



## Convinced and Compelled

### Main video

2 Corinthians 5:14 has some words that have really grabbed me recently and I hope they will for you too.

“For Christ’s love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.”

I was in a prayer meeting and somebody prayed about being compelled by the love of Christ, and I had to look up where that came from, and it came from this verse. And the idea of being compelled comes from the idea of being convinced, so it was those two things that grabbed me.

To be convinced is like a judge making a decision based on the evidence, and I think we just need to admit something. However imaginative and creative our programmes of outreach are within our church, whether they’re new ways or whether they’re old ways, they will never really be that fruitful or effective unless our churches are made up of individuals, and our small groups are made up of individuals, who are convinced and compelled. Compelled means to be like held in but in a good way, it’s what holds you together.

So, my question is, before we do a whole bunch of innovative and creative things to reach out with the message of hope that we have, “Why are you convinced?”

I’m convinced, for a whole bunch of reasons, about the message we have in Jesus.

I’m convinced because I look at creation and I see more than enough hints that point to a creator and an innovative creator at that.

I’m convinced because when I see life right at the very end as a minister and I have the privilege of being with people at the very end of their lives, I’m convinced that end is not it, and there is more, and that more is eternal.

I’m convinced at the other end of life when new life happens, and I see a baby – there is more than the sum of its wriggling parts and that more has a soul.

I’m convinced most of all because of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and because Jesus’ words and wisdom are so compelling and have lasted the test of time and across cultures. My family converted from Hinduism on my Dad’s side from Sri Lanka and the words of Jesus worked just as effectively in an Asian context in the northern part of Sri Lanka as they do here in the UK or anywhere else in the world and I don’t know anyone else’s words for whom that could be true.

I’m convinced because of the life of the early disciples who had nothing to go on but their own evidence and yet staked their lives on what they did and the way they followed Jesus after he had ascended.



And I'm convinced because of the life of Christians today, some of whom suffer great persecution for their faith, and because of friends who are followers of Jesus much closer to home.

I think it's important for us all to have reasons why we are convinced and compelled. So what are your reasons? What are your reasons why you're a believer today? Not why you first became a Christian, although that may be included in it, but *right now* why are you convinced and compelled? Judges are not necessarily certain, but they've got more than enough to go on to base a judgement on it.

We need to accept that – before we create a whole range of interesting and innovative ways of doing church in order to help reach those who wouldn't come foreseeably to the ways we do church in our locality at the moment –we need to accept that in the end it comes down to individuals, you and me, having the confidence and the means to explain the message of hope in Jesus that we have.

### *Feedback video*

So, one question that flows from what we've been discussing so far is, "How do we help our people and give them the confidence to build relationships that help them to share, genuinely share, their faith beyond just talking about the weather or about the sport that was on or about some things more trivial?" Not that we never talk about those things, but that we can at least be prepared to put Jesus on the table.

Now the topic that we've just discussed about being convinced and compelled is some of it, but also we need to give our people some confidence and some examples to at least be prepared to begin to talk about Jesus and pray that those opportunities might come up.

A couple of things occur to me straightaway in trying to answer that question. One is to assure our people that when they're having those conversations in what might seem a very social or work-based context, they're still very much doing something key in the life of our church when they're on their front line that's absolutely vital and no less, maybe more important, than volunteering on some rota in the life of our church.

Another thing that flowed from it is that we realise people in our church genuinely wanted equipping in giving a really good short answer to some of the most difficult questions we get asked about our faith. As a minister I have the privilege of giving a 25- or 30-minute answer to a difficult question, but on a front line you genuinely don't. Normally what happens is you have 30 seconds with your work colleague before somebody else comes in the room and it's no longer appropriate to talk about it and you might get another 30 seconds later on or maybe 2 minutes at best.

So how do you give a good 2-minute answer to the question of suffering, for example, and why God allows suffering? Well, one thing we did in our church and this might help you to think about it, is we listed the 8-10 most common questions we're most likely to get asked and we workshopped it. We said, "OK, to give a good short answer you need to



know a good long answer and then condense it back down”, and we asked just who would want to come to that to process that with us and a whole bunch of people did.

Maybe you could do that. Pick one question in your small group that might come up, that you would even pray might come up even though it’s a difficult one, and process it together to come up with first of all some long answers and then what you might say with 30 seconds or 2 minutes.