



Season 14: Episode 6 | John Lennox on Faith, Science & Truth

Hello and welcome to Scripture Untangled, a podcast by the Canadian Bible Society. My name is Joanna la Fleur, I'm a friend of the Canadian Bible Society, and I'm going to be your guide for today's episode. Today we have a very special episode with CBS Ambassador, Reverend Dr. Andrew Stirling, in conversation with John Lennox.

John Lennox is an author, Bible teacher, and emeritus professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford. He's the president of OCCA, which is the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics. Originally from Northern Ireland, he spent decades exploring some of life's biggest questions about science, faith, and the existence of God.

His books include *God's Caretaker*, *Has Science Buried God?* and *Against the Flow*, which explores the Biblical story of Daniel and its relevance today. Known for his public debates with leading atheist thinkers, including a viral episode recently as a guest on the chart-topping podcast, *Diary of a CEO*, Lennox helps audiences engage thoughtfully with challenging questions and consider the place of Christian faith in the modern world.

Enjoy this conversation.

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Andrew Stirling: Professor Lennox, I am delighted that you're taking the time to join us on Scripture Untangled for the Canadian Bible Society. I must say I've looked forward to this for some time.

And when I was given the opportunity to read your autobiography, *My Story*, I couldn't put it down over the summer. And I have just enjoyed every moment of it. Whether I understood everything or whether I could identify with everything, I'm not so sure.

And maybe that'll be revealed in our discussion. But I really do thank you for the book and for the depth of faith and sincerity that you show in that book. And I really do want to sort of concentrate on that because I want others to read it. I really do.

John, one of the things that struck me in the early part of your book in particular, but even later on, was the influence of your parents. And there were a couple of moments.

One where your mother sort of got you on the right road again and refocused you and said, you know, you have to think about what Christ has done for you. And you were going in many different directions. Focus on what Christ has done for you.

And to have a father who actually introduces you to the writings of F.F. Bruce, the New Testament scholar in Manchester, to show the reliability of New Testament documents. Clearly, you had parental influence that was positive. Tell us a little bit more about that, John, and why parental importance is there for us even today.

John Lennox: Well, thank you very much, Andrew. It's a great pleasure for me to be with you. Firstly, in Canada, which is a country that I love.

And secondly, with a Bible Society, because the work of the Bible Societies throughout the years has impressed me greatly. So, it's a double honor for me today. And thank you for inviting me on.

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Parents played a huge role in my life. And the main reason for that is that they clearly loved me, but they loved me as Christian parents. And their Christianity, and this is the important thing, was credible.

They lived it morally, ethically, and spiritually. And it was very obvious from their attitude, their prayerfulness, their respect for God's Word, and their interest in us as children and me as the eldest of four. They spent time really making the Word of God live for me.

And that was important. But observing their stance, Northern Ireland in those days was very sectarian. And the troubles were beginning to loom in the background.

And my dad was Christian, but he wasn't sectarian. And that showed itself in him taking the risk of employing people across the religious divide in our hometown. And he suffered for it.

His store was later bombed, and my brother was nearly killed quite a few years later after I left the country. But nonetheless, I asked him one day why he took the risk. And he said, son, he said, Scripture teaches that all men, whatever old men and women, whatever their worldview, are made in the image of God, and I intend to treat them like that.

And that was a big lesson for me. And it became a foundation for my own life, that evaluation of other people, which he took a risk to defend. Secondly, I think, and equally importantly, they loved me enough not to push Christianity down my throat, but rather to open my mind and stimulate it by showing how the Christian worldview, how Scripture faced the big problems that we face in the world.

And that was impressive because neither of my parents had high-level education. My dad never even got to finish school properly because he was told by his father he had to run a business. My mom went to a college and taught bookkeeping and shorthand and things like that.

So, neither had a university education, yet they were able so to introduce Scripture and books relating to it that it was mind-opening rather than mind-closing. And all

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those things gave me a very deep impression of the reality of the other world, so to speak, in which they believed. They made Christianity credible, and in that sense, made it easy for me to believe it was true.

Andrew Stirling: Hmm, and that comes across very clearly in the book, John. I mean, that sense of freedom that they gave you to examine, to look, to search, to find truth, I think is a tremendous gift. You write, and this is very important for our audience, you write about Scriptural inspiration.

So, you clearly had a background where parents who lived that sort of authentic faith, but you went on to think about discovering sort of principles to assist in the reading of the Bible. But they're very simple and they're very straightforward about how to read the Bible. And you say these three things, and I really would love you to reflect on this, John.

You say, first of all, you read what the Bible said, first of all. Second, each book needs to be read as a whole, which again is something I applaud. But you also suggest that the jumping off point as to why it is inspired actually comes from those two things, not the other way around.

In other words, don't think about how we discover that the Bible is inspired and then read it. You go the other way around and you begin with the reading of it and then find the inspiration coming out of that. Tell us more about that, John, because that's very important for a lot of our people.

John Lennox: Well, it all has to do with the claim that Scripture makes about itself, that it is the Word of God. And if that's true, then God must be able to authenticate Himself in His Word, which means that although the arguments that can support our confidence that Scripture is the inspired Word of God are important, like F.F. Bruce's book that you mentioned, or the New Testament documents reliable, and many other works on the reliability and authenticity of the contents of Scripture, nevertheless, it is important that we allow God to speak through His Word. And that, for me, is the acid test.

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So, you read it and reread it, and read it asking questions, otherwise you learn nothing, but also praying that God will reveal Himself to you through it. Jesus promised His disciples that after He left them, He would come to them and He would reveal, the Holy Spirit would reveal Him to them, and I believe that that is true. And so, I read Scripture thoughtfully, prayerfully, asking God that He will speak.

And my experience has been that when you have that sense of God speaking through His Word, that is the final authentication. The other things back it up, but I believe that it is that that is shared by Christians throughout the centuries, and it's that experience of God speaking through His Word that actually gives us spiritual authority and something to say to the contemporary world. So, yes, you're right.

It's very important, indeed.

Andrew Stirling: And I think, you know, people do struggle with this because, as you know, there are a myriad of arguments made against the inspiration of Scripture or just placing it as another book alongside many others. But I even found, I'll be honest with you, John, as a preacher, that I would go and look at a text and I would think, oh my goodness, where does this fit in here? And how is it translated? And so on.

But when I started to read it, it inspired me. And it was as if God was speaking to me as the preacher before I could speak to others. So, I never felt that I had to sort of do an a priori defense of it.

I could just proclaim it and then let the Spirit do the rest of that work. And that's clearly what comes across with you. Are there other sort of moments when in your life you've engaged people and you have sort of felt that power of the Spirit working through the Word, through you?

John Lennox: Oh, on many occasions, because I grew to expect that.

Not that it's happened all the time. And of course, these are subjective experiences and who knows what a secular psychiatrist or psychologist would do with them. But nonetheless, I believe that God, in this amazing way, has created us in His image.

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And part of that is that He can speak to us and we can speak to Him. And so, the subjective side, even though it is subjective, I think is important. And, you know, many people object to me that, surely as a scientist, I cannot take this stuff seriously because science and science things are testable.

Well, that's not always true. But let it stand. And in Christianity, nothing is testable. But that's false. And I think one of the ways in which we, I would answer your question, is to say this. Jesus made certain profound claims of what would happen to people who trusted Him as Savior and Lord.

He said that they would receive peace with God. Now, most people don't have very much peace. They understand what you mean and they long for it.

Jesus promised that He would give forgiveness because He was dying for their sin. He promised them new power to live. Now, all of those things are testable by trusting Him.

And often I say to folks, look, the proof of the pudding, so to speak, is in the eating. If you discover, as I have done over a very long life, that when people respond to Christ, they change. And it's often visible.

Their narcotic dependencies disappear. Their fears disappear. They have hope and joy and all the rest of it.

And it's clear that that's connected with their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't have to see that many times to make two and two equal to four. So that is strong evidence.

And when you experience that as a preacher or as what all of us are called to do, to witness to the Christian faith, it changes people. And this is why in my old age, I try to encourage people, Andrew, to get across the fear barrier and start witnessing to their friends. That's a crucial step.

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In fact, it's so crucial. I've even written a little book called *Have No Fear*. And the Gideons or whatever they're called now in the UK have adopted that little book to encourage people to witness to Scripture.

Andrew Stirling: Well, let me give you an anecdote, John, a real anecdote of something that happened last year at St. Andrew's Church in Oxford, which is where I sometimes worship when I'm in Oxford. And during my sabbatical, I worship there. And there was a lady who came to me at coffee time.

And she thought I was a complete stranger and didn't realize I'd been there before or that I was a clergyman. And so, she started to witness to me. And she said, you know, I just, you know, this is the faith and I just want to make sure you have it sort of thing.

It was just delightful. And I said, well, where did you get the courage to do this? She said, oh, there was something that John Lennox wrote about no fear about sharing the faith. So, I thought I would try it out.

I'm serious at St. Andrew's Church in Oxford on Linton. You probably know it.

John Lennox: Oh, I know it well.

Andrew Stirling: I was just stunned by it.

Look, going on a bit further now, because I mean, now you've made the case, I think, that the Bible matters. I'm also intrigued, and I'd like our audience to know this about you, about your passion for Biblical distribution. Because there are a number of stories in your book and in your long history of you handing out Bibles to people on a train or supporting organizations such as the Gideons or the Bible Society of Ukraine or stories of smuggling Bibles into communist Europe, in Eastern Europe, into Poland.

You did that with great passion, and it comes across in your book as something very inspirational. I'm not going to ask you why you think that's important, but I will say, you know, where do you find the courage to do something like that, John?

John Lennox: Well, let me first just correct something. I never smuggled Bibles.

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And there was a strong reason for that, that in the countries I went to during the Cold War, they didn't want me to smuggle Bibles. They wanted to smuggle me. In other words, my Bible teaching, which they said they got so little of, and they asked me, please do not attempt to bring anything else with you other than your Bible, because we want the teaching.

We don't want you stopped from coming yourself. So just for that small corrective. Well, it always seemed to me logical that I'm a Christian because someone else, in my case, my parents have shared the Word of God with me.

And the Lord Jesus commands all of us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to get His Word out. And so, it seemed to me that it was totally inconsistent to claim to be a Christian and yet to be silent. And not to get the Word of God out.

And I still am utterly convinced that that is the case. And I often challenge people and say, look, you believe that the Bible is the Word of God. They'll often say yes.

And I say, when was the last time you gave any part of it to anybody else? And that can result in an embarrassing silence.

Andrew Stirling: Yes, indeed. Yeah, it's also one of the reasons why, I mean, you know, I've got to be sort of personal here.

One of the reasons why I love doing what I do as ambassador for the Bible Society is because we're now involved in translations, as you're probably aware, with indigenous communities and giving Bibles to indigenous communities in their heart language, which is really a tremendous gift. And seeing already, I think, the difference it makes both to the culture and the language, but also in individual lives. And it's making a huge difference, John, in people's lives.

You mentioned earlier on, and I want to explore it a little bit more, about this notion that God has set eternity in our hearts. You know, in conversations I have with people who are non-believers, who are either agnostic, or I don't run into many real atheists, but agnostics, I certainly do, or people who have other doubts. I don't get the sense from them that we see that God has set eternity in their heart.

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You said this, and I'm going to actually quote you on this, John, because this really struck me. You wrote,

"It should be emphasized that from the early days, I expected to get opportunities to talk to people. And that was not simply because I'm a talkative Irishman, no comment by me, but because I believe that it can be said of every person that God has set eternity in their heart.

There is a God-shaped space in everyone, and therefore I expect people to be searching for the truth, even if they do not recognize that that is what they're doing. I like to give people credit for being interested in the big questions."

What does it mean God has set eternity in our hearts, John?

John Lennox: I think one of the increasingly obvious expressions of that is the statement by many people I meet when they're talking about big issues.

They say to me, is this all there is? Surely there must be something more. In other words, it's a sense of transcendence. This isn't satisfying me. The material universe isn't enough. The material toys aren't enough. There must be something more.

And it seems to me that is a start on a very important journey. It's certainly not the end of the journey, but it's a start. And that sense, C.S. Lewis talks about it a lot, a sense of longing when people are on their own and they're being quiet and reflective.

There must be something more. And I believe we can speak into that by telling them, yes, there is something more. And that's why you are like you are.

You're made in the image of God with the capacity to hear Him and to talk to Him. And if you're using neither of those capacities, you will, in the end, realize it by being uneasy and uncomfortable and dissatisfied and so on. And it's that sort of approach I make to it.

Andrew Stirling: John, another question that comes my way, and again, in pastoral engagement over 40 years, people will talk to me and question the whole notion of

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the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. And you write something, and again, I'm quoting you, but it's, again, just one of those pithy quotes. "Christianity is not a religious scheme like many others."

And you're implying that Jesus is not a deity alongside other deities in the pantheon. Why is it important, taking into account the fact that God has set eternity into our hearts, to appreciate the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, especially in a very pluralistic society?

John Lennox: The short answer to that, and I'll word this very carefully, is that the Lord Jesus offers us something that no one else offers. No other religion, no other philosophy, no other worldview offers us a relationship with God that we can know in this life, a certainty of acceptance by God that we can know in this life, a sense of forgiveness and a hope for the world to come that we can know in this life, a new power to live, a new sense of purpose, and all the rest of it.

So, I often say to people, Jesus competes with no one because He's offering me something none of them offer. So, it is scarcely arrogance for me to accept from Him what nobody else is offering me. Now behind that statement is the very important analysis of what religion is, in a sense of what religion is for most people.

And I often ask them to define religion or describe it. And generally speaking, even sadly, people would describe Christianity like this. They say, well, there's a prescribed path and there's a ceremony and initiation to get you onto the path and then you get gurus or imams or priests or rabbis and all the rest of it that give you good advice and teaching to keep on the path until you come to a final assessment.

And that final assessment is based on your merit. So, it's a merit-based system like a university exam. And I point out that however nice the professors are, they cannot guarantee you to get a degree if you're a student because it depends on your merit.

So, you won't know until you sit finals. That, yes, and that is the normal view of religion. And then I drop the bomb and say, that is not Christianity.

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Christianity is not a merit-based scheme to gain approval from God. It is actually the exact opposite. We've got to face the fact that we can never merit God's salvation.

And the main transaction comes at the very beginning of the way when we receive Christ and trust Him and we're accepted at that point, because He dealt with our sins through His cross and rose again in newness of life. So that I often say to them, I'm not doing these talks or interviews in order to get brownie points and get God's acceptance in the end. I'm doing them because I have that acceptance.

And one of the ways I explain that which I found very powerful, I've said it's odd that people think that relationships with God must depend on their merit. And I make a little story out of it. And I say that I met a beautiful young woman many years ago and decided I'd like to marry her.

So, I said that there was an unusual tradition in our family. And she asked, what is it? And I presented her with a cookery book, all wrapped up. And she said, what's this got to do with marriage? Well, it's a tradition in our family that a prospective husband gives to his prospective wife a cookery book, chooses his favorite dish, which in my case is apple cake, and points out on page 157, these are the rules for making an apple cake.

I shall take so much flour and so much this and do this and this and this. And here's how it's going to be. If you will do this, let's say for 40 years, to my satisfaction, then I will accept you.

Otherwise, you can go back to your mother. Now, you're laughing, Andrew, and that's the interesting thing, because you know that that would be an absolute insult to any girl.

Andrew Stirling: Yes, I think so.

John Lennox: And yet people don't bat an eyelid when it comes to God, because that's exactly the way they treat God. Yes, absolutely. If I do so much, you'll accept me.

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You wouldn't insult a fellow human being by saying that the relationship must depend on merit. And this is really explaining what the New Testament means by the Gospel of God's grace. Salvation is not by merit.

It's not of my works. And that's why I can be sure of it. That's why it brings so much joy.

It is not religion in that sense. It's the exact opposite. And I find with these kinds of explanations; some people will eventually get it.

And they are staggered because they're living in a merit-based society where everything depends on your merit. Your acceptance depends on your merit. How you look, what you say, how much money you've got, all the rest of it.

And so, it's saying something very radical that I say, look, if religion is that kind of merit-based system, then Christianity is not a religion. It's a relationship for the person and must be thought of as such.

God's Book: The Series: Before we return to today's conversation, here's a look at an exciting new series from the Canadian Bible Society, *God's Book: The Series*.

What does the Bible really say about science, miracles, violence, and suffering? *God's Book: The Series*, is tackling the Bible's toughest questions in a new eight-part video series created for young adults and anyone who asks questions about the Bible. Featuring Bible scholar Andrew Ollerton and three Canadian young adult hosts, *God's Book* explores some of the most challenging questions surrounding the Bible through thoughtful and accessible conversations. The series is launching really soon, and you can be the first to know when it arrives.

Preview the trailer and download your free launch kit at godsbooktheseries.com. That's Gods book the series. com. And now let's return to the conversation.

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Andrew Stirling: Amen, amen. I was reading and have been reading the writings of Richard Baxter and I'm going to write an academic paper on him actually very soon in *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* which is just an absolute classic book.

And you know, he makes a similar point in the sense that, you know, you don't earn your way, it is by grace and grace alone. And that in and of itself gives peace and you don't, as you said, earn the merit and so on. I want to come back down to real earth in a sense and something very earthy at the moment with you, John.

And that is the concern I have, and I think many people today is the violent world we're in. And the fact that Christ challenges the spirit of the age, He challenges the zeitgeist, He challenges the way that we do things. And you point out, and I thought this was wonderful, the story of Peter and the sword and Jesus' response to him.

But you also talk about the return of Christ as our hope and that sort of has implications for how we treat others and how we deal with the issue of violence. Can we be, as disciples of Jesus in the world in which we live, free from that violent aggression, free from that desire for revenge?

John Lennox: I'm sure we can. But I also know that some people in certain parts of the world may find that very difficult.

I think the arrest of Jesus is a hugely important event in the New Testament writings. And I used to wonder why there was so much space given to it. I don't wonder anymore, because it was when I realized what the nature of the charge against Jesus was, that I saw how relevant it was to world history and to that particular question of violence.

Because Jesus was, to use modern language, he was accused to the Roman governor of being a terrorist or an insurgent, politically motivated to, in the end, destroy the rule of Rome. And Pilate, of course, was very concerned about that. Now, the back

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story is that when the arrest party came, Peter and another disciple clearly had a sword each.

That's all they got amongst 12. And Peter didn't know how to use his sword. And he took a swipe at the high priest's servant and chopped off his ear.

And Jesus just replied by saying, look, put your swords away. If you live by the sword, you'll die by it. And He replaced the ear according to Luke the doctor.

Now, I believe He supernaturally replaced the ear, but you'd be very dim if you didn't realise that this was, as well as a supernatural healing, it's an acted parable. And the fact is, and that lies behind your question, that the use of violence and guns and bombs to defend Christ and His message have, of course, turned people away from God.

Andrew Stirling: Yes, they have. Absolutely.

John Lennox: And they have in my country, in Northern Ireland particularly. And therefore, it is hugely important to realise, and I am speaking metaphorically, that if people's ears have been cut off by that kind of behaviour, Jesus will put them back on again. And I say to people that, you know, if you're a Christian, you need to be in the ear repair business.

And you need to put the ears back on of people who have seen this kind of thing and explain to them exactly the stance of Jesus before and after His trial. And this is hugely important to me and relevant for the world at large. We need to see what Jesus says.

And He repudiates violence, from which I conclude, and it's a radical conclusion, but it's the only logical one, that if people use guns, bombs, violence to defend Him or His message, they're not following Him. They're disobeying him. In that sense, they're not Christian at all, because a Christian is a person that follows Jesus.

So, a great deal of Christendom was simply not Christian, as has been pointed out by many people. But when Pilate interviewed the Lord Jesus, he was very concerned as

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to the nature of Christ's kingdom, because Jesus didn't deny being a king. He affirmed it.

But what sort of a king? And the answer came in a most important and incisive statement that Jesus made. To this end, I was born. And to this end, I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.

And He also said, just before that, He said, My kingdom is not of this world. Well, in what sense? Well, if it were of this world, He said to Pilate, my servants would have been fighting that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here.

It was a very clear statement that His kingdom was not a political threat to Rome. But in the second statement, to this end, I was born. To this end, I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.

Pilate replied by saying, what is truth? But he didn't wait for the answer. And that shows us, I think, very clearly, because the one thing that you cannot do using violence is to impose truth on people, especially if it's the truth of the love of God, the salvation of God, peace with God through Christ, and all the rest of the Christian message. You cannot impose that by violence.

And so, Jesus was making it very clear that He was no threat to Pilate, and Pilate could see it. So, he declared Him innocent. And that fact that the Roman governor declared Jesus' innocent of the charge that's made again and again against Christianity, notably in my case, during my debate with Christopher Hitchens, the late Christopher Hitchens at the Edinburgh Festival.

Yeah. So that's why I believe understanding the trial of Christ can help us bring into the open our Lord's stance to these things. And therefore, Peter was fortunate that he got off with simply injuring a man who Jesus later restored.

I've often wondered what that man thought of the whole incident as he reflected on it in the years afterwards.

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Andrew Stirling: John, that's beautifully put, and it's very powerful in your book. I must say that understanding someone like yourself who had come from the troubles and had seen internecine conflict so clearly, as you mentioned at the very outset here, it resonates with me, of course, in my days in South Africa during apartheid when I was at the University of Cape Town, which, by the way, one of my friends told me you'd visited.

And one of my close friends, actually, and was so pleased that you'd been there when you see the effects of that internecine violence and how it just begets more violence, too, is really something that is so abhorrent to Jesus. Another thing that I see, again, and not only weaving through this book, *My Story*, but also other works of yours, is about the resurrection of Jesus. And you make another phrase, and look, I think our people need to hear this.

You say the resurrection was bodily, it's not a magic trick, and involves the physical raising of the dead. In other words, it's not some sort of a platonic idea or hope or a spiritual thing. So why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ central to our faith, John?

John Lennox: For a very simple reason.

Death for humans is the great unknown. And it's not only unknown, it's feared. All human beings, as Hebrews says very clearly, deep down, we're all afraid of death.

We're afraid of the process of dying, and we are afraid also of what might be at the end of it. And if death is the end, if atheists are right, and their worldview is right, that gives us a totally different universe from the one that the Christian worldview gives us. The atheist universe is hopeless by definition.

We can only have limited hopes for this life, perpetuate ourselves in some sense in our children and grandchildren and so on. But there's no ultimate hope for us personally. And you can see the level of that fear today in the vast efforts being made technologically to preserve something of the human mind and brain even after death.

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People are desperate to have an existence beyond this life. And Christ's resurrection punctures a hole in atheism that will never be closed. It gives us that hope for the future.

But first of all, what it does is to authenticate Him as God incarnate. He predicted that He would rise again and that it would demonstrate that He was, in a very deep sense, one with God. He was God's Son using the Biblical language.

And that was the message that overcame the Roman world in the first century. And therefore, it stands at the heart of the Christian faith. If there was no resurrection, there would be nothing.

We would be of all people, as Paul said, most to be pitied.

Andrew Stirling: Pitied, yes, exactly.

John Lennox: Yeah, that's right.

Andrew Stirling: And that hope manifests itself. I mean, that's sort of the Trinitarian view of God and the love of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And that is our source of our knowledge of what constitutes love.

Has sort of within it, incarnate within it, that sense of hospitality, that sense of drawing us in to God's love and the Trinity reaching out and bringing us in. You had, I think it's fair enough to say, a pretty good experience when you came to Canada and in fact, in Don Mills and elsewhere, you write about that. And you talk about hospitality as a manifestation of the Gospel.

Why is hospitality important? Why is it sort of a manifestation of our relationship with Jesus Christ?

John Lennox: Well, once again, we see the way God came into the world, not in blazing glory with great armies, forcing people to bow through sheer terror, but coming in humbly as a carpenter and mingling with people, having conversations with them and above all, eating meals with them. And what that indicates, of course, Middle Eastern hospitality is very famous for its warmth and its extension to strangers

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beyond family. And I think in that sense, what God was doing was showing that at the humble level of homes, relationships, meals together, this is where God was to be found.

And it's in those relationships of friendship that are often solidified and occur because we have meals together that made Jesus really hospitable to His disciples, even though He wasn't married. And you find again and again, the significant things in the Gospels happened at meals. And there were occasions in which Jesus did something supernatural to feed a large crowd.

And I believe that was simply an indicator of the world to come when He would be the supreme Host and would feed and nourish His people. So that to my mind, there are all kinds of lessons at many different levels to be learned there. And the main one is the importance of family meals, of meals with other people.

And it's often, as you know, we all know that at meals, the opportunity arises to go deeper in getting to know someone and also being vulnerable yourself and sharing wisely with other people what your experiences have been and thereby helping them.

Andrew Stirling: That's so eloquently put, John. And, you know, I look at the story of the Emmaus Road.

And at the end, sitting down and breaking bread and having a meal with those that were following Him, they realized who Jesus was. They saw Him in the breaking of bread. They saw Him in the cup.

They realized and recognized who He was. And so, in that very act, as you said, of the meal, of the dinner, there is this sense in which it is revelatory. And as you said, revelatory about the people that are around us and with us and learning from them.

So that is so important. John, you are, and I'm coming close to the end of our discussion here, there's a couple of things I'd like to just emphasize.

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You have an enormous courage. There are times when I read about you facing off against those that are the most strident atheists. And you've mentioned already Hitchens, Dawkins and others, your scientific peers who might bring into question what you might have said.

And I was thinking of somebody else I know very well, Sir John Polkinghorne, who, you know, used to actually have him come and preach in Toronto for me, you know, that he faced the same sort of rejection sometimes by his peers, sometimes by those in the church. And I mean, that was brought out in your book. Where does your John Lennox courage come from? Because that really struck me in this book.

John Lennox: Well, I think the answer is simple. That it comes from God. And one knows it comes from God because I'm just at this moment reading audio books of my own books.

And I'm reading Daniel at the moment. And I was doing it just before we came on air. And I thought, how did I ever write that? Where did that come from? And although I did a lot of research for books and for talks and all the rest of it, I've experienced something above and beyond that.

And one remarkable instance of it, I don't know whether you've come across it, but just a few weeks ago, I did a major interview with Stephen Bartlett on *Diary of a CEO*.

Andrew Stirling: Oh, yes. Yes, it was great.

John Lennox: And that has gone around the world. And again, several people have rung me up and said, look, where does all this come from?

Andrew Stirling: Yeah, exactly.

John Lennox: And I really believe that James put it, if you ask for wisdom, if you want wisdom, ask for God and He will give it and trust Him to give it.

And I think it's just by the grace of God that I'm allowed to get into these situations. And often I have an overwhelming sense of peace and calm, which is what Bartlett

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noticed. Because it's a pretty high-pressure situation to be questioned by a businessman of his standing.

And yet I had complete calm and peace, and he noticed that at the end. And he saw that also, I believe, in Wes Huff, who you must know from Canada. So that I think it's something God gives us.

And Paul, again and again, shows that he's confident in the Lord. We mustn't be confident in our own capacity. And that's important.

There's a huge difference in using your credentials and in trusting them. Christianity is where we use our credentials and trust God. But the other way, which is where we trust our credentials and use God, that's a disaster.

And it's a very fine line between the two of those things. But the one is Christian, the other is idolatrous.

Andrew Stirling: Yeah, yeah.

And we're driven, as you said earlier on. I mean, this desire to succeed, to elevate ourselves above others is causing an enormous amount of stress particularly I'm finding in young people today. And I know in the UK, as well as here in Canada, we have an issue with young people and mental illness and really feeling the pain and the struggle of trying to elevate themselves above their peers and stand out in social media and so on.

John, I ask this of every single guest, and I've done that from the very beginning. And that is for our audience, what can we pray for you as John Lennox? And what is your most immediate concern right now?

John Lennox: The chief test of all shepherds is how they end up. And so, I would ask that people pray that I finish the journey well and honour the Lord in it.

I'm now coming up for 83, and I don't know how long I've got, but the Lord appears still to have given me a clear mind, and I wish to keep serving Him by writing. I don't travel at all since my wife is now disabled and not at all well. So, my prayer is that I can

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be faithful to the Lord to the end and also on the practical level, that I will retain the physical strength and capacity to drive so that I can look after my wife. Because if anything happens to me then that would be a massive change for us.

But we have to face uncertain futures and it's just to keep faithful I think is the most important thing. There are too many tragedies of leading Christians who in middle or old age go crazy and let the Lord down and any of us can blow it. And King David had a prayer that I often pray, "let not those who trusted You Lord be ashamed because of me."

Andrew Stirling: Well John, that's a beautiful sentiment and I also know and we'll pray for your wife too because in your book you rightly say it's very important to consult with your spouse and it's important to have a partnership and that comes across in your book a loving partnership between you, and you as an integral part of that but also in terms of the keeping of the faith. And I want to say this to you John from the bottom of my heart, you encourage us to keep the faith and if you've done anything in this life it is to be a source of inspiration and guidance and in the most humble way, in the most humble way.

And I want to thank you for your time today and I want to assure you of our prayers that you may end well and keep the faith and that you and your wife will experience all the blessings of the love of Jesus Christ.

Thank you, John, for your time with us today.

John Lennox: Thank you so much and may God bless you and all the work of the Canadian Bible Society. Bye-bye.

Andrew Stirling: Bye-bye.