

CHRIST REVEALED



Episode 1

Transcript

Patrick Gentempo: Hi, I'm Dr. Patrick Gentempo.

Gretchen Jensen: And I'm Gretchen Jensen, and we are your co-hosts for Christ Revealed.

Patrick Gentempo: I hope you're ready to go on what promises to be an epic journey. Through the production of Christ Revealed, I have to tell you that my own life was transformed, and I witnessed things and experienced things that were absolutely startling. With the wide range of people that we interviewed and the places that we visited, it absolutely changed my life forever, and I can't tell you how excited I am to take you on this journey, to witness these things, and to understand the history, the evidence, and the inspiration of Jesus Christ.

Gretchen Jensen: So Patrick, how is this going to work?

Patrick Gentempo: Christ Revealed is nine episodes, and each episode, we have multiple people that we interview and multiple sites that we visit, and everything is directed toward the idea of the history, the evidence, and the inspiration surrounding Jesus.

So, every episode in and of itself is extraordinary in its scope, but what's unique about Christ Revealed is that when you put this all together, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. I can't tell you how important that concept is. There's so much about Christ that we need to understand, and to take little pieces, of course, can be something that fulfills us, but when you start to paint a vivid and complete picture, it's literally transformative.

Gretchen Jensen: So, in episode one, we're going to hear an interview with Sean McDowell. We're also taking you to the Garden Tomb.

Another interview with Tisha Michelle and the Mount of Beatitudes.

So, tell me, Patrick, what was it like talking to Sean McDowell?

Patrick Gentempo: Well, Sean McDowell was an incredible interview. Now, his name is well-known, because his father is Josh McDowell, who is a big leader in the Christian community. Sean is in Christian Apologetics, an entire intellectual movement within Christianity that is very compelling and he has some unique ways, and actually some surprising ways that he leads and teaches his students. So we sat down in his home. He was gracious enough to invite us in, and had a very in-depth and powerful conversation that I think you'll find absolutely enlightening.

Gretchen Jensen: So lean in and enjoy episode one.

Patrick Gentempo: Sean, thanks so much for spending time with us here today, and I'm really excited to have this conversation with you.

Sean McDowell: Oh, happy to do it. This is a great project.

Patrick Gentempo: Can you give us a little bit of your background?

Sean McDowell: Sure, be happy to. I'm a professor at Biola University, teaching a graduate program in Apologetics, which is just offering a defense for what we believe and why we believe it. I also teach high school part-time. I taught high school full-time for 10 years before pursuing a doctorate, and I love working with students, working with young people. So I teach part-time at Christian high school, and I get to speak to students and write, and I'm a father and husband.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, so, you have your PhD in what subject?

Sean McDowell: I got a doctorate in Apologetics and World View Studies.

Patrick Gentempo: So, explain what that is. When you say apologetics, well, go ahead and explain that, but also what you mean by world view studies.

Sean McDowell: Sure, yeah, we had somebody call up to Biola University and say, "Why do you have classes on apologetics? Why are you apologizing for the faith?"

Of course, that's a misunderstanding what apologetics is. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "Set apart Christ as Lord in your heart. Always be ready with an answer or a reason for the hope within. Give it with gentleness and with respect."

Well, the word translated into English, answer or reason, comes from the Greek, Apologia, so it's apologetics. So, apologetics, especially in the Greek context at that time meant given a defense or reason for what you believe.

So when Plato wrote A Defense of Socrates, he called it An Apology. So, apologetics, we have classes on why does God allow evil, classes on intelligent design, classes ... I teach one on the Resurrection, or how do we know the Scriptures are true, and then world view studies was a little broader that would include cultural issues, philosophy, and just how to apply it to certain issues of the day.

Patrick Gentempo: That's great. Tell me what you think was meant by the hope within.

Sean McDowell: What I think Peter meant is that as believers, we don't grieve without hope. We don't live in a purposeless, just immaterial world. There's a God who's created us, and who's conquered death and evil through the Resurrection, and for those of us who believe in Him, regardless of the pain and the hurt we see around, we always have hope that a better day is coming.

Patrick Gentempo: And how critical hope is, and this ties into, because one of the things that I feel like through this process I'm discovering, is that faith, I think, is an additional human need. You're just given the predicament of being a human being. Trying to be one without faith, I think it leaves a big void that can lead to all kinds of problems.

So do you think those two things are tied together?

Sean McDowell: Well, I do. I mean, Jesus was asked, "What's the greatest commandment in the law?"

And He said, "Love God," and He said, "Love other people."

So we have been made to be in relationship with God and to be in relationship with other people. Now to be in relationship with God, that requires faith. Now that's not blind faith. That's not believing something without evidence.

In fact, I think faith is trusting what we have reason to believe is true, but it goes beyond what we can see. It involves a hope-in-future thing such as Heaven. So, we have good reason to believe in those things and we trust God, and that's really what gives us hope in the present.

Patrick Gentempo: So, when you are in classes teaching in the Apologetics classes, what are some of the responses you get from students who are coming to learn in that environment? Are they surprised by the level of intellectual prowess that's attached to all of this?

Sean McDowell: So, we have a very unique program in that it's a graduate program, and it's a master's level. So we have people from 25 years old to 75 years old, who come in distinctly wanting to study and learn about the evidence. So by the time they get into my class, they are sold on the fact that there is evidence. There's facts. They believe it.

Really what I find is when I go speak at churches, when I speak on college campuses, there's people who the first time hear about evidence for the Resurrection. They hear about evidence from the origin of the universe pointing towards a Beginner. They hear about philosophical evidence from a moral law that we know to a moral-law Giver, namely God.

So I think the church and the broader culture is pleasantly surprised, and intrigued, and interested when they're introduced to some of the evidence for God in general and Christianity in particular.

Patrick Gentempo: So, in the general framework of philosophy and its branches, morality being one of them, most people do not say that, or would not consider that there's a Christian view relative to this that's a well-reasoned view. They almost think, well, you have to separate yourself from philosophy in order to be a Christian or think like a Christian, but it seems like the opposite is true.

Sean McDowell: Well, I think that's the case. We live in a world that says there's truth when it comes to science. There's truth in history. There's truth in mathematics, but when it comes to religion, it's all a matter of opinion. It's a matter of feeling. Whatever you believe is true for you.

So, without even realizing it, even amongst many believers and nonbelievers, there's kind of this divorce between facts and evidence and your religious beliefs. What makes Christianity unique is in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, "If Jesus is not risen, our faith is in vain." It's worthless. We're still in our sins. In fact, we're to be pitied.

So our faith is tied to a single, testable, historical event. So Jesus did rise. Christianity's true. If He didn't, it's false. So I think for people to start to make that connection and realize that facts matter, evidence matters, and we should use our minds when it comes to faith. That's eye-opening and encouraging for many people, challenging for others.

Patrick Gentempo: So, over 2,000 years later, are we able to establish some facts that are rational?

Sean McDowell: I think so. In fact, what's interesting is we would tend to think the further we get away from the time of Christ, the less confidence we could have in the evidence. That would kind of be the natural intuition. I think it's the opposite.

I think with increased technology, with increased discipline, today, we are actually able to get closer to the very words of Jesus, confidence in the Scripture. We're able to uncover certain archeological finds we were not aware of in the past. So, I actually think the evidence is increasing the further we move away from the events from which Jesus actually lived.

Patrick Gentempo: We see, as you said, there is archeological evidence that exists, and we're really excited to be going to Israel to start looking at some of this-

Sean McDowell: That's fantastic.

Patrick Gentempo: ... and interviewing these people. It's going to be great.

Has there been any contradictory evidence that's come up?

Sean McDowell: So, it depends on what you mean by contradictory evidence. I think there's some evidence that's incomplete, evidence that's ongoing. When you look at the issue ... Take the topic of archeology. Most places in the Bible have not been found.

Well, that's not to prove they don't exist. That's because most places have not even been excavated in Israel. It's like less than 1%, for a lot of political reasons and other reasons. But then, of the sites that have been excavated, not 100% of that individual site has been excavated. It's a minority of that site. Then of the small amount of sites that have been excavated, very few of those have been studied, conclusions have been drawn, and then released to the public.

So we kind of have this expectation that if anything happened, we'd be able to find it very easily, but there's political, there's historical. There's all these professional factors in the way. So I would say as a whole, what we found broadly supports the Christian world view. But even in a court of law when you have a case, there's always some facts you're just trying to figure out where they fit, even though the broad case might be enough to convict somebody beyond a reasonable doubt.

Patrick Gentempo: Right. So, and it's interesting. I didn't realize that less than 1% of it has been ... The archeological digs account for less than 1%, and that

there's much more they could be doing, but you think there's barriers in the way of doing that work?

Sean McDowell: Oh, sure. Some of the barriers can be finances, the money to do it. Some can be safety issues. Barriers can be legal issues, political issues, personal issues. In Israel, if somebody has a home on top of a site, they have vested interest in not losing their home. So there's just a lot of factors that come into play with our ability to excavate particular areas.

Sometimes, there's uncertainty, where exactly cities were, exactly where mountains were. This is just because we're thousands of years removed from the events. These are the kinds of things we would expect dealing with events from antiquity.

Patrick Gentempo: But yet, in your lifetime, there have been discoveries that have been collaborating in nature, as far as what the discovery was and what was said in the Bible. Is there any that stand out to you?

Sean McDowell: There's a number that have been found. One was actually shortly before my lifetime. One of my favorites was years ago, in the Harvard Theological Review, there was a professor who wrote and said, "There's astonishingly little evidence that the feet of a crucified person was ever pierced by nails."

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: So, all of the crucified victims that we found had been crucified with ropes. That seemed to contradict the Biblical account, especially in John, when Thomas says, "I want to see the nail marks in your hands and in your feet."

So does the Bible contradict the archeological record? Well, 1967, about a decade before I was born, a man who's been named [Jehohanan 00:13:02] was found in the middle of the 1st century in Palestine. He was crucified in the way that is described happened to Jesus.

Now there's still some scholarly debate whether or not his legs were actually broken as it describes in John, chapter 19. So, that's unconfirmed, but nails were used that shows John accurately described the way crucifixion took place in that place and at that time. To me, as the archeological record continues, we just kind of come across these findings that slowly corroborate the biblical story.

Patrick Gentempo: And with that, an area of focus for you has been the fate of the apostles. So, why did you decide to write on that, and why'd that become an area of focus for you?

Sean McDowell: Yeah, that's a great question. I grew up hearing apologetics in the defense of the faith. One of them was that all the apostles, except probably John, died these grisly deaths because they refused to recant their belief that they'd seen the risen Jesus. Therefore, it's true, and there's a power to that. Why would somebody intentionally die for something that was false?

Well, a few years ago, I was taking a group of students up to the Berkeley, where we invited in some skeptics to speak to our Christian students, and I teach my students how to ask good questions, and just interact with people with very different belief systems.

Patrick Gentempo: Oh, can I just ... That's fascinating. So, you basically say, "I'm going to take these students, who, we're trying to ... They've come here with an agenda to learn and you want to shape them," and one of your methodologies in doing that is to put them in front of some skeptics and let them--

Sean McDowell: Yeah, just let them.

Patrick Gentempo: ... So you're not afraid of the other side of the argument?

Sean McDowell: No. These are high school students.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Sean McDowell: In fact, we've had students down to 12 and 13 years old go with us.

Patrick Gentempo: Oh, wow, so [crosstalk 00:14:43]. Wow, okay.

Sean McDowell: We'll bring in leading atheists, leading skeptics, leading people from very different world views.

Now, we train our students very carefully, and we go with them, and we debrief afterwards, but I'm not afraid to expose my students to contrary ideas.

Patrick Gentempo: I think that's awesome.

Sean McDowell: Just got to train them well. They usually walk away more confident once they've seen the pushback and then we make sense of it.

So, we were on this trip, and I had a friend of mine who was arguing. He's what you might call a mythicist, argues Jesus didn't even exist. One of our students said, "Well, why would all the apostles die if Jesus didn't exist?" And he pushes back. He goes, "Give me evidence that any of them actually died."

This was about seven or eight years ago. My students all look at me like I'm supposed to have the answer, and I sat there, and I thought I don't really know. I've just taken it second, third-hand from other people. I've never looked into this myself.

And I was in a doctoral program looking for a doctoral thesis topic. So, it hit me that night. I'm like, this is perfect. I have to know for myself if this is really a good argument, and I imagine other people are going to be pretty interested, too. So that night, I pretty much decided I was going to start writing on that if my committee would approve it.

Patrick Gentempo: So what was that journey like, once you started making that your doctoral thesis?

Sean McDowell: Well, when you write a doctoral thesis, I had to be careful not to start off and say, "I want to prove that they all died as martyrs," to make this argument. There's a temptation to that, and I had to consistently fight back on that, because that the only way to be scholarly, objective, and be fair to the evidence and really ask, "Is this a good argument? What's the evidence they died as martyrs? Can we really believe they were eye-witnesses to Jesus? And if this is true, what's the best way to make the argument?"

So, it began by just mentally shifting. Rather than just making an apologetic, really asking the question as fairly as I could, and I told my wife, I'm like, "I've got to be willing to follow the evidence wherever it leads. Is this a good argument?"

So I just started ... I mean, I literally started by Googling, just to see what people were saying. Didn't get much out of that. Then I started doing journal researches. I looked at books. I called scholars. I mean, you just become a detective, and you trace every single footnote you can until you feel like you've exhausted the evidence that's out there, and then you try to assess it as fairly as you can.

Patrick Gentempo: Where'd it lead you? What were some of the highlights?

Sean McDowell: Well, some of the highlights. I would say basically I decided to study the 12 apostles with Mathias instead of Judas, and then James, the brother of Jesus, and Paul, because they're such significant figures in the early church and they're both eye-witnesses of Jesus, and both not believers in Jesus during their lifetime.

I think we can conclude with confidence that at least James, the brother of Jesus, James, the son of Zebedee, Peter and Paul, we have good historical evidence that they died as martyrs. I think a decent case can be made for Thomas and for Andrew. I think the rest, to be honest with you, it's hard to know when history ends and when legend begins. We just don't know.

For example, the story is that Bartholomew was skinned alive. This is the tradition we often hear. Well, the earliest record that I could find is about 500 AD. Now that doesn't mean it's false, but historically-speaking, we can't have much confidence in that being true. Not to mention when it comes to Bartholomew, there's a number of different traditions about where he went and how he died, about five, six, seven traditions.

So I'm looking at this, saying, "I don't think, historically speaking, we can have a lot of confidence that Bartholomew died that way." So when I ratchet it back, I said, "Okay, what really matters here?"

I said, "Well, the first thing is, we have good, early, consistent evidence that the apostles were eye-witnesses of Jesus." That's why they believed. We see it in all four gospels. We see this distinctly in Paul's writings, like 1 Corinthians, chapter 15. We see it in extra-Biblical writings. Church fathers like Clement of Rome and Ignacius talking about that.

So very early, the consistent record is the apostles saw with their own eyes. Second, we know, at the heart of their faith was the Resurrection. There is no early Christian faith, apart from belief in the Resurrection.

There's some critics who will say, "In the 2nd century, this Resurrection begins to emerge, but it wasn't at the heart." Well, this just simply isn't true. The earliest account we have in 1 Corinthians 15, which is at least two decades after the death of Jesus, and I think he's passing on a creed that he received earlier. Probably within three to five years of the death of Jesus, Paul says, "I pass on to you what was most important. That Jesus died. He was buried. He rose on the third day."

The early, consistent testimony is that to be a Christian was to believe in the Resurrection. I mean, read the book of Acts. When they start proclaiming and preaching the message of Jesus, it's about the Resurrection. So the gospels are eyewitnesses. Second, we know that they were proclaiming the Resurrection. Third, we see persecution.

I decided read through the New Testament and pay attention to every single book when either somebody was persecuted, or Jesus taught that someone would be persecuted for their faith. I was stunned and partly disappointed how much I had missed this before. At the heart of Jesus' message is, "Pick up your cross and follow me."

Now, sometimes we say, "Pick up your cross. My neighbor listens to loud music. My son's disobedient." Well, that's not what He meant. He meant pick up your cross and be ready to die. It's over Paul's writing. It's over James' writing. It's in Hebrew, this consistent message, you proclaim Jesus, persecution is coming.

Then we see this outside of the church in writings like Tacitus and imply to the younger, that when people proclaim the message of Jesus publicly they were persecuted. So if we take a step back, what does this tell us?

You have a group of people who believe they had seen the risen Jesus. The first thing they proclaim is the Resurrection. We have reason to believe that if people are proclaiming the Resurrection persecution was very likely, and then we look at the individual Apostles.

What do we find? We find some good evidence for Peter, First Century evidence that he died as a martyr. Same for Paul, and I think, same for both James. So the key is not so much that we can show that all of the Apostles died as Martyrs. The key is that they sincerely believed that Jesus was risen from the grave, and were willing to suffer and die. That's the key.

Patrick Gentempo: Its compelling. I mean, it's not a leap of logic that if you can pretty much corroborate that at least a handful of them, you can see they did die as martyrs. Then it's not unreasonable to suggest that the other ones could have also.

Sean McDowell: Yeah. I think the key is to argue this. You look in the book of Acts, chapter four and five, the apostles start proclaiming the risen Jesus.

They're threatened. They're beaten. They're thrown in prison. We see Stephen killed in the early chapters of Acts. We see James killed in Acts 12:2, and they're told, "Just stop proclaiming the risen Jesus."

In Acts 5, Paul basically says, "We can't. We fear God more than we fear men." So the earliest record we have is this group of men proclaiming they'd seen the risen Jesus, willing to suffer, and die, and face persecution for that belief.

We have no record any of them recanted, and we know with confidence that at least some of them died as martyrs. So this doesn't prove the Resurrection is true, but it tells us they didn't make it up. They were sincere. They didn't invent this false story to get themselves persecuted and to lose everything. They really believed Jesus had risen from the grave and appear to them.

Patrick Gentempo: So with that now, it's a great area of focus to just say, "Let's go deep here and see what does exist in the way information around this in evidence."

What other things about the Resurrection have you ... Do you feel like is very compelling as far as saying that the Resurrection is validated?

Sean McDowell: Well, I think we have to go step by step and look at the facts that we know. Sometimes, people start and say, "We've got to defend the entire Bible being true," and then you get the Resurrection thrown in.

I think we can make it case from archeology for manuscripts, et cetera, that the Bible, and the New Testament, and the gospels are reliable documents, but we can also say, "Let's just look at this event, the Resurrection, through the lens of how we would look at any event in history. See what facts we know are true, and ask what conclusion best explains it."

So, there's a few things we know. Did Jesus die? Well, that's unmistakable. We have medical evidence that blood and water came out, that John reports, which only happened we can medically show at the point of death.

We have it multiple attestation, and all the gospels, the writings of Paul, writings of Peter. We even have [Josephus 00:24:00] and Tacitus, extra biblical writers talking about Jesus dying.

So Jesus died on the cross. Then we have this amazing evidence for an empty tomb. One piece of fact being that it was discovered by women. I find this very fascinating. If you're the apostles, and you're making up, in that culture, a story based on a Resurrection, in which a woman's testimony was not valued as highly as a man's testimony. In fact, the more significant an event was, the less likely they would rely upon a woman.

So you're the apostles and you're inventing a story based upon a historical event, who's the least-likely people you would invent? Well, it's obvious, women. So why do they all report, Matthew, Mark, Luke,

and John that women found the tomb? Because that's what they really believed happened. They weren't inventing this story. Then you have all these cases of appearances. You have appearances to the 500 in 1 Corinthians 15. You have appearances to the apostles. You have appearances, again, to the women. You have appearance to skeptics, like Thomas, James, and Paul.

Then you have this transformation of the apostles. Willing to suffer and die for this tells me they didn't make this up. We have good, consistent, early evidence that Jesus rose from the grave.

Now other people might say, "Okay, here's other theories that can explain the Resurrection." And you can just Google this. You'll find endless hypotheses, but the question always has to be, given certain facts that we know, what theory best explains all of them and has the least problems? So probably the most common one is that the apostles hallucinated. Well, one big problem with that is that hallucinations are internal, subjective feelings. There's not an external object that matches up with that, but we have multiple accounts of group appearances of Jesus.

I mean, you can no more share a hallucination than you can a dream.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: So hallucinations have a hard time accounting for the facts. It also can't really account for the empty tomb. Another common one, which really rocked me in high school ... I grew up in a Christian home and I heard that the Bible was true. I always believed it, and then I heard these skeptics who wrote these articles that said, "Maybe Jesus didn't exist. Maybe Christianity is patterned after these dying and rising gods, Mythris, and Horus, and Adonis, and Isis from the kind of ancient world at that time and there's nothing unique about Christianity."

I had never heard that before and it rocked me intellectually and emotionally to think what if the story isn't true. When I started to look into it, I realized that there's a few huge problems with this. Number one, the dating is all wrong. So some of these stories existed before the time of Christ, but any of the parts of the stories that closely mirror Christianity tend to come from the second, third, and fourth centuries. So if there's any borrowing going on, it's from them borrowing from Christianity rather than the other way around.

Second, you'll see similar terms, but what they mean by these terms are very different. So last time I looked, it's been a little while, on Wikipedia, it said that Osiris resurrected. Well, that sounds like Jesus resurrected. Osiris resurrected. Well, if you read the story of Osiris, he's murdered, thrown into a chest, falls in the bottom of the sea, body is put back together, and eventually becomes god of the underworld. That's not a Resurrection. It's the same word, but it doesn't have the same meaning. Besides, these are fictional stories that are patterned after the dying and rising of the seasons, not historical events like we have for the person of Jesus. There's many other naturalistic hypothesis

that people put in, but none of them can account for the facts that we know with as much consistency and power as the Resurrection.

Patrick Gentempo: So what do you think right now is the biggest or some of the bigger misconceptions about Christianity, that non-Christians or the non-Christian world has a certain view of Christianity from the outside looking in as compared from the inside out. What do you think is some of the mis-characterizations that are erroneous?

Sean McDowell: I think of a few. I think number one, people look and say, "Well, look at all the bloodshed, and the horror, and atrocities done in the name of Christ." That's a common misconception now. Certainly some bad things have been done by people who say that they are believers, and by the church. I'm not denying that, but that's the lens by which people see all of Christianity. They miss, number one, all the good that's been done in the name of Christ. Hospitals, universities, orphanages, women rights, et cetera.

People also fail to distinguish between when people do things that goes against what Jesus taught. Clearly their violating the way Jesus told people to live. So, I do think a lot of people look at Christianity through that lens, which I don't think is the whole picture. I think, another one, people look at Christianity and just think, as with any religion, it's all a matter of faith. It's just blind faith. Just believe it if it works for you.

They don't realize that Christianity is based upon a testable, historical event. I think the other one is ... A first question in many people's minds today is not so much is Christianity true, but is Christianity good. I think we live in a culture, given certain moral norms that have been broadly accepted, in particular, related to the issue of sexuality. Christians are bigoted. They're hateful. They're intolerant. So many people won't even consider the evidence because they look at Christians, or at least the perception of Christians that's proclaimed to them, and they think, why would I want to be like that? So they don't even entertain the evidence.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: Those are three big push backs that I tend to see.

Patrick Gentempo: And do you feel like they, many times, are building straw men? Yeah, there's a bad apple who's proclaimed to be a Christian but doesn't practice the moral code of Christianity, if you will, but then say, "They're held out as the poster-child in the media as a straw man, basically to discredit Christianity?"

Sean McDowell: I do think that happens. A few years ago, I wrote this book answering some of the big objections that the new atheists at this time were raising against Christianity.

So I called up one of the largest skeptical groups where I live in Southern California, and I said, "Hey, I'd be willing to come to your group. I'll give you all free book, and just sit in the hot seat, and you can ask me whatever questions you'd like to ask a Christian. I'm not

going to pretend to have all the answers, but maybe we could have a conversation."

So I went up there with my pastor, and my wife. In this home, there were about 20 skeptics, atheists, agnostics that were there, and we had a wonderful conversation. One thing that stood out to me was how many misconceptions they had about Christians because of a TV show that they saw, because of a comment they heard, because of a classmate. These isolated individual experiences shaped how they saw all of Christians.

One reason was a lot of them didn't know a Christian. Now in fairness, Christians can do the same thing to other groups. They maybe don't know a Muslim. They don't know an atheist, so they have a misconception, and see them entirely through that lens.

So that's why it's important, whoever's watching this, to say, "You know what? Let's ask, is my perception of this group, whoever it is, accurate? Do I know people in this group? Do I take the time to listen to them, and accurately understand what they believe and why they believe it?" So I think you're absolutely right. A lot of people reject a straw man of Christianity, not what Christianity really believes, and what Jesus really taught.

Patrick Gentempo: Now this is fascinating to me, because I think that is a misconception, in and of itself. You now have mentioned it twice with your students, and now, with yourself, saying that there's a local group of atheists, and I don't think most people would say, "Well listen, I'm a Christian. I teach in this arena. Let's have a conversation." Right? Most people would say, "I don't want to know those people," or they feel like there would be some kind of a condescending judgment against these people who are non-Christians, and maybe even are trying to discredit Christianity. But instead, you want to show up and actually have the conversation. What was their disposition towards you?

Sean McDowell: You know what? When I sat down and it started, the head of the group who's become a friend of mine, he looked at me and he goes, "Kudos to you."

And I said, "Why?"

He goes, "I can't believe you have the guts to just come and sit here in our group and be a part of this. Not many Christians would do this."

Now, sadly, he's right. I'm not saying that give myself a pat on the back, but most people are not willing to step outside of their comfort zone to meet people. It's easier to label. It's easier to throw bombs on social media from a distance. I had a chance to preach in a mosque about four weeks ago, and the Imam and I had a conversation. We disagreed, but it was cordial. He was so gracious. They served the best food, Middle Eastern food you could imagine.

We accomplished. We clarified. I think most people today, if you treat them with respect, and you see them in person, not just online, are willing to have conversations about faith. I really do.

Patrick Gentempo: I'm startled, here, pleasantly startled. So, you go from having a interaction with a group of atheists to now preaching in a mosque. Can you give us a little more detail on that experience? What that was like to walk in there and do this?

Sean McDowell: Well, this was a unique experience. I was working with a group in the inner-city in Philadelphia, and we were taking students out to have conversations with people in the city, just with very different beliefs.

I knew I was taking a group of students into a mosque. In the morning when we debriefing to get ready, are the fellow on our side who was leading it, he says, "And you'll be preaching for 15 minutes in a mosque, sharing the Christian view of Salvation."

I said, "Okay, time out. I didn't get that memo. I'm happy to do it. That's awesome, but I need to know, like what are they expecting? How long do I have? What do you mean present the Christian view of Salvation?" So I prepared that day. I went in, and I was asked to give my ... There's probably 150 of our students, maybe a 150 Muslims from the mosque in an open room, and they had food in the back, and I was allowed to present the Christian view salvation 15 minutes. The Imam presented the Muslim view of salvation 15 minutes. Then we sat there and took questions back and forth.

I'll tell you, this Imam was so gracious. He was kind. He was warm, so hospitable. We differed, so he didn't pretend we didn't differ, but I walked away ... I mean, our students loved it. I walked away going, "Wow."

I think a lot of people, not everybody, there some people out there that wouldn't. There's a lot of people, if you just step outside your comfort zone, treat them the way you'd want to be treated, would be willing to have spiritual conversations. The best part is I realized some of our students had faulty views about Islam, and based on many of their questions, I realized so many of them didn't even understand the gospel. They didn't get it. They had a straw man view of it.

Now I haven't heard that any of them became Christians, but at least they understand more clearly who Jesus claimed to be, what it means to be a Christian, and I think they felt loved by Christians.

Patrick Gentempo: If you watch the news and world political events, you would think that that was, what you just described is an impossibility, and that there is no way for there to be conversation, communication, a shared spiritual experience, which creates understanding. Again, it doesn't necessarily mean alignment, that suddenly people's minds are changed about their faith, but it creates understanding, which can only lead to a positive place. It can't lead to a bad place.

Sean McDowell: Oh, my goodness. Only good came out of it. Our students were ... I mean, they were beaming that night. We went back and we debriefed for an hour, an hour and a half, and they... When the whole trip was done, that was their highlight.

Patrick Gentempo: I can see why. I'm sitting here almost giddy, thinking about the prospect of that happening. I think probably it dispels a certain, maybe a somewhat unconscious view, or maybe for some people, it's overt sense that with people who practice religion, whether it be Islam, whether it be Christianity, that there's a certain arrogance that comes along with it that would eliminate the possibility of a gathering such as what you just described.

Instead of arrogance it's just basically saying, "Hey, you know ..." It shows confidence. We can walk into any scenario, have a conversation, let there be a level of connection human-to-human, and if we don't agree on certain things, that's okay. At least now, maybe you understand me and I understand you.

Sean McDowell: I think the word you said is very interesting, a confidence. Why would somebody go into a mosque or any other religious faith, present their view, and have questions fired at them for an hour? It's because they're confident that their position is true.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: One of the things I do in church is, is I do this atheist role play. I call it atheist encounter, where they know I'm a Christian. I put glasses on. I go into atheist mode. I'll give an atheist viewpoint, five or six minutes, and then I take questions from the audience, and then I just kind of shoot it down, one-by-one, and always, the frustration brews about 25, 30 minutes into it.

I've been called names. I've been personally attacked. Then I'll stop, and I'll say, "Before we answer some of these questions, I want to know how did you treat me?"

And I'm telling you, it's like people go, "Oh, shoot. I didn't even realize that. I was trying to win you in an argument. I was trying to show that you were wrong. I was trying to show how smart I am. I wasn't interested in learning, and really treating you in love as a human being."

And then I'll ask the audience, and I've thought about this. I've done this, I don't know if I'd say hundreds of times, but dozens and dozens of times, to youth pastors, to parents, to school teachers, to junior high students, stadiums of 6,000, to 12 students, and consistently, students get defensive. Christians get defensive, angry, and sometimes even hostile a little bit.

Why? You know why? Because we don't know what we believe and why. We don't have the confidence that it's really true. So when someone starts pressing us and asking us tough questions, "How do you know the

Bible's true? Why does God allow evil? Can't all religions be true? What about evolution?"

If we haven't thought about it, and someone presses us, it's human instinct to get defensive. But Jesus said, "Love God with your heart, and with your soul, and with your mind." Peter said, "Be ready with an answer."

When we take the time to know as Christians what we believe and why we believe it, it builds tremendous confidence and a willingness to engage people lovingly and thoughtfully, with very different views than our own.

Patrick Gentempo: So non-believers are not the enemy, which is probably I think the mindset.

It's interesting. When I really think about what you're saying relative to the confidence being the thing that allows you to lighten up and walk into to a circumstance, and just feel I'm here, and I have the confidence to be able to have this communication. Not worried that somehow, it might rock my world or destabilize my experience of life, but rather that there's a way maybe to gain greater understanding here.

I would say that from people outside looking in, I think if they were to be asked, the non-Christian world, do they feel like nonbelievers are the enemy and that they can't interacted with, it's really not that way.

Sean McDowell: I don't think it's just Christians. I think we live in a divisive, argumentative culture. It's us versus them. I think there's reasons for this. One reason is I think there's a lot of brokenness and hurt in relationships. We've seen suicide and depression rising.

Rick Warren famously said, "Hurt people, hurt people."

So whatever your faith is, or no faith, if there's emotional and relational brokenness, then it's much easier to argue with someone and dehumanize them, than to listen to them and treat them humanely. I think we also just live in a culture that's so rushed. We're so busy, and we're so distracted, and we also are so afraid of political correctness that what if I say the wrong thing? I'm going to get attacked and shamed.

So people are afraid in a relationship, publicly, to say stuff. So they go online under a pseudo name, just start attacking people, because they have no natural outlet for it. So I found just learning to listen, learning to know what we believe, having conversations, trying to have sympathy and thinking, "Okay people with different belief systems aren't the enemy. In fact, they might be right. And if they're right, I should believe it."

I mean, I grew up in a Christian home. My father, he's been in ministry over 50 years, and he's written over a 150 books.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Sean McDowell:

He's probably spoken to more young people live than anybody in history. Done 250 debates. I only mention this, because I went through a period of doubt in my life where I had a lot of questions. I started thinking I know my parents mean well, but what if I was raised in a different family? If I was raised in a Muslim family, would I just be Muslim? How do I really know the Bible is true? How do I really know Jesus rose from the grave? It was kind of an existential mild crisis. I don't want to overstate it for me.

I remember sitting down with my dad, not knowing how he's going to respond. He spent his whole life defending and proclaiming the truth of Christianity, and his son's like, "Yeah, I don't know if I buy this."

So, I sat down. I said. "Dad, I want to tell you something. I want to know what's true, but I don't know that I'm convinced Christianity's true." I felt like I had to be honest with him. He looks at me. He goes, "Son, I think that's great."

I remember thinking, "Dad, did you hear anything that I just said?" He goes, "Look, I didn't raise you to just believe something because I told you. I'd raised you to follow after truth, and seek after truth, and wherever it leads you, embrace it."

He said, "I'm convinced if you really seek after truth, you'll end up or continue believing in Jesus, because Jesus is the truth. But follow truth, even if you don't like it, even if it's uncomfortable. Seek after truth." That's something my dad has just hammered into me. And he always tells me, even in politics, "Read both sides before you make up your mind."

I think the only reason we look at people as enemies, the only reason we don't listen when we get so angry, is because we hear one side of the argument. We think everybody else is stupid. Well, if you only look at one side, then of course everyone else seems stupid. But if you read both sides, if you take the time to listen to people, at least understand where they're coming from, then it's much harder to be in this argumentative, "He's the enemy," rather than just loving people in the way that Jesus said we're supposed to love people.

Patrick Gentempo:

And there's so much, as you're citing, the level of acrimony in the world and polarization is unprecedented, at least in my lifetime, I think. I think everything you just said speaks to the root of that, and why that exists. So I think the solution is basically creating understanding. I think, sometimes, it's the inward look, right? Saying, "Okay, where am I?"

I think it's an amazing reflection, given that you were born in a Christian household, your father is such a large figure in the Christian community, and that you would still ask the question. This is really, I think, a startling question: "What if I was born in a Muslim household? What might have happened?"

All of a sudden, you can start to say, "Okay, but... And there are people who are. And now, how should I relate to them?" I just think that that's an amazing lens to look through that would cause pause for anybody

because maybe the Muslim, if they said, "What if I was born in a Christian household?" See? I think everybody can ask that question. I think that's one of the most amazing soul-searching questions I've heard. So I just wanted to point that out.

Sean McDowell: Well, at least minimally, it can help us be sympathetic to people who see the world differently, and be a little bit more self-critical about what we believe and why we believe it.

Patrick Gentempo: So now you're a father, three children. You talked about your experience growing up as the son. Now what's it like for you, being the father?

Sean McDowell: That's a great question. I love being a dad, have three kids, and spending time with my kids is up there with my wife, kind of my pride and joy, some the most fun things I do.

You know, we live in a world where there's a lot of different beliefs, and obviously, I want my kids to be Christians. I want them to embrace the belief system that we have. I'd be lying if I said differently, but I also know that my kids need to grow up and make some decisions for themselves. I can pray for them. I can guide them. I can hopefully model for them what it means to be Christian, and at some point, they're going to have to decide what they believe and go for it.

But they know I'm going to love them no matter what. When we go on these trips I've been describing, we take my son with me. My daughter was there when we're at the mosque. I wanted her to meet some people who are Muslims and just have a cross-cultural experience, and not just view them through the lens of which maybe we see on TV, in the movie, or the news, or something like that.

So I try to guide my kids, try to have conversation with them, pray for them. It's fun to be a dad, but you know, when it's all said and done, they're going to have to make some decisions about their life spiritually, and I can't make those decisions for them.

Patrick Gentempo: So what's interesting, I think in part, is that, okay, you're born in a Christian household. You've committed your career, and life, and faith, and spirit to this.

What about the parents that are Christian, but their entire life and career is wrapped up in something very independent of Christianity, whatever their job might be, in any type of a company, maybe in a blue-collar world, or maybe they're professionals, or what have you, and they haven't had the, I guess I could say, the experience of getting deeply academic and just being able to build their confidence based on a lot of education and reason that's going on, yet they want to still live the Christian life, have a Christian household, et cetera, what are their resources, or what do you think are their challenges and solutions, in that particular scenario?

Sean McDowell: Yeah, I'd say a few things. I'd say parents don't have to be the experts on everything. I'm not the expert on plenty of things in my life. The other thing I would say is if you just take the time to read a couple books and

make loving God with your mind a part of who you are, you've already set yourself apart most people in the culture who don't read thoughtful books.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: So I would say to those parents, I'd say, "What does it look like in your life and in your family to make just loving God of your mind and thinking Christianly, one's spiritual discipline?"

What book can I read? What conference can I go to? Who can I find in my church, track them down, and have a conversation with that person, and start to learn and grow in that aspect of my life?

The other thing though, is part of being a Protestant Christian, is I don't believe there is sacred and then secular vocations. It's not like what I do is more spiritual than someone who's a doctor, or a teacher, or a plumber, or a car mechanic. As I look scripturally, it was Abraham [Kuyper 00:47:38] who said, "There's not a square inch of creation out of which God does not cry out, 'It's mine.'"

So whatever profession you have, what does it look like to love God, and honor God, and serve God through that profession? That's a question that we need to be asking. Now sadly, a lot of Christians don't ask this question. I met two mechanical engineers have been in church their entire lives, and they were in their 30s, and I said, "What does it look like distinctly, to be a Christian mechanical engineer? How do you apply your faith your profession?"

They looked at each other. They looked to me and they said, "I don't know. We haven't thought about that." And I thought, what a shame. So their spiritual life is Wednesday night at Bible study, Sunday morning at church, but they're not actively thinking through what it means to be a Christian, to live out their profession in the workplace.

Patrick Gentempo: So it becomes compartmentalized, as compared to [crosstalk 00:48:31]-

Sean McDowell: It absolutely becomes compartmentalized.

Patrick Gentempo: I guess this is a very interesting point because they're trying to mechanize their Christianity or their faith, as compared to it being a spiritual experience that's a part of every aspect of their life. So in a sense ... And I guess that could get frustrating, right? There's people who are living this sort of compartmentalized or this mechanistic faith, they're going to probably be frustrated with what their experience is compared to saying, "I have one view that applies to all the important categories in my life."

Sean McDowell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: My parenting. My health and fitness. My career. My finances. I mean, everybody's got all these categories of life but if you compartmentalize the spiritual side is what I'm hearing, and kind of separate it from everything else, you're still not really having the experience.

Sean McDowell: I think that's right. Deuteronomy 6:4, which is arguably the central passage of the old testament. When Jesus asked, "What's the greatest commandment?" He cites the Shema, this passage. "Love God with your heart, your soul, your mind, and with your strength."

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: Then he says, "Talk these to your kids." This is Deuteronomy 6:4 and the verses that are following by Moses. He says, "Talk to them when you wake up in the morning. When you lie down at night. When you walk along the road." In other words, Moses is saying, "Make God a natural part of the rhythm of your life."

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Sean McDowell: Refuse to compartmentalize spiritual things to Sunday morning and Wednesday night, but our spiritual beliefs should shape the way we look at culture, shape the way we compete in sports, shape the way we have a relationship, shape the kind of worker we are, this is what it means to be a Christian. To have a holistic world view that shapes everything that we do, and I think when we began to think this way, we avoid the frustration that you're talking about and it's very liberating.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Sean McDowell: There's a piece of God in a sense that every single day how I live my life matters for eternity, for the Kingdom.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: That's when the Christian world view moves just out of church Sunday morning, and frankly, it's the exception that I've seen of churches that really help carefully teach a world view and connect what is taught Sunday morning to their jobs, their career, and of course, [inaudible 00:50:52] challenge that 45 minutes. They have limited resources, time, I get that, but that's one of the challenges today. We live in a secular world so committed to compartmentalizing your faith, and yet, Jesus says, "I created everything."

Faith should effect every single choice that you make. That's empowering to live that way as a Christian.

Patrick Gentempo: Have you seen people who have recognized their compartmentalized spirituality or their faith in Christianity, and then have made the switch? And what did you see unfold as that happened?

Sean McDowell: I think I see people just realize that one, instead of pointing at others to be the Christian experts ... Oh, my youth pastor will do it. Oh, my pastor will do that. Oh, the missions pastor. People began to take responsibility in their own life and realize I could lead Bible study.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: I could learn how to have better spiritual conversations. I could learn to just engage people around me more thoughtfully. So it begins to transform the way people live. If you think about it this way, I saw a study about happiness and it said that there were three levels of what you think about a job. One's a job, second is a career, three is a vocation.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: So job is something you get and you move on. A career is long term. A vocation is a sense of a calling.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: A higher deeper purpose in life. There's actually people that had a vocation were the most happy about life in a sense of a contentment.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: So when Christians realize, "I'm just going to work to get a paycheck, I'm honoring God through my work. This is an opportunity God has given me, and how can I represent Christ in how I do my job? What would it look like to help other people come to Christ through my profession?" They start to ask these questions and build a world view, it moves from just having a job or a career to a vocation, which just gives life such a deeper sense of meaning to it.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, well a purpose, right? Suddenly their purpose is expanding regardless of what their job is. It just adds more meaning too it.

Sean McDowell: I think that's right.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah. Fascinating. How important is community in having a Christian faith, as far as being a part of a community?

Sean McDowell: Well, I think we live out based on what we believe.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: Studies have shown that people who describe themselves as Christians live no differently than people who don't in America. But people who describe themselves as Christians, and have a Christian world view, who think like Jesus, are more likely to live like Jesus.

But world views are always best learned in community, in relationship with one another. So it's not a coincidence that Jesus would break bread with somebody, share stories, and talk with that person, share their life. So the only way we can pass on our values to the next generation is in relationship with parents, with grandparents, with uncles, with coaches, with teachers, and this is something that's not accidental to Christianity, this is at the heart of it.

God himself is tri-personal. Right, when we're invited to become a Christian, we're going to sense invited into the community of the one

God who eternally exists as three persons. We're made in God's image to be in relationship with each other, to be in a relationship with God, and it's that community that gives us meaning. It's community that gives us purpose, and it's the community where we learn the certain truths that can set us free to go live out our faith in the world.

Patrick Gentempo: Is there a difference between saying this is an abstraction in my mind, as compared to saying it's a living experience day-to-day? I'd imagine that when things are great, it's one thing, but when life gets tough or there's tragedy, having that community is something that is essential.

Sean McDowell: I think it's community and I think it's our belief system.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: It's both. Sometimes people just say, "Well, in the Christian faith, we just need community. We got to show we have a great community. Invite the world into it."

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: And then there's a lot of people who say, "No, we just need to preach and proclaim truth."

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: I think it's both. In one of his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul says, "I not only gave you the gospel, but my very own life." It's both.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Sean McDowell: When people look in on our broken world and see a loving genuine, not perfect, but a real community of people, that is so appealing and powerful. But non-Christians can have community. What sets our community apart is there's the Holy Spirit that's there. We have a common brotherhood, and we have truth. So when people are suffering, yes it's community that helps them, but it's also their belief system.

I saw a study by Dennis Prager in his book *Happiness Is a Serious Problem*, and he saw people that had suffered the loss, married couples, that had suffered the loss of a child prematurely. Most of them were either divorced or separated. Just the pain of that would rip relationships apart, and he asked the question, "Why would some couples be able to stay together, and some couples couldn't?" And his conclusion was, "If they had a belief system in place that could make sense of such a tragedy, they were far more likely to withstand the pain and the hurt that comes from the loss of a child."

So suffering and evil, for somebody to withstand it, has to have a framework. Has to have a world view, a belief system that doesn't make the pain go away, but at least understand God is with me. God can redeem this for good. We live in a broken world, and community together, I think is the recipe to help people keep a lasting faith.

Patrick Gentempo: I think that's a profound thought, the idea of people having a similar world view or sense of life. I think also with what you're saying, and it kind of ties back into an earlier conversation, having the belief is one thing, but having confidence in the belief is another thing and that's where ... Because what happens is, without the confidence you say, "Well, I have the belief." But then tragedy happens, and since it's weak, then the belief probably isn't serving you like it should as compared to saying, "I have confidence in a belief." So when adversity comes, I have a foundation to be able to process it.

Sean McDowell: I think that's a great way to put it. So think about it this way. There's a difference between knowing that something is true, and knowing that you know that it's true.

Patrick Gentempo: Tell us about that.

Sean McDowell: There's a huge difference.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Sean McDowell: So I might have students who know a right answer on a test, but they haven't studied. They know it, but they don't know that they know it, so they don't have the confidence. They'll second guess themselves and sometimes get it wrong. But if you studied, you not only know it, you know that you know it, so with confidence you put the right answer down.

Our churches are filled with people who know the truth, but it's exception to find someone who knows the truth, but who also knows that he or she knows the truth. Brings confidence, not only in suffering, but a willing to share their faith. A willing to live out this faith in the world and all the challenges that it brings, that's why training in Apologetics, training in Theology is so important because it helps us not only know the truth, but in our minds we can know that what we know is true, and that brings real conviction.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. Obviously you're an extraordinarily gifted communicator and thinker, and you've chosen teaching as a central part of what you do. What do the next 10 years look like for you?

Sean McDowell: Oh, gosh. That's a great question. Well, I'm going to take three months off to coach my son's JV basketball team.

Patrick Gentempo: Awesome.

Sean McDowell: That's one of the most [crosstalk 00:58:41]-

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, you're a college basketball player yourself?

Sean McDowell: I was, in the past. Not anymore.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Sean McDowell: That's for sure. I'm busy. I have a lot of great opportunities. One of the things that has been my mind, is you know what you love by what you're willing to sacrifice for it.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: Right?

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Sean McDowell: What we're willing to really sacrifice for, shows what we love.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: I have some neat writing, speaking opportunities, and I believe God has gifted me in that. My wife's behind me saying, "Go. Go use those things for the Kingdom."

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: But I've got young kids, and I don't want to miss out on that window that I have with them. So I've got some book projects I want to work on. I want to keep teaching. Biola is an amazing place. God has wired me to teach. I read a book, and I come in and I'm like, "Honey." And my son explains that. They're like, "Dad, we're watching TV." It's just the way God has wired me.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: So I want to keep doing those things. Speaking, teaching, having a YouTube channel, and blogging. I mean, those things are all fun, but I also, over the next 10 years, I want to be a good dad and I want to be a good husband.

Patrick Gentempo: What's the biggest challenge Christianity faces right now?

Sean McDowell: I would say probably the shift from people ... Let me take a step back. My dad's spoken on 1,200 university campuses, and when he started in the '60s and '70s, people would say, "Give me some evidence. That's not true. Prove it." Right. People don't say that as much anymore, although some people do. They'll say, "What right do you have to say that?" That's hurtful.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: Because we've shifted from seeing even truth being something objectively out there that we can form our life to, to being whatever I feel is true for me is true.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: In fact, now I think just in the past few years, the first time we've seen in culture, where even feelings trump science. Even feelings trump science. So to me, at the heart of our culture is, if you define for

yourself as just as Anthony Kennedy said ... He said essentially, "You get to define your own meaning and concept of existence in life. We live in such a radical individualistic and relativistic culture that say, "As long as you believe something, you feel it's right and live it out, you're free and that's true. Go do it. Anybody who says differently is a bigot."

Christianity comes along and says, "Actually, true freedom is found and not based upon living just according to your feelings. True freedom is found in living according to your design as God has made you to be. True freedom is found in submitting yourself to God's desires. True freedom is found in doing the right thing." So there's this cultural move radically towards the individual that's defining freedom in the way that's contrary to the way that Christianity describes it, and I think deep in their hearts, people know that this is actually mistaken but they don't reflect upon it. So I wrote a blog recently on Star Wars, and if you notice in the Star Wars films, there's this underlined theme that you're only free when you submit to an authority and you're obedient.

So Luke can only be free when he submits to Yoda. Rey can only be free, in the most recent Star Wars, when she stops resisting the force, but aligns herself with an objective truth outside of herself.

Patrick Gentempo: I think saying objective truth because it's not a blind submission.

Sean McDowell: It's not-

Patrick Gentempo: There's an objective truth and now if you draw that conclusion, you submit to saying, "Okay, surrender to this because this is the truth."

Sean McDowell: Yes, it's not blind faith. It's reasonable, but it goes so contrary to this deep-seeded belief. When I ask young people, "How do you define freedom?" They'll say, "Doing whatever you want to do."

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sean McDowell: In terms of challenges for people to understand Christianity, it's this individualistic feeling based culture where our world is moving towards, rather than understanding, no true freedom ... Like David says in the Psalms, "I delight in a law of the Lord." Moses says in Deuteronomy 10, "Here is the commandments God has given you for your own good."

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative). It's interesting because what you're describing basically is relativism. I mean, you have basically, your truth is your truth, is your truth, and you can just be a whim worshiper based on that. You feel this way today, you feel this way tomorrow, and you start to ... Rather than worship something foundational, it's about whims and how you feel in the range of a moment, and I think that's a challenge to humanity in general, independent of a particular faith. It's kind of a disintegration of any discipline around life that can move it in any kind of a positive direction. So I think that that's a very profound observation, and something that I think needs to be corrected in our culture because it's got a lot of ripple effects that I think lead to bad places.

Sean McDowell: Well, I think you're right about that. I don't know how to fix it.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Sean McDowell: G. K. Chesterton said ... Even at the turn of the last century. He said, "Look, you can free a camel from the zoo, but don't free a camel from its hump. Don't free a tiger from its stripes. We're only free when we act in accordance with the way we're designed to be. When we live our life in an accordance with reality. Well, God exists and he's made us in his image, and he's designed this world, then we are only free when God has designed them to live."

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Sean McDowell: So for young people to see that truth is just so contrary to all the voices in our culture that are increasingly proclaiming a different message.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah. It reminds me a quote from [inaudible 01:04:36]. It said, "In order for nature to be commanded, it must be obeyed." I think it's just alignment, right? So that's a very, I think, powerful insight. For people now that are observing this, as kind of a final note for them, what message do you want to send them off with from this conversation?

Sean McDowell: Well, I guess I'd say to people that God is good. Even in our world today, all the messages that we hear is that Christianity has caused all these problems in the past, and Christians are bigoted. Well, Christianity has caused some problems and some Christians are bigoted. I'm not going to deny that, but if you understand who God is, if you understand who Jesus is, it's only in relationship to him that we have true freedom.

We are made to love God and love other people. Anything else we try to do in our life is going to end up leaving us empty. It's only meaningful. Jesus said, "Seek he first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." But this isn't a blind faith. This is actually a reasoned based faith and belief system. That's what sets Christianity apart. That Jesus died, was buried, on the third day rose again. We have consistent early testimony that this historical message is true, and the first people who saw it were all willing to suffer and die for that belief. That's powerful.

Patrick Gentempo: I should say, our quest here is to look at the history, the evidence, and the inspiration. I think you've attended to all three beautifully. So thank you so much for your time.

Sean McDowell: Well, you're too kind. Thanks for having me.

Gretchen Jensen: Such a great interview with Sean. I was really touched by his kindness. Hey, right now. Can you tell us about The Garden Tomb? We've got the Tisha Michelle interview and the Mount of Beatitudes.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, you're in for a real treat. First of all, The Garden Tomb is one of the two proposed sites where Jesus was buried, and it's an amazing setting that has a spirit to it that you'll see visually when you actually watch that particular segment.

Then we get to interview Tisha Michelle, and Tisha was a godsend to us all through Israel. She's an amazing tour guide of Israel that does all the VIP tours for the dignitaries that visit, and she was really, not only the key to get us into some places where cameras don't normally go, but she also has such a deep amount of information that takes this kind of black and white idea, of archeological digs, and turns it into technicolor as she talks about scripture, talks about the location we're at, what happened there and bring the whole thing to life in a way that I've never seen anybody there before. So you're really going to enjoy Tisha. You're going to see her throughout the series as a matter of fact. Then of course, we have the Beatitudes, where the famous Sermon on the Mount occurred.

I have to tell you, when you're standing there and you're seeing this natural amphitheater that was formed there on the side of that mountain, and know that that's where Jesus stood and gave that sermon, it's going to give you goosebumps. It's an amazing experience. So I can't wait for you to go ahead and experience that with us.

Understanding the impact that Christ Revealed can have on people's lives, I really want to invite you to share it with everyone you know. We're releasing this globally for free. We want to bring some light into the world right now that we feel is desperately needed. So please, share Christ Revealed. Send your friends, family, loved ones there. Let them experience what we're all going to experience episode by episode throughout this entire process.

Speaker 4:

Well, right behind me is The Garden Tomb. The tomb that many believe is where Jesus was buried and from whence he rose from the grave. Well, the tomb itself was unearthed in 1867, and a couple of decades later somebody began to suggest that it might be the tomb where Jesus was buried, from whence he rose. Mostly because of its proximity to a place that were many already might be believing might be Golgotha.

We're a couple of hundred yards away and in the gospel according to John, we're told that in the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden there was a tomb. So that implies a sense of nearness, and therefore the same people that were believing, what we call Skull Hill today, might indeed be the biblical Golgotha, began to say, "Well, maybe in that case, this is the tomb in which Christ was buried."

I mean, it is important to bear in mind that tomb behind me is not identical to what it looked like in the days of Christ. The interior of the tomb was somewhat modified by the Byzantine Christians, and the crusaders were using this area for quite irreligious purposes, and they built a structure right in front of the tomb, and that greatly changed the way it looks today.

It is very different from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I think both play a very important role in the City of Jerusalem, as witnesses as it were to the Resurrection of Jesus, but there are many Christians that do not connect to the mode of worship in the Holy Sepulchre, and to the church itself. There is no space there, where Protestant Christians or

even Evangelic Christians could, for instance, take communion together. So this site, besides having some legitimate reasons of why one might think this is indeed the place where Jesus was buried, from whence he rose, it also fulfills a very important spiritual function. It's a place of Christian witness and Christian worship, where every Christian no matter what background they're coming from, can come and meditate on the crucifixion of Christ, celebrate his Resurrection, join with a group of people and take communion together here in this garden.

It's especially been important to Evangelical Christians, as they come to Jerusalem. It really has become sort of the spiritual home for Evangelical pilgrims in Jerusalem. So the area that might be Golgotha is just 200 years away from Damascus Gate, which is today's main northern gate of the city. And today's Damascus Gate is located pretty much exactly in the same location where the main northern gate was also in the days of Christ, and indeed that proximity to the city walls, to the proximity to the city gates and to the major road, which used to come out of the Damascus Gate and connect Jerusalem to the cities of the north, is one of the primary reasons why many began to point to Skull Hill as a possible location for Golgotha. Since we know the Romans always used to crucify on the sides of the major roads, places that were accessible to the populace.

The purpose of the crucifixion was to instill fear in the hearts of the passersby. It was a way to project the power of the empire. After all, those who were crucified were usually those who were tried for some form of rebellion, whether it was a slave rebellion against his master or someone rebelling against the authority of the empire.

Patrick Gentempo: Tisha, I'm very excited to have this conversation as you are our mentor and tour guide for Israel. So tell me about what got you involved in being here. We'll hear the accent. You're from the United States, but you live here now. How did you end up in the position of introducing people to Israel?

Tisha Michelle: Well, it all started when I was nine months old. My mother a pioneer gospel ... First of all, gospel music in the United States. Bands like The Gaithers, and Larry Gatlin, and The Oak Ridge Boys, and all of the gospel bands. I grew up backstage with Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash-

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: ... and had a great childhood, and we were filling up coliseums back when I was just a little child. Someone came to my mom in 1968 and asked her, "Have you ever wanted to bring a tour to Israel? You're filling up these coliseums, why don't you advertise a tour?" My mom took her first tour in 1968, I was nine months old.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: And fell in love with the country.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Tisha Michelle: To walk where Jesus walked. To walk where the prophets walked. It changed her life, and she immediately went back to the Israel government tours office, and worked with the Israeli government to help them start a Christian market. She believed that ever Christian had to come to Israel because it would change their lives. To see where Jesus walked and the prophets walk, it makes the Bible no longer black and white, but technicolor.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: So as I came to the land as a child on multiple tours, I literally fell in love with the country. There's nothing like it. The scripture says, "That he'll comfort those who comfort Israel." The scriptures will say, "Oh bless those that bless Israel." The scripture even says that, "They're the apple of his eye." So even as a little child, I used to weep when I would leave the country. I knew that that was my destiny. I would be back here and in 1993, I made Aliyah, which means I immigrated to Israel and never ever, ever regretted it for one moment.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. Now you have the, I guess, maybe call it the privilege or blessing to be able to take a lot of people through Israel, and you seem to be the guide to the stars who come here. Your reputation precedes you. Are you allowed to talk about some of the people that you've introduced to Israel?

Tisha Michelle: Sure. To be honest with you, I never take that for granted.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: I always say, "It's God's favor."

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Tisha Michelle: He's opened to many doors for me here in the land, and it's been amazing to work with some amazing people. Sarah Palin.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: I helped her with her first trip to Israel, and also Governor Huckabee. I've worked with the Governor Huckabee for many years.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, yeah.

Tisha Michelle: Governor Mike Huckabee. Many, many gospel music and country music artists. Senator Rand Paul. The president of South Korea, and many, many, many more.

Patrick Gentempo: So, let's talk about some of the highlights in Israel that are very noteworthy. We could probably spend a very long time because there are so many.

Tisha Michelle: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: But let's start up north with the Galilee. First you have the Sea of Galilee. What can you tell us about that?

Tisha Michelle: Oh, the Sea of Galilee is an amazing place. First of all, it's the second lowest part of the Earth, and a part of the Syria African rift. Beautiful, beautiful place, but the Sea of Galilee is special because it's all most of the miracles of Jesus. In fact, the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee saw three quarters of the gospel, and small towns like Capernaum, and Bethesda, and [Gerizim 01:20:36]. Those three villages saw most of the miracles of Jesus. So very, very special. It's where he walked on the water. It's where he spent most of his ministry.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. Let's talk about Capernaum. What can you tell us about Capernaum?

Tisha Michelle: Capernaum is his own hometown. Scripture says that he was from Nazareth, and remember he grew up in Nazareth, and a prophet wasn't accepted in his own hometown, so the next thing we know the infuriated people of Nazareth were ready to throw him off the brow of a hill.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Tisha Michelle: Then next thing we know, he reappears in Capernaum, which he calls his own hometown. Peter lived in Capernaum, and that became literally the center of his ministry, and so many things we can't even imagine happened in Capernaum. John 21 says that, "There's not enough books in the world to contain the miracles that took place in those three short years of his life, and most of those miracles, many of them, happened at Capernaum."

Patrick Gentempo: What are some of the places that are visited there? Peter's house, I believe, is there?

Tisha Michelle: Right. When you're visiting and touring through Capernaum, one of the highlights, obviously, is the house of Peter.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: If you really think about it, that could have been ... First of all, we know that Peter was from Bethesda.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: He was not from Capernaum, but his wife was from Capernaum, so that became his own city too. If you think about the house of Peter, that could have been where the Paralytic was lowered through the roof.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: It could have been where Jesus stayed. It could have been where Peter's mother-in-law was healed from fever, and it could have been the first church. So what an amazing find.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah. Bethesda. The location of Bethesda is somewhat controversial, but there's a new archeological dig, isn't there?

Tisha Michelle: Well, it was very exciting to be able to sit down with Professor, and learn more about the new possible location of Bethesda in. Up until then, Bethel was the calculated location of Bethesda. It was Edward Robinson in 1838 that believed that that was the biblical Bethesda, also known as Julius.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: But things are changing. So we're excited to find out more and more, but we've even found Roman ruins there and possibly a Byzantine church. We might have just found the new, or the real accurate Bethesda, which makes more sense because it's much closer to the Sea of Galilee, and we know that that was a fisherman's town. In fact, Bethesda means house of the fisherman.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: So we know it had to be near the Sea of Galilee, and also, home to several of the disciples and where Jesus healed a blind man.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, so the significance of Bethesda is the fact that it was home to several disciples and there was a miracle performed there, that blind man healed there.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: So that's very exciting. In that same area, actually, all these things are in pretty close proximity as you cited. We also have a find of a synagogue that existed in the time of Jesus. What is that?

Tisha Michelle: Right. Well, these are brand new excavations. So just over the past couple of years, we've started to excavate the city of Magdala, which is the traditional birthplace of Mary of Magdalene. In Magda we actually found a synagogue from the time of Jesus. From the second temple period.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: You see, in Capernaum we have a synagogue, but the base was from the time of Jesus. The actual synagogue you're looking at is third or fourth century synagogue.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: But in Magdala we found a synagogue from the time of Jesus, and we believe he was there and it's just amazing all of the things they're finding, but a very, very significant sight.

Patrick Gentempo: Now where that's located on the Sea of Galilee ... There's many references to crossing over, and that's where some boats and fisherman would be in Magdala, right?

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: So is it supposed that he would stop at that synagogue, and catch a ride across the water to his hometown? Or what is speculated about that?

Tisha Michelle: Sure, yeah. I'm sure that he took one of the boats many, many, many times to Capernaum, and what scripture says, "To the other side."

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: Which is the Decapolis. So the southern Golan Heights on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee is the Decapolis. There were 10 Pagan Hellenistic cities all on the other side of the sea, and that's why if they were Pagan and Hellenistic, that's the only reason there would be swine there, and that's where the miracle of the swine took place.

Patrick Gentempo: Right. You can actually see those areas right from Capernaum, and Magdala, and these other places?

Tisha Michelle: Right, right.

Patrick Gentempo: Also in that same general vicinity is the Mount of Beatitudes. What can you tell us about that?

Tisha Michelle: Well, that's actually where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, which is the longest sermon in the gospels, and probably the most known sermon of Jesus. But what are Beatitudes? They're attitudes for kingdom people to be in.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: So that's a very, very important location, I think, in understanding Jesus you have to go back to the Jewish roots of Jesus, and who he was and what he was trying to teach. See, Jesus was a Kingdom person, and he was continually a Kingdom person. He was continually in Kingdom attitude.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, and the Sermon on the Mount, of course, very famous and it would make sense from a proximity standpoint that he would have that sermon there. It's still in that same general vicinity where it seemed his ministry was, and it's very exciting to be able to hit all these spots and experience them without having to drive days between.

Tisha Michelle: I think that's the thing that shocks people, is that Israel is really a small country. I mean, about 95% of the Bible took place in an area of a 150 by 50 miles.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: And three quarters of the gospel took place in a tiny little triangle that's just several miles big, and that saw most of the miracles and most of the gospel.

Patrick Gentempo: Another thing is, is this small country, the size, I think, landmass wise, I think you said the size of New Jersey.

Tisha Michelle: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: Where I'm from.

Tisha Michelle: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: But there's five different climates?

Tisha Michelle: Yes. Five different climate zones. So I always say, "God gave us a little bit of everything." And one day you can be in the snow, and in the desert by the beautiful Mediterranean Sea, you can be in the forest, and everything in between.

Patrick Gentempo: Tell me about Mount Carmel.

Tisha Michelle: So, Mount Carmel is a beautiful location. In fact, from Mount Carmel we can literally have a panoramic view. We can see so many biblical stories right in front of our eyes. Even the Mediterranean. So on one side you can see Cecily by the sea, on the other side you can see the Valley of Armageddon, where the final battle is supposed to take place according to Revelations. So, from Mount Carmel, that's where we hear about the story of Elijah and the Prophets of Baal. That's where Elijah defeated the 450 Prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. That was an area of the worship of Baal, and Asherah, the Gods of fertility. Obviously, Elijah is coming in at that point and saying, "How long are you going to falter between two Gods? You going to choose Baal, or are you going to choose the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?" And that's where he defeats the Prophets of Baal.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. It's a pretty historic place.

Tisha Michelle: It really is.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, of course, one of the stars of the Bible, John the Baptist, had his ministry in the Jordan River.

Tisha Michelle: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: So tell us about the Jordan River.

Tisha Michelle: Well, the Jordan River, first of all, is a very, very important river to us in Israel and modern day Israel. The name Jordan in Hebrew is Yarden, which actually means descending from the [Dan 01:23:31], and the Dan is the main water source of the Jordan River. That's in the north of the country where the biblical tribe of Dan was.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: There's three rivers that join together that form the Jordan River in the north. The Jordan River is actually the main water source for the Sea of Galilee.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: Pours into the Sea of Galilee in the north and pours out of the Sea of Galilee in the south, and all the way down to the Dead Sea, whereas they say, "The river of life pours into the sea of death."

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: The Jordan River is where, obviously, John the Baptist would have spent a lot of his time, especially down in the wilderness preparing the way for the Lord in the wilderness.

Patrick Gentempo: Right. Obviously, it's where Christ was baptized.

Tisha Michelle: That's right. It's where he met Jesus.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. Now let's talk about the city of Jerusalem, and boy can that be a very long conversation.

Tisha Michelle: The Holy City. That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: The Holy City. So it's very spectacular in its scope historically, and spectacular to witness in present day. One of the great vistas to observe the actual Holy City is from Mount of Olives. A lot of stuff happens there, so let's go through the highlights.

Tisha Michelle: Well, the Mount of Olives is special. Oh, my goodness. When you sit there and see the view of Temple Mount, you can actually see Mount Moriah where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac. Where The First and Second Temple were. Just an amazing spot, but The Mount of Olives is rich. First of all, Jesus entered the city over the Mount of Olives. He looked out over the city from the Mount of Olives, he wept over the city, it's where he ascended to heaven, and it's where he's going to come back. So it doesn't get better than that. That's literally, Holy ground.

Patrick Gentempo: Right. There now that exists on the Mount of Olives are many things to commemorate these things that you talked about. So what are some of the sites that you might stop at?

Tisha Michelle: Well, first of all, you stop at the orientation of the city with that magnificent view, and then you make your way down the Palm Sunday Road, the traditional Palm Sunday Road. One of the stops you might take is the church of Dominus Flevit, or that area where the Lord wept. Luke 19 tells us that, "He wept over the city." He actually foretold the destruction of the temple. So the Lord wept over the city. He made his triumphal entry over the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. Then another site that you might visit, obviously, is the garden of Gethsemane.

Patrick Gentempo: So talk about the significance of that.

Tisha Michelle: Gethsemane actually means oil press, and that's where they would take the olives and make the olive oil. In fact, Gethsemane was a meeting place for Jesus and the disciples. If you want to get technical about it, I'm sure that Jesus felt quite pressed his night in Gethsemane as he was

praying. In fact, if you want to get really technical about it, that's where he shed his first drop of blood for us because sweating blood is an actual symptom of extreme stress.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: That's where Jesus prayed. The disciples wouldn't stay awake. They couldn't stay awake. He was betrayed and he spent his last night there in the garden.

Patrick Gentempo: We also notice on the Mount of Olives, a bunch of older ancient graves.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: What is all of that?

Tisha Michelle: Well, the Mount of Olives is the oldest and the largest Jewish cemetery in existence.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: So you see many, many, many graves there. In fact, if you're looking down on the Mount of Olives, you can see three valleys. One is the Valley of Jehosaphat, is right down below. Also known as the Kidron Valley, and that's where God is, according to Joel, judge the nations on account of how they've treated Israel.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: In fact, Jehosaphat means, where God will judge, and in the Kidron Valley we have the Tomb of Zechariah and Absalom, as well, in the valley.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: Some of those ancient graves.

Patrick Gentempo: And the other two valleys?

Tisha Michelle: Then the other two valleys. The other one is called the Tyropoeon Valley, also known as the Cheesemakers Valley. The third valley is called Gehenna. It means hell. Where child sacrifice was made to the God Molek, but it's really amazing. If you look at those valleys ... See, scripture says that, "The Lord has implanted his name on Jerusalem." And if you look from an ariel view, it's as clear as day, you can actually see those valleys form this, which is the Hebrew letter [Foreign Language 01:27:59], which if you see every mezuzah or prayer box on every Jewish door, that stands for the word Shudiah, God. He didn't just say it, he literally implanted his name on the three valleys of Jerusalem.

Now those valleys enwrap Zion, Mount Zion, which scripture says that, "The Lord abides in Zion. He says, 'This is my resting place forever.'"

Patrick Gentempo: And on Mount Zion, don't we have the City of David?

Tisha Michelle: We do.

Patrick Gentempo: So tell us about that.

Tisha Michelle: Well, the City of David is, first of all, was the Jebusite city before David came into the area. David conquered the city from the Jebusites. He unites the 12 tribes and makes it a eternal capital, Jerusalem. An amazing place, and the archeological excavations there. Daily we're finding new things proving the Bible accurate, all the time. In the City of David, we found what we believe to be the shaft that David used in order to conquer the city from the Jebusites.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: Eilat Mazar has done some excavations there and she thinks that they might have even found the palace of David.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: And Hezekiah's Tunnel was uncovered there, and the Pool of Siloam, where Jesus healed a blind man.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah. Exciting stuff. Now let's get into Jerusalem proper, the old city at least.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: These four quadrants, what are they?

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative). The old city are ... First of all, the walls of the old city were built by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1536, around 1536 AD. Ottoman Turkish walls. Today the walls of the city in closed four quarters, which are the Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Arminian quarters inside the old city.

Patrick Gentempo: So some of these sites of historical significance, especially to Christians ... I guess, we talk about the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: Tell us about that.

Tisha Michelle: Well, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre ... Well, first of all, that's a church ... When Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire 324 AD, his mother Helena was sent to the region. And she travels the land with early church fathers, and she's led to these locations and designates the Holy sites.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: So the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was one of those sites that Helena believed to have found a portion of the cross there, and she believed

that that was the location of Golgotha and the tomb. So that is the final stations of what is called the Via Dolorosa, the Catholic Via Dolorosa are at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: Now, that is the Catholic and the Orthodox location of the tomb, and of Golgotha, but there's also Protestant location, which is The Garden Tomb. Both were quarries outside the old city walls.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: So we're not sure which was accurate.

Patrick Gentempo: So there's some scholarly debate between the two?

Tisha Michelle: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: But at least ... Yeah.

Tisha Michelle: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: And they're not that far apart from each other.

Tisha Michelle: No, they are not.

Patrick Gentempo: There's a Tower of David, which David never built. So tell us about Tower of David.

Tisha Michelle: Right. More accurately the Tower of David Museum encloses many different layers of archeological excavations of the city of Jerusalem, but more significantly, the main tower is considered the Citadel Tower. And that was one of the towers, the base of it, that is today, and that was one of the towers that protected and guarded Herod's Palace. Herod the Great. So we know that that would be ... That Jesus was brought to Herod and judged there.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: And there are some exciting excavations that are going on there, and we're very excited to see what else is uncovered there.

Patrick Gentempo: You have, of course, maybe the holiest site of the Jewish faith, the Western Wall.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: What does that represent?

Tisha Michelle: The Western Wall is actually the retaining wall of the Holy Temple, Mount Plaza. So it was a retaining wall. When Herod renovated The Second Temple, he leveled a portion of Mount Moriah, and he had to build a platform, so he built a platform about 12 soccer fields big, and

enclosed it by retaining walls in order to hold this platform down. So the Western Wall is the retaining wall of The Temple Mount compound.

Now, you have to understand, you can see that I am wearing a [coin 01:32:13], and you see it's got a palm branch on it.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Tisha Michelle: Now what did they wave when Jesus came down over the Mount of Olives?

Patrick Gentempo: Palms.

Tisha Michelle: Palm branches. So palm branches represented freedom during the time of Jesus or for the Jewish people, and this is a Jewish revolt coin. A 2,000 year old coin. You have to understand that when the evil emperor Hadrian took control after the destruction of the temple, he ... In 132 AD, that started what was called The Second Jewish Revolt, the Bar Kokhba revolt under a Rabi by the name of Rabi Bar Kokhba.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: Unfortunately, the Jewish people lost the Bar Kokhba revolt, and they were banned from coming to Jerusalem, but this revolt was started when Hadrian banned Jews from coming to Jerusalem. He would not allow Jews to enter Jerusalem. Only one time a year on Tisha B'Av, and that is the day The First and The Second Temples were destroyed. They were destroyed on the same day.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: In fact, even to today, that's a Jew that the days mourn, and lament, and fast, about the destruction of both of their Holy temples. So Hadrian banned Jews from coming. He allowed them to come back one time a year, and they obviously would come to the Wailing Wall, and that's why it got the name The Wailing Wall because scripture says, "Nothing would be left of the Holy Temple. Not one stone." So that is what the Jewish people had to come back to.

Patrick Gentempo: In the desert near the Dead Sea, there's a site of Qumran. Why is that significant?

Tisha Michelle: Oh, my goodness. We found, in Qumran ... First of all, we found in several caves, but we found the oldest scriptures in existence, in Qumran, in these caves. These scriptures predated anything we've had by a thousand years.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: Unbelievable.

Patrick Gentempo: So this is where the famous Dead Sea Scrolls have been unearthed?

Tisha Michelle: We found scriptures from every single book of the Bible, except the Book of Esther, and I mean, what a wealth of knowledge. In fact, the book of Isaiah we found in its entirety, and it's a miracle it even existed.

Patrick Gentempo: And they're still digging there, aren't they?

Tisha Michelle: We're still find ... We found a cave not long ago.

Patrick Gentempo: What are some of the theories as to how all these scrolls ended up there?

Tisha Michelle: Well, one of the theories, obviously, the mainstream theory would obviously be the story of the Essenes. Who you have to understand, the Essenes were a group of Jewish people ... They believed that they were the Sons of Light. They believed the rest of the world were the Sons of Darkness. They believed there was going to be a final battle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. They believed they were in the wilderness preparing the way for the Lord in fulfillment of scripture.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: So one of the theories would be that the Essenes' were the ones that copied these scriptures in the area of Qumran.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: That was kind of the main school of thought back up until a couple of years ago. Now the interesting thing though is, is that in a small place like that in the middle of the desert, for a couple of hundred years, how many scribes could there have been? There were many different hands in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It doesn't even quite make sense. So one of the new theories is, that perhaps there was a biblical library from Jerusalem, and in preparation for the destruction of the temple, they brought all these scrolls down, hid them in the caves, all with the hopes that one day they'd be back to find them, and unfortunately, there was no one to come back. They were just planted there, waiting for us to be brought back to the land of fulfillment of Ezekiel 37. For him to bring us back to our soil, for a nation to be reborn, and the oldest scriptures in existence to be found. For us to get our biblical birthright back.

Patrick Gentempo: Another fairly recent discovery is the Pool of Siloam. Tell us about that.

Tisha Michelle: Well, we had the honor of touring with Eli Shukron who was one of the archeologists that uncovered the new Pool of Siloam. Now up until a couple of years ago, we believed ... Everyone visited a different Pool of Siloam, which was actually a pool from the Byzantine period. But the Pool of Siloam was discovered when there was actually a leak in a pipe, and they did some excavations and uncovered the Pool of Siloam, the accurate Pool of Siloam, which is an amazing find.

Patrick Gentempo: And what happened there?

Tisha Michelle: That's where Jesus healed the blind man.

Patrick Gentempo: Oh, yeah.

Tisha Michelle: You might remember that miracle was the miracle where he used saliva.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: This man had been blind from birth, and it's not the only miracle that Jesus used saliva. I think it's interesting also with the man with the speech impediment. That was deaf in the Decapolis. He had a miracle. He used the saliva for his miracle.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: And also for the man in [Bethesda 01:36:51] that was blind. If you go back to the Jewish beliefs at the time, you have to understand that the Jewish people believed that there were healing properties in the saliva in the first born Jewish male, that's why he would have done the miracle, and that took place at the Pool of Siloam.

Patrick Gentempo: Tell me about Masada.

Tisha Michelle: Masada is an amazing place. It's over the Dead Sea, and that was a fortress that Herod built in order to protect himself in times of trouble, and just an amazing, amazing place, but Masada was the last stand of the Jewish people in the land. You see, when Masada fell ... The temple was destroyed in 70 AD. Masada fell in 73 AD.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: If it wasn't for a miracle from God that we would be brought back into our land, that would have been it, and one of the miracles of Masada is we actually found Dead Sea Scrolls all the way down to Masada.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: That's a southern most point that we found Dead Sea Scrolls, and when we excavated in the synagogue of Masada, we uncovered the Book of Ezekiel. Not just that, Ezekiel 37. Can you imagine being in the place of Israel's last stand in the land? When Masada fell, we lost our land for 2,000 years, and here we are back, prophecy is already fulfilled, and we uncover Ezekiel 37 prophesying that the Lord is going to bring us back into our land, breathe life into us, and a nation would be born again, and it was already a done deal. Amazing.

Patrick Gentempo: Amazing. Tisha, I want to thank you for bringing Israel to light in such a spectacular way. As you said, "It becomes technicolor."

Tisha Michelle: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: And I think you're true to that word.

Tisha Michelle: Thank you so much. What a blessing to be with you.

Patrick Gentempo: Tisha, where are we right now?

Tisha Michelle: We're right here on the Mount of Beatitudes. The Mount of Beatitudes is actually where the Sermon on the Mount took place.

Patrick Gentempo: So the facility that we're standing in right now is a Catholic structure that was built here?

Tisha Michelle: Yes, and it was built by Orders of Barluzzi.

Patrick Gentempo: Aha, Barluzzi.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: Yup.

Tisha Michelle: And they built it to commemorate where the Sermon on the Mount took place. Now they built a church like most Byzantine churches, in an octagonal structure.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: And that was, in this case, to commemorate each of the Beatitudes, all starting with the word blessed.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: In Hebrew, the actual word is Ashrei, which it's not blessed. It's actually happiness, better translated. Not a ha, ha, ha, he, he, he, happiness, but a contentment and a happiness that God alone can give us. So this church was built in 1927, but most people and most scholars believe that the Sermon on the Mount actually took place just down below. There is a natural amphitheater that ... The banana patch forms a natural amphitheater, and the acoustics are phenomenal. So very likely down below was the accurate location.

Patrick Gentempo: Obviously, Sermon of the Mount is a very famous part of the Bible and a very foundational aspect of understanding Christ's teachings.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: So we're on the north side of the Sea of Galilee-

Tisha Michelle: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: ... or all these other terms that they use for that.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: So basically, when Christ was giving the sermon, he would have been doing it facing the sea?

Tisha Michelle: Well, the scripture says that he went up on a mountain, right?

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: So we believe he was facing the sea and addressing the crowd down below, right.

Patrick Gentempo: So the crowd formed down below.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: He was up on the mountain.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: So basically where we're standing now, we're looking at ... So this is kind of the view he had while he was giving this inspired sermon?

Tisha Michelle: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. So this area is where most scholars feel like the actual sermon took place?

Tisha Michelle: Right. So the area right here actually forms a natural amphitheater, the acoustics are phenomenal.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Tisha Michelle: So although we do have the traditional church up here, this is where most scholars feel that the Sermon on the Mount took place.

Patrick Gentempo: You can see it kind of rounds out and so he would have ... Jesus would have stood here and the crowds would have been right down there.

Tisha Michelle: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, it does make sense when you look at it visually.

Tisha Michelle: You can imagine the trees were people, and he would be up here speaking to thousands down below.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. Quite a site. This area, this general area that we're in, I think you said something like, "75% of the gospels happened right around here." I mean, in a very tight area.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: So give me some background on the history of Jesus as it relates to this place.

Tisha Michelle: I think it's really important because we're starting right now, at the center of his ministry. Like we've said, "Three quarters of the gospel took place in a tiny little, like five, six mile triangle."

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: And we're right here, right now. But let's go back to who Jesus was. Now, he wasn't from this area.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: Jesus actually grew up in Nazareth, and we remember his famous synagogue speech in Nazareth, and that infuriated ... Quoted from the Book of Isaiah and said, "This is fulfilled before you."

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: It infuriated the people of Nazareth. They actually led him to a brow of a hill and wanted to throw him off, and scripture said that he disappeared from his midsts, and begins his public ministry right here.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: Now, I think it's important to go back and realize, who was Jesus?

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: Scripture tells us that he was Jewish.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: Scripture tells us that he grew up in Nazareth.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: And scripture tells us that he was a Rabi.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: So much so, you know who called him Rabi? Not his followers. His followers called him master or lord.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: It was the [pharaohsies 01:42:21] that called him Rabi. So they weren't going to give him any credit that he didn't deserve.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: Also, what's important is to realize that he would have been teaching like the Rabis of his time would have taught.

Patrick Gentempo: Right, right.

Tisha Michelle: Jesus is our Messiah, but how do we ... There's a lot of years we don't know where he was.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: If you think about it, the last time we hear about him in the temple he was 12, and the next thing, he reappears right here at the age of 30. That's a lot of years you don't know where he was.

Patrick Gentempo: Right, and from his hometown of Nazareth, which is behind you I think as I'm looking.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Right.

Patrick Gentempo: How far are we from Nazareth?

Tisha Michelle: We're about a 30 minute drive.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah. So walking, it's a couple days maybe?

Tisha Michelle: Yeah. Half at least. At least a days walk, probably.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, yeah.

Tisha Michelle: But we have to have a little bit of background on where he was, and I can take you all the way back to the age of three.

Okay because Jesus was a Jewish boy growing up with a typical Jewish religion. So we know from the early books and the early Jewish literature, we know exactly what the Jewish boys would have been doing. So at the age of three, a Jewish boy would have been memorizing the Book of Psalms, as his father would have sang the book of Psalms to him.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: By the age of five, he would have been committing to memory the Book of Leviticus, as his father would have been teaching him that. The age of 10, most Jewish boys would have even the first five books of the Bible, The Torah, committed to memory. By the age of 13, a Jewish boy comes into manhood, and most Jewish boys had the Old Testament committed to memory and were already moving on to study The Mishnah, which was an Oral law that was handed down from generation-to-generation from the time of Moses until it was compiled in Tiberius.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: And the second century. By the age of 18, a Jewish boy would be pursuing his vocation, and age of 20, the same thing, Jesus was a ...

Patrick Gentempo: Carpenter.

Tisha Michelle: Right, or a stonemason. Right?

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Tisha Michelle: That's right. Then at the age of 30, get this one, the Jewish people believed that a Jewish male came into his full vigor, and only then was he ready for his public ministry.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: So at the age of 30, Jesus comes into his public ministry. Remember the first miracle, when he's turning the water into wine.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: And his mother comes to him and says, "Hey, we're out of wine." And he says, "Woman, my time has not yet come."

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: He wasn't 30 yet.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: But he did the miracle anyways. But at the age of 30 he comes onto the scene in his public ministry, and he has three years to change the world.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: Three years. I think it's interesting because it's like ... Approximately 65,000 thoughts go through our mind a day.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Tisha Michelle: He didn't have a second, a moment, that wouldn't count for the Kingdom. He was a Kingdom person at all times, and that's the essence of the Beatitudes, attitudes for Kingdom people to be in.

Patrick Gentempo: And that's what that means?

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: Attitudes for Kingdom people. Basically, this ministry happened mostly right here where we are?

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: And as you said, "Nazareth was not that far from here, half hour by car," and then he appeared here and this is so many of the stories unfold.

Tisha Michelle: That's right. This is where they unfold, and then you have to understand that when Jesus was teaching, he taught in a way that was typical to Rabis called [remez 01:45:37]. What is remez? It means alluding to.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Tisha Michelle: So if we've already established that Jewish men during the time of Jesus had scripture committed to memory, all a Rabi would have to do is say a word, a key, a phrase, and all of a sudden an entire passage would explode in the listeners mind, and you would know exactly what he was pointing back to in scripture.

Patrick Gentempo: So Mussolini had this place built when?

Tisha Michelle: 1927.

Patrick Gentempo: Now, what gave him the land rights to be able to do this?

Tisha Michelle: Well, different churches came in and purchased land, and ordered the erection of churches on the original ... Many are on the original sites where Helena had designated. In this particular case, it wasn't.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tisha Michelle: So they built it in 1927, and then an architect by the name of Antonio Barluzzi built it.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah. This obviously is a very popular spot for people to show up and visit. You can see a lot of activity around this.

Tisha Michelle: People come from all over the world. They have that one time where they want to make a pilgrimage and see where scripture took place.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, yeah. Amazing.

Tisha Michelle: Prophets of [Octane 01:46:36], and the miracles took place.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Gretchen Jensen: Wow. What a great start, but you know what? We have even more because tomorrow we're going to hear from J. Warner Wallace and Claire Fan. So Patrick, tell us what can we expect?

Patrick Gentempo: J. Warner Wallace is a fascinating individual. He wrote a book amongst many others called Cold-Case Christianity. So here we had a guy who was an atheist, who was a cold case murder detective, a homicide detective, and he would open up these cold cases and apply all these rules of evidence to try to determine what really happened here. He decided to do this on the case of Jesus Christ, and the Resurrection. I have to tell you that his journey through this process and how he explains the painstaking detail to which he analyzed a case for the Resurrection, is absolutely astounding and unique. Incidentally, it converted him to become a very committed Christian. So you're going to have an amazing time with that particular interview when you see what he has to share.

Claire Fan is from the United States, but she immigrated to Israel many years ago with her husband. She is a New Testament expert, and there are little nuances that I picked up in my interview with her, that were startling to me as she puts into context the role of faith, how one receives the Holy Spirit, and her entire context about Christianity. What it's like to promulgate that in Israel. So you're going to be fascinated with her interview also.

Before we tie up here, however, I really want to encourage you to share Christ Revealed with everyone you know. There are social media links right here on the page where you can share it, or just send people to Christrevealed.com. Let them register for free to watch the rest of this

series. It will change their life and they'll thank you for doing it. So thanks for spending time with us here today, and I look forward to being with you again tomorrow.