

Too Good to Be False with Tom Gilson

(August 14, 2020)

Is there really anything new that we can learn about Jesus from the New Testament after 2000 years? When people tell me, yes, I get skeptical. Oh, you've come up with something that Aquinas didn't see, or Augustine didn't see, or Luther didn't see, or Calvin didn't see, or Spurgeon didn't see? After 2000 years, you've seen something new? Well, actually, I think you can get fresh insight into, inarguably, the most influential human being in the history of the world, Jesus of Nazareth, who wasn't just a human being but also God. I think you can.

And it's not just me who says this, because my friend Tom Gilson has written a new book. It's called, *Too Good to Be False: How Jesus' Incomparable Character Reveals His Reality*. And the list of endorsements on this book is a mile long. I've endorsed it, but so has Lee Strobel, JP Moreland, J. Warner Wallace, Gary Habermas, Jeff Meyers, Sean McDowell, Josh McDowell, and several others who are saying there are insights in this book that we haven't seen elsewhere. And the book is called, *Too Good to Be False*. Tom Gilson, again, is my guest. He is the author of this new book; just came out August 1 of this year. And Tom has written six books, he's written over 600 articles, he's editor of stream.org, and he's also the founder of thinkingchristian.net, one of the top philosophical blogs for Christians on the web. It's got several awards for that.

Tom, before we get into the book, let me ask you one thing. First of all, how are you? And number two, tell our listeners what you do at stream.org, because I've mentioned The Stream many times before, but I want you to tell our listeners what you do with The Stream.

Tom:

Okay. Hey, Frank, it's good to be here. I'm doing well, thank you. And I'm a senior editor at The Stream. I'm a columnist there. So, that means I'm writing four articles a week, or something like that, but also help to just set policy, set articles for The Stream. What we're doing there is, I would say, you can be biased and right at the same time, right? I think we're the go to place on

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

the internet for a Christian perspective on current events, and that's what we're there for. We've got timeless stuff too.

Frank:

You do. And there are no ads on stream.org. It was started by James Robison and Jay Richards. And it's been, must be close to 10 years now, maybe eight years. I can't remember exactly when it began. But I go there almost every day. And you and others have written some great articles up there. Occasionally I'll put something up there. But you're a regular. You're up there all the time. And so many other writers, Michael Brown, is up there quite a bit. And several other Christian apologists, philosophers, theologians are on stream.org, so check it out.

But let's get to your book, Tom, because first of all, I mentioned at the top of the show that you can get some fresh insights from this book. And I think it's primarily because you didn't use an everyday Bible study method to do so. What do you mean, you didn't use an everyday Bible study method? You talk about this in the intro.

Tom:

Yeah, I do. Yeah. Everybody, when they study the life of Christ, and for good reason, everybody studies what Jesus did and what he said. Well, I took a backward approach to that. I started thinking about what he didn't say and what he didn't do.

Frank:

Hmm.

Tom:

And, you know, that could mean a lot of things. But in this case, what I meant is, I was thinking about, what great leaders do? What do other religious founders do? And what are they like, and how does Jesus compare to them? And the more I looked at it, the more I thought, Jesus stands out. He's different. I even looked into literature, mythology, you could go into Marvel movies, you could go anywhere, and you won't find anyone who comes close to having the kind of character that Jesus has.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

In fact, let's talk about that a little bit. Tom, when you say what he didn't do, that's one of the things I put my endorsement, because you were looking at, okay, what Jesus didn't do is almost as amazing as what he did do. So, give us a couple of examples of what he didn't do that stand out and give us a fresh insight as to who Jesus really was and is.

Tom:

Okay. Yeah, let's talk about his most famous sermon. And by the way, this is one thing he didn't do, is he didn't get better as he went along. You listen to anybody else who's delivering their first sermon...of course, we don't really know if this was his first sermon, but it was first in Matthew's timeline, at least. You listen to anyone else giving their first sermon, and they're not going to do what Jesus did, which is deliver a sermon that people are going to talk about for 2000 years to come. Yeah, he got it right the first time.

But the other thing he didn't do in that sermon is, He did not say, thus says the Lord. He never said that. This is surprising because, in the context in which he was speaking and teaching, you look at the prophets that came before him, and they were all speaking, as if speaking in the words of God, right. But they said, thus says the Lord. Jesus comes along and he's speaking with the same authority, as if speaking the words of God, but he wasn't quoting anyone. He was speaking on his own authority. And he did that. Everywhere he taught he spoke on his own authority. If you were looking at the thing on an academic page, and he had to footnote everything and say what his source was, every footnote would read, me, Jesus of Nazareth. Nobody else. That's different.

Frank:

And you heard him say things like, well, you have heard it said, but I say to you... Or he'd say, a new commandment I give to you. What?

Tom:

Yeah.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

And then he also says, all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me. Really? You're just a man? So, he didn't say what the Old Testament prophet said, thus sayeth the Lord. He just assumed he was the Lord and said things like this. What else didn't he do that you could lay out for us that gives us a fresh insight as to who he is?

Tom:

Yeah. This is an interesting one. The way I first caught this it goes back to a while ago when I ran into a young 20 something guy who wanted to know more about Jesus. So, we set up to meet at a bakery coffee shop. And his dad came along and turns out his dad was a would be cult leader. Now, I say "would be" because he didn't have any followers. But his beliefs were pretty cultish. Well, he had five spread out over four different states. But he kept saying to me, as he was describing his beliefs, he kept saying, my father says this, my father says this. And he claimed to get it from the Bible.

Well, that bothered me so went to home and researched and I thought, who says, my father, in the Bible? And I came back and asked him that and he said, well, the disciples said, my father. No. Jesus said, my father; he never said, our father. And that's where he didn't do something that everyone else might do. In fact, he told us to say, our father, but he never did. It's striking. You go to the resurrection account at the end of the book of John, and he tells Mary, go tell the disciples that I go to my God and your God, to my father and to your father. He's really careful to keep that separate. Why? Because his relationship with the father was different from our relationship with the father. It is a totally different kind of relationship. So much different.

Frank:

In fact, you even say in the text that Jesus never claimed to have faith in God.

Tom:

Yeah.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

That's kind of a striking observation. He never said, I have faith in God. How so? And we only got about a minute before the break. We can continue on the other side of the break, but go ahead, Tom.

Tom:

Yeah, we'll probably need to. The rest of the Bible, no one ever says Jesus had faith in God. That's really weird because there is nothing he taught more than the importance of faith. And the other things that he taught like love, compassion, giving, that kind of thing, he demonstrated. But he never demonstrated, and no one ever said he had faith in God. That's really weird. A good teacher ought to demonstrate what he's teaching. Right? Was Jesus a hypocrite? That bothered me when I first noticed that.

Frank:

Well, let's unpack it further on the other side of the break. Why didn't Jesus say he had faith in God? You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. My guest is Tom Gilson. His new book, Too Good to Be False: How Jesus' Incomparable Character Reveals His Reality. And we're going to talk a lot more with Tom and get new insights into Jesus. Yeah, we really are. Don't go away.

Ad:

Friends, can you help me with something? Can you go up to iTunes, or wherever you listen to this podcast, and give us a five-star review? Why? It will help more people see this podcast and, therefore, then hear it. So, if you could help us out there, I'd greatly appreciate it.

Frank:

Welcome back to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. I want to mention that this Sunday, August 16, I'll be doing a local gig here in Charlotte, NC. Freedom House Church, right here in Charlotte, not far from Concord Mills Mall up that way. For those of you in the Charlotte area, I'll be speaking at the 9:30 and 11:15 services. I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist to be the topic. Freedom House Church. Go to our website, crossexamined.org, click on events, you'll see that there. And

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

a little bit later I'll mention some new online courses we've got coming up that you want to be a part of.

But right now, my guest is Tom Gilson, and his new book is called, *Too Good to Be False*. It's a book with some fresh insights about Jesus. Believe it or not, we've been talking about a couple of them just before the break. And just before the break, Tom, we were talking about this idea, or this, this observation you made, that Jesus never said, I had faith in the father or faith in God. Why not?

Tom:

Yeah. Well, the first thing, Jesus was not a hypocrite, and we don't want to come to that conclusion. That would certainly be wrong. And you certainly also wouldn't want to say that he lacked trust in the Father. That's not what's going on here because their relationship was so close. I think what's going on here is probably something like...you might say, you know, I have faith that I can complete this huge, long project. Why? Well, because you're pretty sure you can do it. You have good reasons, you have belief.

What you don't say is, I have faith that I can scratch my eyebrow, unless you've got some kind of medical something going on. Because there's just nothing in there that's in question. Faith is about something that you know, you have good reason to know, but it does imply that there's something in question. I think that what's going on with Jesus and the father is that he's got the kind of trust where nothing is in question. So, it is trust, but it's not the same kind of trust that we have with the Father, where we have to push through something that is, at least at risk, or something that's being ventured. That we got to see what God's gonna do. That makes sense?

Frank:

Oh, yeah it does. And if you folks listening get the book, *Too Good to Be False*, that's unpacked in much greater depth than we could discuss here on the radio. I want to mention one other thing I heard Tim Keller say not long ago, which I thought was insightful. We were talking earlier about how Jesus always says, my father, my father. But there's one place that he doesn't say, my father, and that's when he's on the cross where he says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I wonder if that had to do with the fact that he felt, at least in his human nature, that he was forsaken judicially, because he volunteered to go to the cross. But still, it was an

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

injustice for him to take that punishment on himself so we wouldn't have to experience the punishment. And it's the only place where he says, my God, rather than, my father. That, in that instant he felt like that relationship had been broken, at least judicially.

Tom:

Yeah, I think these details matter. And I think they do tell us something. I think you're on the right track. I think Tim Keller's on the right track there.

Frank:

Now, Tom this book, which many have, as I mentioned earlier, have endorsed. Very wholeheartedly have written such great endorsements for it. But, really, who's it for? Is it for the academics? Or who is it for? Because I read it as anyone would read it and I think it's written for everybody. But who are you really trying to get this book to?

Tom:

Yeah, I'm really trying to reach the pastor, the teacher, the everyday Christian, that there's something there for everyone. By the way, it's also for groups and I'm hoping people will read it and study it in community, because there's discussion questions in the back for that. But I was gratified to get an endorsement from Craig Evans, distinguished professor at Houston Baptist University who said, "although it's oriented for the general reader, including skeptics," "...we'll get into that I'm sure. He says, "the professionals will get a lot out of it too." Because of these new ideas, there's something in there, even though it's written to be very readable, there's something in there for academics, as well.

Frank:

Well, it's the angle from which you're looking at Jesus You're looking, as we mentioned earlier from, what didn't he do? What didn't he say? In fact, think about a being with Jesus's obvious power. Okay? He could heal people, raise the dead, calm the storm. Could do all the things that get us into trouble. That's why he's the Messiah, right. You know, he heals us, he comes, he has power over nature, he can raise the dead, he's sinless. These are all the problems we have. He's demonstrated to be the Messiah. But did Jesus ever do anything that would give him personal benefit? It seems like he never pulled rank. He never decided that he was going to do

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

something just for his own personal benefit. Even the Apostle Paul, who apparently had the power to heal, couldn't heal his own thorn in the flesh. This seems odd, doesn't it, Tom?

Tom:

And that is actually the most striking thing to me about Jesus' character. It's actually the one thing that takes it from Jesus' deity being a doctrine to Jesus being the God whom I have to fall down before and worship. Because, here's the thing. He had all this power and he never used his extraordinary power for his own benefit at all. If someone gave me the Powerball winnings, or something...I got a billion dollars all of a sudden, and if I was the best person you ever heard of, except for Jesus, and if I gave it to missions, and to feeding the poor, and to ending human trafficking...if I were that good, I'd still probably get the roof fixed. Or take the family on a nice vacation or something. But Jesus, when he was hungry, and he could have turned a stone into bread, and he was tempted to do so, he said, no, that's not the point here. We don't live on bread alone. Power corrupts, said Lord Acton, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And Jesus was absolutely the opposite of that. He was absolutely uncorrupted. Nothing else like that.

Frank:

I just happened to be reading in Luke this morning where the soldiers were mocking him, and people standing at the cross reminding him you know, if you're the Messiah, why don't just save yourself. You think you can save others? You can't even save yourself. And he didn't save himself. But, of course, he could have.

Tom:

He could have.

Frank:

Yes.

Tom:

He's the only person who died and didn't have to die. We all you know we can choose how we die. We can die for the Lord, and I hope that we all die speaking his name. He didn't have to die. He didn't even have to be born. There was a guy in India a couple years ago who sued, this is

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

funny, he sued his parents for wrongful birth. And you get the sense that if he'd maybe had advanced, informed consent, it would have been okay. Well, Jesus came with advanced informed consent before he was born.

Frank:

Yeah.

Tom:

And he came for us.

Frank:

Yeah, just imagine, knowing what Jesus knew, that some time in his early 30s, that he would literally be sacrificed, and you know, all the years leading up to that, the amount of stress that if he was a normal person like us, you know, we probably couldn't handle that. But no, he knew that was coming and he volunteered to do it, which is, again, amazing. In fact, the first part of your book...again, we're talking to Tom Gilson. His new book, *Too Good to Be False*. The first part your book, Tom, Part One is called, *Greater Than You Knew*, which is talking about Jesus's character here. And let me just quote something you write here.

You say, "His love is unmatched in all history and all literature, his ethical goodness is unparalleled in all history, and even the greatest author's imaginations. His teaching methods may look simple, but you can't call a teacher simple, who gives each person exactly what he needs, who never gets the least bit flustered, much less stumped when the best scholars of the day also happened to be his chief adversaries, constantly trying to trip him up." You elsewhere say, "no author, no novelist, no poet, no playwright has ever devised a character of perfect power and perfect love like Jesus." You say, "people like Shakespeare, and Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy, all these different poets, they couldn't create a figure like Jesus." And then you write this, "yet skeptics think the anonymous storytellers involved in the story distorting processes of cognitive dissidence reduction, legend development, and the telephone game did what none of the greats ever imagined. I say, that would be a greater miracle than Jesus's resurrection."

So, start with Jesus's character. And then we're going to talk about how he couldn't be an invented character, like you mentioned here in the text.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Tom:

Yeah, this is a part where it's for skeptics, but also to encourage Christians in their confidence in the faith. What I did, and it's also different in this book, is I took the story seriously as a story. And I took Jesus' character seriously. I even set aside the miracles, just saying, what's his character like? And we've already talked about how great he is. And so, stories always come from somewhere, right. You've got to explain the story according to its author, and it's got to make sense as to who could write a story like this. As I say, in the book, you don't have a hockey player writing a novel about life on the road as a concert pianist. It just wouldn't make sense. So, does the backstory, the explanation for the story, fit the story? You got to take it seriously as a story.

And so, the skeptics have a backstory. Christians have a backstory. Our backstory is that it's true. And the backstory fits the story. They go together. The skeptics have a backstory, which is that the whole thing, as you summarize here, came by processes that are guaranteed to distort. The list you gave there summarizes all of Part Two of the book. The disciples were following an actual man named Jesus. The skeptics will go that far in allowing his reality. But he died and what do you do? He's done. He's gone. All their hopes pinned on him. They've invested so much in them. There's a deal that psychologists talk about called, cognitive dissonance theory, and it says that when that happens, sometimes people will find a way to make it true after all. So, they did. They made Jesus rise from the grave, even though it wasn't real, then they told the story so that he could still be their Messiah. And then in order to reinforce that they had to evangelize everybody into believing it with them. And so, the whole story of the resurrection started from this messed up place of these guys are really psychologically unhinged. You know, that's not a good start for a story for the ages.

Frank:

No, and as you say, it would be a greater miracles to say that the Jesus character, in all four accounts, all four gospels, came out they did, through this process of cognitive dissidence and storytelling and legend development in the telephone game. We'll get back to this right after the break. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek. My guest is Tom Gilson; his new book, Too Good to Be False. We're back in two.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Ad:

If you find value in the content of this podcast, don't forget to follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Join our online community to have great conversations, grow in your knowledge of God, and become a better defender of the Christian faith. Also, don't forget to subscribe to our YouTube channel, where we have hundreds of videos, and over 100,000 subscribers, that are part of an online family. Find those by searching for Frank Turek or CrossExamined in the search bar. You can find many more resources like articles, online courses, free downloadable materials, event calendars, and more at crossexamined.org.

Frank:

Jesus' story developed over decades and decades. Was it really just invented and made up, a lot of wishful thinking? Because that's what some of the skeptics are saying. But my friend, Tom Gilson, who's written the new book, *Too Good to Be False*, challenges that and said it would be more of a miracle to have the four gospels, as we have them, come out the way they did by that process. And Tom, can you explain what skeptics mean when they say, well, say the telephone game, or how they think legends developed in the New Testament? What process, if you could describe it a little bit, did they say gave us the four gospels that we have now?

Tom:

Sure. Yeah, not every skeptic goes with every detail on this, obviously. But, pretty typically what they're going to tell you is that it was oral tradition spreading around the whole Mediterranean region, especially Asia Minor in Europe, also maybe North Africa. And Bart Ehrman, who is the number one selling, writing, so on, skeptic on this topic, he talks in three or four of his books about the telephone game. Which he says, it spreads across country to country, language to language, and like one child whispering into another child's ear, and then it goes around and around. And he says, what happens to stories when you do that? They change. And I look at that and I go, change. I don't just change, they get screwed up, they get distorted, they get corrupted.

And that's where skeptics, especially Bart Ehrman, in this case, will tell you that the story of Jesus came from and they'll say, well, just look, you know, we got a different number of angels at the tomb between different gospels and so that's your sign that it got corrupted, it's messed up. And I go, okay, you're looking at the twigs, not just the trees, you're missing the forest for

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

the twigs. There is a character in this story, who is the same character in all four landing points, you might say, all four gospels. Landing points for the telephone game. He's the same character. He's perfectly consistent. He's perfectly unique. And he's really, really good. Does that sound like something that came by this, what I call, story scrambler process?

Frank:

It wouldn't have happened in one gospel, much less four, to have that process. And remember, these texts were authored in different places. It wasn't like they were all in contact with one another either. Now maybe they had similar sources. For example, Luke was not an eyewitness, so he checked different sources. Mark, we of course believe, was really giving the recollections of Peter. But Matthew and John were eyewitnesses. It would take a genius, as you put in your book...again, the book is called, Too Good to Be False. You say, "to invent Jesus would have required genius beyond genius". And it just seems like more of a miracle, as you put it, Tom, to suggest that these four gospels with this supreme character of Jesus in it that not even the greatest known novelist of all times could have created. It seems to be more of a miracle if this could have happened by this scrambler process or telephone game process, you said.

Tom:

Yeah, and it seems like at least one of them would have messed up and have Jesus say just, thus says the Lord, if this was where it came from. Or one of them would have come along and he would have had Jesus saying, our father. And there were so many ways that they could have, in details, gotten him wrong. And they didn't. And so, you know, was there one master editor who put them all together? They just don't read like that. You have to look at the gospels and say, do they read like they came from this source, and they just don't. They don't read like anything really other than true reportage, which is a term I get from Lydia McGrew, who's studied this a lot and written about it in, for this purpose especially, a book called, Hidden in Plain View, which covers similar types of topics from another angle. It's true reportage.

Frank:

Yeah, I think the question is, and you have it worded a little bit differently. You're quoting somebody here where you say, "did the record invent the person or did the person create the record?" We might be able to say it this way. Did the gospels create Jesus, or did Jesus create the gospels? And it really seems much more plausible to suggest that Jesus created the gospels

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

in the sense that he really existed and then they wrote it down. It wasn't as if Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John got together, or separately, and said, let's come up with it a fictional character called Jesus, with all these characteristics. That would take more of a miracle than to just say, there was a person named Jesus who said and did these things. And we recorded it. Here they are. And so, in fact, you also say, I love this line, "the poet's must have been superior to the hero. Any inventors of Jesus would have had to surpass Jesus himself." And then you write "plausible?". Is that plausible?

Tom:

Yeah, I don't think that's plausible. And, you know, the interesting thing is, I've dealt with, what I call internet atheists. People who just, you know, pop in on comments on blogs, or on the Stream articles I've written, and they want to contest this. You know, what they typically say was Jesus wasn't that good after all. You know, he didn't condemn slavery. Well, first of all, he had reasons for not condemning slavery. He wasn't here to start a political and economic revolution; he came to start a spiritual revolution.

Frank:

Although he did say, I came to set the captives free, quoting from Isaiah, when he started his ministry in Luke chapter four. So, he did say that, but I agree with you, he's not here to create this big political revolution against the Romans. He's here to be the sacrifice for the entire world, so he could then change hearts and then change the political system.

Tom:

Right. And he did also, by the way, teach the golden rule, which has something to say in the same topic. But here's the thing that, with everything so far that I've heard from skeptics, there's something that they miss, which is this. Let's just, for the sake of argument, say okay, Jesus could have done that, but he didn't. You know, just for the sake of argument. Here's what I see going on here is, we've got examples of Jesus perfection, and the clearest one is the way he has all this power and only uses it for others. Unmatched in all history and literature. And what these people are doing, when they pointed these things that are supposedly wrong with Jesus, is that they're like they're out on the beach. They're out on the beach, and you pick up a diamond that you just found in the beach, and it's four carats and is sparkling and is beautiful. And they say yeah but look at all the sand. And I go, wait a minute, there's a diamond here. And

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

they say, yeah, it's a lot of sand. Where did the diamond come from? And there has to be some kind of an explanation for that. Even if you're not sure you like all of Jesus, there's something there that their legendary processes just don't explain.

Frank:

And by what standard are you judging Jesus? That's the question I have. I hear that a lot of Christians out there now disagreeing with Jesus on sexual issues, on marriage, you know, on heaven and hell. And I'm going, really? You call yourself a Christian and you disagree with Jesus? Why don't you just stop calling yourself a Christian if you're not following Jesus. That's what Christianity means; to follow Jesus.

Tom:

Sure. And I'm only granting, for the sake of argument, you know. I wouldn't give up what you're saying for a second. I'm going with him as the leader. The guy knows what he's talking about. And so, you know, my theory on when I have a problem with what the Bible says, the problem is not with the Bible, the problems with me. I better work on that.

Frank:

Yeah, in fact, that's true and Augustine said that, if we think we found some error or problem in the Scriptures, either you got a bad translation, you have a bad manuscript, or you just don't understand. But to say that Jesus was wrong is not an option. How do you interpret the Bible? That's one of the online courses we have coming up. It's a brand new course and I'm going to be leading it beginning September 7. And on the premium version, I'm going to be live with you on zoom for several Q&A sessions. So, if you want to be on the inaugural launch of, How to Interpret Your Bible, sign up. Just go to crossexamined.org, click on online courses, and you will see it there. That begins September 7. Hope to see you there.

Tom, I've never been in a church that actually had a course on how to interpret the Bible. That's why we started this course here at crossexamined.org. How do you interpret the Bible? It is an important question, but your, Too Good to Be False, is a book that I think everyone should have. And just in our conversation today, I hope you folks have realized that Tom Gilson here has taken a different approach to Jesus. What did he say? What did he do? And what kind of writer could create a character like Jesus? The answer is, no one. He's an authentic person from

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

history and just who was he? Now, in the second part of the book, Tom, and we're kind of skipping around here. We're trying to cover a lot in a short period of time. The title of the second part of the book is, Too Good to Be False. And you kind of summarize the case for the historicity of the gospels. Can you kind of give a quick summary here as to why you think they're historical, other than what we've already spoken about?

Tom:

Yeah, well, they have to be historical because there's no other explanation on record that fits. The skeptic scrambler idea doesn't fit, and they don't have another one that I that I'm aware of. And I've done the study. It doesn't. We don't know where they could have come from unless they came by way of true reportage. So, I think that it's too good not to be true. It's too good to be false.

Frank:

And in fact, you've point out a couple of embarrassing details in the book that I've been mentioning for quite a while, and others have long before me. There are embarrassing things in there that they never would have invented. Like, they never would have said that, you know, Jesus said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? They never would have put that in there. They never would have had the women be the first witnesses, or the disciples ran away when the crucifixion occurred, or Peter would have denied Christ three times. They never would have made this up. And so, there's a lot of good circumstantial and good historical data that shows that the person that you read in the gospels is the person that actually existed on earth 2000 years ago. And the question is, what do we do with Jesus? And in the third part of your book, Tom, which is an entire section here, you call it, Jesus, No Matter What. What's that about?

Tom:

We are heading into an age, and actually everybody in their lifetime is said to ask, am I going to follow Jesus through whatever I'm going through. But we're heading into a stage, I think, in history where, for the first time in the Western world, the question is, are we going to follow Jesus when it is following Jesus in itself that's causing us trouble, that's causing us the pain? In other words, we're being persecuted for our faith. Will we follow Jesus no matter what, through that kind of a thing? That's the question now.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

Yeah. Let's talk more about that right after the break. That's a timely question as we have entered the cancel culture, and if you don't agree with the cancel culture, you could be in trouble. And Jesus does not agree with the cancel culture. And if you agree with Jesus, are you going to be canceled? Well, we'll get into that, and a little bit more about, *Too Good to Be False: How Jesus' Incomparable Character Reveals His Reality*, by Tom Gilson. I'm Frank Turek. We're back in just a couple of minutes. See you then.

Ad:

Friends, Frank Turek here. *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, is a listener supported radio program and podcast. So, if you like what you hear here, would you consider donating to crossexamined.org? 100% of your donations go to ministry, zero percent to buildings. We're completely virtual. So, if you can help us out, we greatly appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Frank:

Welcome back to, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, with Frank Turek. And after listening to Tom Gilson, you shouldn't have enough faith to believe that New Testament documents are legendary. You can't create a character like Jesus, especially four different versions of him, that agree on the core of who he was. Jesus of Nazareth really existed. The question is, who was he and why did he come? And, Tom, you write in the book...again, the book is called, *Too Good to Be False*. Everyone should get it. It came out August 1. As of right now, on Amazon, it's got all five-star reviews; 15 of them And the list of endorsers is the list of who's who in apologetics and people who are interested in Jesus studies.

But you say this in the book, Tom, I want to get your comment on this. You say, "for those who think there's a menu to choose from, I say scratch Christianity off it. It doesn't belong there. God offers no menu, no alternatives you can choose between. Not even one you can label as 'right for you'. If Plan A was God the Father allowing God the Son to suffer and die, then there can be no Plan B. It's life in Christ or it isn't life at all." Now, Tom, that sounds a little bit narrow. What do you say to that?

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Tom:

It is. Well, Jesus is good and if there's anyone you want to follow in history, you pick a good example, and he's the one. But people will say yeah, that is narrow. What about other good options? But they're not taking the whole story into account. I'll still view it as a story. But it's a true story. But look at the ending of the story, or near the end, the part where he dies on the cross. And people will say, yeah, that's a good story. And if you want to be a Christian, that's cool for you. I'll go my own way. I'm saying that's wrong. Because if there's a menu of options, and it's cool for you to follow Jesus, what that means is that it's cool for you to believe that God sent His Son, Jesus, to go through a really brutal, humiliating, incredibly painful torturous beating, first of all, and then a horrible death. And that's one of the universe's nice ideas for us so we can get what we want. No. That's not one of the universe's nice ideas for us. If it's a nice idea on a list of nice ideas, then it's a bad idea. The cross isn't a good idea unless it's the only good idea. God would not have done that for us if he'd had Plan B sitting over there in a corner too.

Frank:

It reminds me of, I'm paraphrasing CS Lewis when he said, look, either Christianity is the most important factor in the universe or it's irrelevant. What it can't be is moderately important, right? Yeah, either God exists, and he came to save us, or he didn't. Now, if he did come to save us, then what could be more important than that? We're talking about eternity. Of course, if there is no eternity there is no ultimate meaning. We're all going to go to heat death and everything you've ever done, said, or did with anybody, or to anybody, or for anybody will never be remembered and will never have any ultimate significance if everything's going to go to heat death. But if there is, and the universe will go to heat death, it's ultimately going to run out of energy. But if there is a God and there is an eternity, the things you do here do really matter. Not only now but in eternity.

Tom:

If you're speaking of CS Lewis, and very famously he said, Jesus not did not intend to leave us an option of him being, you know, just a good teacher. That's famous. I think Jesus also did not intend to leave us the option where the cross is optional. Yes, you can say that. You can't say the cross is an option. It's either the right answer or it's not on the list at all. And so, I don't want to hear anybody else saying, oh, that's cool for you if you're a believer. And since he is so

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

good, he's too good to be false, the only right answer is to follow Him, and thank him he died for us, and keep following him no matter what.

Frank:

Yeah, Jesus either is the Lord, or he isn't. There's no other option. And if he is the Lord, we owe him everything. If he's not, then he's just another teacher along with everybody else. But as you point out in the book, Too Good to Be False, Jesus is not just another character in history. Isn't it interesting too, Tom, that all the other world religions, or at least most of them, post Jesus all want a piece of Jesus? Right? The Muslims work him into their system. Even more modern day versions of Hinduism want to talk about Jesus. You've got the Bahais. You've got all of these different worldviews wanting to say something about Jesus and somehow get Jesus on their side. Why do you think that is?

Tom:

Yeah, Craig Hazen, I think. came up with it first. And he's right. It's because he's so great. Now you got Jesus, the social socialist too, by the way.

Frank:

Yes.

Tom:

That's the big one in cultural commentary today. It's because he stands out, He shines. He is the top example from history. I'll even tell skeptic, look, just read his account, and if you don't believe in the miracles, just read and see if you think he's a great person to follow. And my hope is, that if they start following him on that basis, they'll realize that he's more than just a good leader but the Lord.

Frank:

And how could it become the most influential human being in history if the resurrection did not occur? Because it was claimed to have occurred, it could have been refuted by going to an empty tomb, and the Jews and the Romans wanted to do that to refute Christianity, but it grew right out of Jerusalem. So, it's really hard for me to believe that Jesus is the most influential

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

human being in history if he didn't rise from the dead. It's just too good to be false. Someone should write a book called, Too Good to Be False, Tom.

Tom:

Someone should.

Frank:

Maybe you should take that up. Too Good to Be False, is the book; How Jesus' Incomparable Character Reveals His Reality. And, Tom, I know you're a big advocate of apologetics. In the back of the book there you talk about how Christians ought to get involved in apologetics. Why must they?

Tom:

Yeah, the whole book I didn't mention the word apologetics. But that's a lot of what it is about how great Jesus is obviously, too. But I actually modeled the book on the book of Hebrews, which is written to people in a situation pretty parallel to ours, where you've got a group of believers who are under pressure from the culture to revert to cultural norms. And someone comes along, we don't know who it was, and writes a letter to encourage them to stick with Jesus. Well, what's he do? He says, Jesus is great, but he also gives reasons. And you know, you got people who will say, just believe. Just believe. You know, we've got it. All you have to do is believe.

The author of Hebrews could have done the same thing. He put it in the first paragraph. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is the one through whom the worlds were created. That's enough. There, you're done. But he kept going and he gave reasons. Now they're not the same reasons that would impress us, because you know that the readers then were into things like the Book of Leviticus, and he used that as his reasons. Today we need to use reasons that are of interest and relevance to people who are listening now. But we need to use reasons if we're going to encourage people to stay in the faith when they're under pressure to walk away.

Frank:

That's what we're doing here at CrossExamined.org. I know you're doing it, as well, at thinkingchristian.net. By the way, the other couple of courses we have coming up online this

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

September; we have a course for college and high school students called, Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. I will be your instructor if you want to take that course. We can only take 40 people in the premium course. When we do the live zoom sessions, everyone can interact. If you want to be a part of that go to crossexamined.org, click on online courses.

And also, we have a turnkey course. If you're a teacher right now, and you're trying to figure out how you can teach your kids apologetics remotely, we've got it all online for you already. We can customize the, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist course for you. Just check out the turnkey course. Go to crossexamined.org, click on online courses, as well. So, we got the turnkey course for teachers, or small group leaders. We've got, Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, for high school and college students. And we also have, How to Interpret Your Bible, starting up, as well. And in about the next week, we're going to announce another course from Sean McDowell on how to reach Gen Z.

So, we've got a lot going on. I know you do, as well, Tom. Why don't you sum all this up before we sign off here? Well, I have to ask you one more question. Skeptics. What are they saying about the book, Too Good to Be False?

Tom:

Right now, they are mostly saying Jesus isn't so good. You know, so they're just trying to set it aside. I'm waiting to hear from the major skeptics, and I can only imagine what they're going to come up with.

Frank:

Yeah, well, it's a unique approach. You really got a unique approach here, Tom. Too Good to Be False, is the book; How Jesus' Incomparable Character Reveals His Reality. If there was one big idea you wanted people to take away from this book, Tom, what would it be?

Tom:

It's all leading toward the final part where I say, Jesus no matter what. He's that good. He's that extraordinary. He is worth our worship. He's worth our following. And it's because he's that great, the story is true, his salvation is true. And wherever he takes you, whatever goes on in your life, he's worth following. And so, follow him no matter what.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

By the way, is there a website people can go to to get more on this?

Tom:

The best one is ThinkingChristian.net, my home website. ThinkingChristian.net; that's the best one to go to.

Frank:

ThinkingChristian.net not only has information on the book, Too Good to Be False, but you've got a blog up here, as well, that you've been doing since 2004. Were there blogs in 2004, Tom? How old are you? Come on?

Tom:

Oh, really old.

Frank:

You've been out there a while. Yeah, check out ThinkingChristian.net, and you'll see the blog there, you'll see the podcast. Are you speaking anywhere? Do you have any media events coming up that people can watch you online? Anything like that?

Tom:

Actually, nothing coming up right now. If you go to ThinkingChristian.net, I would welcome invitations, a place where people can come and see if we can work out a way for me to come speak with your group online or in person.

Frank:

Yeah, we're doing a lot online, as I know you probably are, as well. This church I have here locally in Charlotte is meeting but most of the groups now are meeting online. So, we're doing a lot of Zoom. And if you'd like to have Tom talk to your group, you can go to ThinkingChristian.net and get in touch with him that way. Tom, it's been a pleasure. Great book. Thanks, so much for being on.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Tom:

Thank you, Frank.

Frank:

That's Tom Gilson. Again, the book is, Too Good to Be False. Trust me, you need to read it. It is a unique take on Jesus and the New Testament documents, so I highly recommend it. I'm Frank Turek. I'll be back here next week, Lord willing. See you then. God bless.

Ad:

If you benefit from this podcast, help others find it. Just go to iTunes, or any other podcast service you might be using to listen and leave us a five-star rating on the, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, podcast with Dr. Frank Turek. It will take you less than five seconds. You can also help a lot by leaving us a positive review for others to see. This podcast is available on iTunes, Spotify, Google Play, Stitcher, TuneIn, and many other audio content delivery apps. Thank you and God bless.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)