverbs 18:12 says *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

Instead of approaching others with a sense of self-righteousness, let us humbly share our faith journeys. In doing so, we build bridges rather than walls, fostering connections with those who may be skeptical.

Self-righteousness wears many disguises. The scary thing about self-righteousness is that we usually don't recognise it in ourselves, yet we are so quick to see it in others. We think because of our religious practices that we are okay with God. We think because of how we pray that we are trusting in Him, not in ourselves. We think because of how we live that we are doing better than the people around us. Self-righteousness stinks; unfortunately, we are the last to smell it on ourselves.

Even when our self-righteousness is cloaked in words of gratitude or shown in actions that, on the surface, appear to be done out of a desire for God's glory, self-righteousness still reeks of self-justification. Self-preference, self-motivation, self-promotion ... self, self, self. It is a misplaced trust that leads to misplaced judgment.

President George W. Bush once said, "We judge others by their actions and ourselves by our intentions." We judge people around us more harshly than we would dare judge ourselves.

Think back to our series on Biblical justice. We do justice when we grasp God's grace. When we know God's mercy, we humbly share Jesus with others.

Self-righteousness preaches merit; humility pleads for compassion.

Self-righteousness thinks you are right; humility approaches in other-centred love.

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Self-righteousness separates by being better; humility identifies with others, recognising we are all equal.

Self-righteousness destroys through its alienating self-service; humility opens doors with its power to sympathise.

Self-righteousness turns up its nose; humility offers an open and up-lifted hand.

The cross is central to shaping and transforming the very foundation upon which our engaging stories are built. The Cross is our trellis. It reminds us of Christ's humility and sacrifice, providing a model for how we can engage with a skeptical world. Humbly look to Jesus in awe.

Yes, and ...



2. Jesus' Engagement Model (Our Cross shaped trellis)

A. Jesus as the Ultimate Example

Jesus spoke to people's hearts. He focussed on people's needs. He communicated to people something greater than themselves. Jesus knew His Mission. He was intentional.

"You're Kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you".

### 2. Jesus' Engagement Model (Our Cross shaped trellis)


Jesus as the ultimate example; it is crucial that we understand where those around us are coming from. In imitating Jesus, who approached people where they were, we must listen to the needs and questions of the skeptical.

Jesus spoke to people's hearts. He focussed on people's needs. He communicated to people something greater than themselves. Jesus knew His Mission. He was intentional.

Our care and concern, mirroring Christ's approach, should become a prescription for the deep needs of those who are searching. This approach, rooted in love, provides a tangible expression of the Gospel.

Canadian author and theologian Eugene Peterson says, "In a word, what I'm saying is, *Grow Up*. You're Kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you". People must be able to see the light of Jesus shining from you.

Yes, and ...



3. The Kingdom of God is Transformative

A. Mission Starts Here

"The faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace." "and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light."

### 3. The Kingdom of God is Transformative

#### A. Mission Starts Here

Effective connection with others requires us to be more than passive observers. Instead, we become active participants, serving amongst our community, and integrating ourselves into their daily lives.

Our recent Mission Partnership meeting reinforced this idea that we must start by connecting locally before we look further afield.

Our community should see a beautiful, attractive, and compelling picture of life in the Kingdom of God.

Our community won't trust Jesus for salvation unless we, with the Spirit's help, can show them Jesus has something meaningful to say about life.

In Colossians 1:5–6, Paul speaks of "the true message of the Gospel, that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace."

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This text reminds us that the gospel continues to work in us even after we first believe. It's not merely good news on the day we heard it; it's good news that keeps on bearing fruit and increasing as we grow in holiness, as verse 12 says, "as holy people in the Kingdom of light".

Yes, and ...



3. The Kingdom of God is Transformative

A. Mission Starts Here

Consider the Gospel from three perspectives: Cross, grace, and Kingdom. Since Jesus is our prophet, priest, and king, the good news about Jesus confronts us, changes us, and governs us.

Embracing and enjoying the Gospel in all its fullness can help churches become distinct, countercultural communities full of humble, Spirit-transformed people.

Consider the Gospel from three perspectives: Cross, grace, and Kingdom. Since Jesus is our prophet, priest, and king, the good news about Jesus confronts us, changes us, and governs us.

The Gospel is a message to be proclaimed, an identity to be received, and a Kingdom to live for. It's a new forgiveness, a new status, and a new way of life. It's the message that Jesus died for us, that through Him we're adopted into God's family and that He has ushered in God's already-and-not-yet Kingdom.

When we proclaim the Gospel through only one of these perspectives, we miss its richness and beauty and minimise its transforming power.

We need to share the historical events of the Gospel, the Cross and resurrection, to accurately understand the Gospel as a matter of public truth, not private belief. We are growing the vine from the Cross shaped trellis, patiently; step by step.

We need to share the Gospel's personal invitation, adoption into God's family through faith in Jesus.

And we need to share the new status and identity Christ offers people. Jesus' Kingdom subverts and upends the world's value system.

Embracing and enjoying the Gospel in all its fullness can help churches become distinct, countercultural communities full of humble, Spirit-transformed people.

That's what our community needs to see. It is from this place that we reach out. When people see this, we can authentically share at this deep level and connect with questions that only Jesus can answer.

Our Bible Reading from Colossians is a picture of this. Be thankful, filled with grace and prayerful. This is the heart we need to connect with a skeptical world.

### B. Coffee, Dinner, Gospel

Put simply, as our social landscape changes, we must reimagine our approach to connecting with others. Work with what you've got! Use your gifts you have been given for His glory. The challenges presented by generational differences and diverse experiences are opportunities, not obstacles, to build connections without skepticism.

Yes, and ...



4. The Key of Intentionality

A. Practise Intentional Listening

B. Practise Intentional Speaking

"Wise words are like deep waters; wisdom flows from the wise like a bubbling brook."

### 4. The Key of Intentionality

#### A. Practise Intentional Listening

Seeking to understand others is not a passive exercise but an intentional act. Unspoken responses often convey more than

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words, and our reciprocal conversations should be driven by empathy rather than a desire to correct.

Trust, prayer, and obedience become the guiding principles ensuring that our intentions and actions align with God's purpose, fostering an atmosphere of genuine connection.

### B. Practise Intentional Speaking

Our passage from Proverbs makes it clear that the tongue holds immense power, either bringing life or stirring up strife. It is a tool that can build up or tear down.

Proverbs 18:4 says, *“Wise words are like deep waters; wisdom flows from the wise like a bubbling brook.”*

As bearers of the Gospel, let our words reflect the love and grace of Christ. May our tongues be instruments that speak life, hope, and redemption into our community.



In conclusion, our call to authentic evangelism is found in the transformative power of the Gospel. Let us be mindful of the words we speak, embody the virtues of the Kingdom by being holy, and allow the Gospel to bear fruit in our lives and community. As we go out today, may our actions and words echo the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.