



FOLLOWER OF JESUS

NICK WRIGHT

QUESTIONS

People often ask, or wonder, why I call myself a follower of Jesus. You may be one of those people. There are lots of good and different reasons to ask. Here are some of the most common:

1. I'm just curious. What's your faith got to do with your work? If it doesn't make any difference, why mention it?
2. I've met religious people before and I have felt preached at and judged by them. How can I know you won't be the same?
3. I believe (or don't believe) X, and I'm concerned that our differences may create tensions between us.
4. I'm a Christian of X (denomination) and I want to check out if what you believe is the same as what I believe.
5. I'd love to believe in God like you do but have never found any good reason to do so. How did you find Jesus?

I'll have a go at answering these questions. It's tricky, partly because language itself is tricky. Words can carry different meanings and evoke different feelings for different people. If in doubt, do ask.

1. JUST CURIOUS

My work is about enabling people, teams and organisations to grow in insight, fulfil their potential and achieve their goals. Each of these dimensions can raise its own underlying questions. For example:

- What kind of insights are most useful for developmental purposes?
- What is the true and positive potential of a person, team or organisation?
- What goals are wise, ethical, reachable and sustainable to pursue?

If we were to reflect on these questions through an overtly spiritual lens, they could look something like this (below). This presupposes a biblical notion of God, which I hold to as a follower of Jesus:

- What does God want me/us to know and understand?
- What are my/our God-given talents and potential?
- What is/are my/our God-given purpose in the world?

Each layer of questions can beg further questions. If we believe there is no God, the first set of questions is often good and enough. If we believe God does or may exist, the second set is critical.

Many of my clients have no explicit interest in a spiritual dimension at all, so we stay with the first set of questions. Some clients, however, are interested in the second set too. That's entirely their call.

So, you may be wondering what general influences my beliefs and faith have on my coaching, training and OD practice, irrespective of what a client may or may not believe or want to work on?

- A commitment to personal integrity, critical reflexivity and critical reflective practice.
- An appreciative awareness of the client's strengths, possibilities, hopes and dreams.
- A solutions focus on the client's results, reflexivity, resourcefulness and resilience.

You will notice that these professional characteristics are not necessarily distinctively Christian. They are for me, however, rooted firmly in my beliefs, vision, faith and ethics as a follower of Jesus.

2. RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

I'm tempted to try to distance myself from 'religion' and 'religious' people, mostly because the R word carries, for me, negative connotations of stiflingly-rigid rituals, rules and regulations.

It's one reason why I call myself a follower of Jesus. The over-used 'Christian' word risks triggering all kinds of assumptions and feelings that I want to avoid, if possible. Here's what I do believe:

Jesus is a person. Christianity is a religion. We are called to follow Jesus. We are not called to follow Christianity. This means that, for me, to follow Jesus as authentically as I can is paramount.

This is, however, far easier said than done. I'm consistently inconsistent. I fail as much as, if not more than, I succeed. I have no right or desire to preach at or judge anyone. Jesus calls us to love.

One of my favourite parts in the Bible is where it says: God didn't send Jesus into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him. If you find me judging anyone, do tell me.

3. BELIEF/DON'T BELIEVE

Everyone has a worldview, beliefs and values. Sometimes we know these things explicitly. More often than not, they guide what we assume, choose, feel and do without us ever realising it.

Learning to discover what we truly believe and value, and why we do what we do, can be a powerful source and catalyst for personal development in individuals and cultural development in groups.

My role is not to convince you of my beliefs. It may be, however, to help you discover your own beliefs and values so that you can explore, weigh them up and make fresh choices, if you want to.

We don't need to hold the same beliefs and values to work together successfully. In fact, holding different beliefs and values can be an advantage when identifying e.g. filters, assumptions or options.

If you were to decide a course of action that I considered unethical for you or for others impacted by it, I would raise it explicitly with you and help you to explore potential consequences and alternatives.

If you felt that my beliefs and values were in any way affecting the quality of our relationship or work negatively, I would encourage you, likewise, to raise it with me directly so that I could address it.

4. X DENOMINATION

The focus of my belief and faith is on Jesus. I studied theology and pastoral studies at a non-denominational theological school. I acknowledge and respect different Christian traditions.

My core belief is that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus reveal that no matter who we are or what we have done, we really matter to God. Jesus is our light, love, hope, saviour and truth.

I found Jesus through Roman Catholics; led youth and community work in Pentecostal churches; trained as a Baptist minister; and have worked as coach and mentor for Church of England leaders.

I've worked with para-church organisations, including: Tearfund, World Vision, Shaftesbury Society, Oasis Trust, Open Doors, Home for Good, Christian Medical Fellowship, CVJM and Bible Society.

I belong to a group of Christian motorcyclists who support each other to stay close to Jesus, and to take practical love-in-action to support people who are e.g. poor or most vulnerable in the world.

My role is not to convince you of my beliefs. It may be, however, to help you reflect on your own beliefs and practice so that you can explore, weigh them up and make fresh choices, if you want to.

5. FINDING JESUS

I wish I could say there's a simple, magic formula. There isn't. It's first and foremost about opening ourselves to God, to reaching out towards him in whatever way feels real and meaningful for us.

Some people call this prayer. Don't worry about trying to find or use the 'correct' religious words or language. Be you. Be real. God meets each of us where we are – as the unique people we are.

I have found it useful to read parts of the Bible, e.g. the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts for starters. Don't try to understand everything. Be open to what God may show you or say to you.

Get involved in doing positive things, e.g. in support of people who are poor, vulnerable, anxious or lonely. We sometimes discover God when we do the things he calls us to do, by making it real.

Find others who are experienced in following Jesus so that you can learn from them. Christians are far from perfect, but we try hard to stay close to Jesus and to bring his good news to the world.



NICK WRIGHT

Nick Wright is a psychological coach, trainer and organisation development (OD) consultant with 25+ years' experience of working with beyond-profit leaders and organisations in the UK and internationally.

Nick has a Postgraduate Diploma in Coaching Psychology, a Masters' Degree in Human Resource Development, a Degree in Theology, a Diploma in Pastoral Studies and a Certificate in Supervision and Consultation.

Nick is a Fellow of the UK's Institute of Training and Occupational Learning. If you would like to learn more about Nick and his work, see:

www.nick-wright.com
info@nick-wright.com

Get in touch!