

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

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Unbelievable? with Justin Brierley

(May 8, 2021)

Where can you go to find excellent dialogue between believers and unbelievers? There is no better place, in my view, to go than a show that originates in the UK called, Unbelievable. And the host of that show, and he's been the host for 15 years now, is Justin Brierley. And Justin has been on this program before when he came out with his book called, *Unbelievable*. And here's the full title, *Unbelievable? Why After Ten Years of Talking with Atheists, I'm Still a Christian*, by Justin Brierley. And Justin joins us for the entire program today. Justin, how are you?

Justin:

I'm really well. Thank you, Frank. And thank you so much for having me back on. And it's high time I got you back on my own show as well. It's been at least a few years since you were on the show. But yeah, it's wonderful to join you by the wonders of technology today.

Frank:

Well, Justin, the programs that you do every week, and I try and listen to as many as possible are, I think, the best place to go anywhere to get real good dialogue and discussion between believers and unbelievers. Even between Christians who have different viewpoints on certain issues. You even do that as well. Just give a little background to our listeners and viewers how this came to be. How did this program come to be? I mean, you've been doing this for 15 years. You're a relatively young man. Are you even 40 yet? You're probably not even 40. How old are you?

Justin:

I'm afraid I have crossed that threshold.

Frank:

Oh, you have? Ok.

Justin:

I'm 41 already. But I actually began the show, I guess I would have been in my early 20s, mid 20s maybe. I started in broadcasting. I was hosting a breakfast show at the time on a Christian radio station here in the UK. The same one that I'm on today, Premier Christian Radio. But I had this idea for: What if we, kind of, did something different and we burst the bubble a little bit

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and we actually brought non-Christians on to a show where we actually do dialogues and discussions and debates? Kind of in a way just thinking of the Christian audience listening, thinking wouldn't it be helpful, maybe, to actually have that kind of a dialogue and hear what a fruitful conversation might sound like. Because at the end of the day, certainly in the UK, we live in a largely secular society. And while you can go to church and have your Christian friends, most of the time, you're going to be rubbing shoulders with people who don't share your beliefs. And I felt that a show like Unbelievable, where we could bring both sides together for dialogue and debate, could be helpful.

What I didn't anticipate, this was kind of just before kind of podcasting was getting going, was that, within a couple of years, we'd have launched a podcast of the show, as well as the radio show, and that would start to attract lots of non-Christians listening as well. So, we ended up with this very large non-Christian audience who started tracking with all the non-Christian guests we were bringing on, especially if they were well-known, you'd suddenly have you know, maybe a well-known atheist would post it to their blog because they'd been on the show. And suddenly, I was getting all these non-Christians and Christians listening to the podcast as well. So, we were pretty early adopters on that front. And the show has just grown really organically since then. So, we get, you know, millions of downloads a year on the podcast.

More recently, we've started doing a lot on YouTube as well in the last few years and posting a lot of our shows there as well. And that's partly been because we've been doing some special editions of the show for the last few years called, The Big Conversation, where we bring some of the biggest minds in Christianity and atheism and other positions together to debate some of the biggest questions. So, we started that off with Jordan Peterson, who I'm sure you're very familiar with, in conversation with an atheist psychologist, Susan Blackmore, and those kinds of, you know, high level conversations. It's been wonderful to be able to host those and to see the way that that's really grown the audience for Unbelievable, especially through the YouTube channel as well. So, so yeah, we're excited about how things have developed over the last 15 years and every week I get new people who have just picked the podcast up, you know, and that's so exciting when new people are listening and starting to delve into the back catalogue of shows.

Frank:

So, friends, wherever you listen to podcast, just go to that app wherever you listen to them, and type in the word "Unbelievable?" with a question mark, and you will find Justin Brierley's show. Now Justin, you also have another podcast you do with N.T. Wright which is, sort of, a

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Q&A podcast where you're asking the great theologian a number of questions. Tell us about that and where people can hear that.

Justin:

Yeah, I have such a privilege of sitting down with N.T. Wright, who's one of the world renowned Bible scholars, really. And because I got to know him through the Unbelievable show a few years ago, I said, what about if we did a regular sit down together? And so, we take questions from listeners, and I just fire them at him on every podcast, and he very graciously answers. And you get to know him a little bit and he's just a wonderfully, sort of, open, interesting character himself. So, it's called, The Ask N.T. Wright Anything Podcast, and it's basically just a nerd fest if you're a, you know, theology fan, and you want to know kind of all of the ins and outs of you know, Paul, and, you know, the letters he wrote. He's one of the world's leading authorities on that kind of thing. Anything really about New Testament early Christianity. Plus, you know, he'll share his thoughts on all kinds of, you know, cultural issues, social issues, you know, whatever, that people send questions in. So, that's been a real joy to be able to do that.

Frank:

And sometimes he even brings this guitar and will sing a song or two for you.

Justin:

Yes. I know he's a big fan of, you know, the kind of 60s Bob Dylan stuff. He'll pull out a guitar occasionally and play a few. And he's made up some of his own, you know. He did one with Francis Collins, the famous geneticist, where they, kind of, did their own version of a Beatles song and that kind of thing. So, he's multi-talented. Very jealous of N.T. Wright, yeah.

Frank:

Yeah, he sings Bob Dylan without the irritation. Right? [laughing] So, you can check him out on the, Ask N.T. Wright Anything Podcast.

Justin:

Yeah, he hasn't got the accordion to go with it, though, you know. That's the only thing he's lacking when it comes when it comes to the Bob Dylan impression. But yeah, we usually, if he does a song, we tack it on as a, kind of, a bonus at the end of an episode.

Frank:

Now, Justin, you've now been doing this for 15 years. Your book came out four years ago. And again, the book is called, *Unbelievable*. What has changed in the past five years or four years

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since you wrote...I know you probably started writing it five years ago. Has anything changed in terms of your beliefs? I mean, you've moderated discussions and debates with Christians and atheists for 15 years now. Has anything changed in the last five years since you wrote the book? Have your beliefs changed at all? Have you been moved at all by any atheist or non-Christian arguments?

Justin:

I mean, if anything, I'd say that I only feel more conviction in a sense for how intellectually robust the positions are, you know. What I sketched out, you know, there's certain things I might tweak slightly, and things I might adjust or update, you know, if I were writing it again, now four or five years later. But fundamentally, you know, the core arguments for God that I put down in that book, I just feel, you know, have stood the test of time and will continue to. One of the things I talk about in the book is the fact that human existence is very hard to explain on an atheistic world view, but it makes sense in the theistic worldview. So, just the fact of how the universe came into being, the fact that life exists in the universe, I don't see that any of those, if you like scientific and philosophical arguments, have in any way, been countered in the last five years. If anything, the evidence is only more in favor of those. But those kind of evergreen issues of why we believe what we do about the value of human life and dignity, and where does this moral ground come from, you know, again, I've yet to hear a satisfactory atheist understanding of how those things could be. And I'm always open to it, you know. I want to hear if there is a really great response or alternative viewpoint. But again, I haven't heard one and I host shows frequently where I'm looking for that and hosting those kinds of opinions.

And likewise, you know, when it comes to the evidence for Christianity, which I also develop in the book, the evidence for the resurrection, I just, I actually see, if anything, there's been a shift in culture in the last few years since I wrote the book, to actually, people being somewhat more open, I think, interestingly, to that kind of evidence. Because when I wrote the book, we were still in the heyday of the new atheism, in many ways, but actually, the conversation has been changing, and maybe we could talk about that in the next break.

Frank:

Sure, let's do that. 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 today is Justin Brierley. And if you haven't heard of Justin, you need to. You definitely have to listen to his podcast. It's called Unbelievable. Wherever you get podcasts, look it up. And we'll be back in two minutes. Much more with Justin Brierley. Don't go anywhere.

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If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio, go no further, we're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent anyway. You're not going to hear this on NPR. 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 today is Justin Brierley. Justin, all the way from the UK, but the podcast is very popular, as it should be here in the United States. The podcast is called Unbelievable. And what Justin does is, he has dialogues with Christians, atheists, Christians, Muslims, Christians of different persuasions about very important issues of the day. So, you need to look into his podcast and also check out his book called, *Unbelievable*, as well. The full title is, *Unbelievable? Why After Ten Years [now 15 years] of Talking with Atheists, I'm Still a Christian*. Is that unbelievable?

Justin, as we were talking before the break, you've heard some of the best arguments for atheism out there. In your view, if there is an argument, or the best argument, you might say, for atheism, what do you think it would be?

Justin:

It's a great question. I guess it is the classic argument, which is the argument from evil, from suffering. You know, that's the one that people most often run up against. And I think, in some ways, it's the hardest to answer as an emotional question, because...

Frank:

Yes.

Justin:

...that's not just an intellectual issue you're dealing with there. So, in the book, you know, I gave a chapter to that, you know. Hardly enough for such a huge question, but at least an attempt to get to grips with why people ask the question, where it's coming from, and what some of the possible answers may be. But in my opinion, that still remains, you know, one of the toughest questions that an atheist can ask. Now, it's not to say there aren't good answers, but it's often about the way that we answer the question that's significant, because inevitably, we can give a, kind of, philosophical abstract kind of answer to a question, but if what the person is really dealing with is an emotional issue at the core of it, then it's more of a pastoral response that's inevitably needed for someone who's going through that.

Having said that, you know, there are other toughies, you know. There are many questions that I still, you know, deal with, struggle with, you know, that are still somewhat of a mystery to me. I mean, probably the one that crops up quite frequently, in one form or another on the show, is

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to do with the hiddenness of God. You know, why, if there is a God, why doesn't God just reveal himself in a way that makes it obvious to me, or to everyone? And in a way, you know, when you see someone who appears, at least, to be genuinely searching, genuinely saying, I'm open to this, I want this to be true, I've asked God to reveal Himself to me, but nothing's happened, you know, that can be tough. It can be like, okay, why isn't that person having some kind of experience of God having, you know...and those are sort of the difficult questions because, again, it's not just a philosophical question, it's an experiential question. It's why aren't I having the same experience that other people are claiming to be having? I feel like I'm just as open. So, those are the, kind of, sometimes the hard questions to answer. Again, I think there are answers to why God would not necessarily make it perfectly obvious, you know, write himself in the stars or something for everyone to see. But I think those are the kinds of tough kind of questions that you sometimes have to grapple with when you're having those kinds of conversations with skeptics.

Frank: Well, let's marinate for just a minute on that hiddenness question, because we talk a lot about the evil question. We don't often talk a lot about the hiddenness question, because I think that's a valid question to ask, you know. If we're saying this God exists, why doesn't he make his existence more obvious to everyone? So, how would you go about answering that, Justin? What would be your top two or three points on that question?

Justin:

Yeah, I mean, the first place I might go is just to say, maybe God's not actually that interested in people simply believing in Him. And that may seem an odd thing to say, because everyone assumes, well, surely the point of it is, you know, making people believe in God. But actually, that's not the point, you know. The demons believe and tremble, says James.

Frank: Right.

Justin:

Belief itself isn't what God's interested in. It's actually trusting in Him. It's following him. It's loving him. That's what God really wants from people. And the process for that may not look like simply give me the evidence I need, and I'll believe. Okay? In a sense, the problem, very often, with skeptics and atheists that I meet is that it's, kind of, okay, I believe in God, but on my terms, okay. Once I've had this level of evidence presented to me, then God is worthy of my belief, my ascent, intellectual ascent, if you like. But again, God might not be that interested in, sort of, just meeting your particular criteria because God may have other purposes. It may be that God wants people to serve, wants people to not simply believe because it's been laid out

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on a platter for them but go on a journey, go on some kind of way of understanding and grappling with him.

So, I've seen many people who have gone through quite a, you know, full on intellectual journey, who've gone through a lot of experiences until they get to the point where, actually, they understand something. They have some revelation. They are able to put their trust in God. But very often, it's very rarely just an intellectual journey. It's something that, actually, helps them to realize that they need God, that it's not just that God is some intellectual option and if I choose to believe I will. The process is about, actually, coming to love and trust and ultimately serve God with their lives.

And so, it's more complex than simply, give me the evidence I need and believe. It's actually about, well, what's God actually doing? Why would God, maybe, not simply make himself abundantly perfectly obvious to you? It might be because God is asking you to do something slightly different in chasing after him, trusting him, you know. And, you know, in that sense, I think all of us, you know, whether or not we think we have, sort of, a kind of one to one relationship with God, we're all, actually, asked to trust in God in a way that doesn't look like just the way I can interact with my wife or someone else. Because, actually, I believe God has a purpose behind that, that there's something about going on that journey of trust with God, that is different to some of our other relationships. Or, you know, just the fact that we can intellectually assent to, you know, one plus one equals two. Sure, it does and it's great that you've got the evidence for that. Does it make any difference to your life? Maybe not. And, in a sense, this is the biggest question, and there may be good reasons God has for why he wants us to go on a different kind of journey to finding him and trusting him.

Frank:

You know, it's quite interesting too, when you do look at some of the events in both the old in the New Testaments, when the Israelites, and say, the chief priests had overt evidence that God existed. I mean, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, and the chief priests immediately want to kill him. It's not so much an intellectual assent. They had that but they rejected Christ anyway. And I'm wondering, I recall, I mean, you've had Lawrence Krauss on your show...and remember, Lawrence Krauss, in one of his interactions with William Lane Craig said, oh, you know, if God would write his name in the stars, then I'd at least think about it. Right. But I wonder if God did write his name in the stars, like he writes it in DNA...you know, he puts this genetic code in all of us that seems to be the product of intelligence...if he would really go from intellectual assent, as you say, Justin, from, demons know that God exists too, but they don't trust him. I wonder if he would take the next step toward actually trusting in Christ, rather than just

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believing that He exists, but trusting in Him. I see too much resistance. It's not so much about God's existence, it seems to be more about our resistance to God. And I don't know if you've seen that in some of your guests. Have you seen that?

Justin:

I definitely do. I definitely do see that in some guests. I mean, the classic example would be a show I did a couple of years ago where I had Hugh Ross, who I'm sure you know, great scientist/physicist, and the question opposite Peter Atkins, who is a well-known atheist scientist from Oxford University. And at the more kind of, irascible end of the spectrum, if you like...he's very pugnacious and dismissive...but, we got to a point in the conversation where, you know, he would have presented a certain amount of evidence for why he believes there is good evidence from the universe that there's a God behind it. And, you know, Peter was just batting it all off saying no, no lazy thinking, bad evidence. And I eventually said, look, what kind of evidence could convince you? And I used almost that very same example you just mentioned. You know, if you saw the stars line up, and it said, Peter, I'm here, it's me, believe in me, would that be enough? And he said, well, could be advanced alien technology. And I was like, okay, if Jesus appeared to you right here in this room told you to believe in him. [He said] I'd assume I was just having some kind of a delusion in my brain. You know, and so the point is, Peter Atkins, at that point, is so wedded to his naturalism, to his atheistic perspective...

Frank:

Right.

Justin:

...that it appears there's no sort of evidence whatsoever that could persuade him otherwise. So, at that point, it's not more evidence that person needs, because all of the evidence will be filtered through a naturalistic perspective. Something else has to happen. I don't know what it is. It might be, who knows? But something else has to happen to Peter Atkins at that point, to change his perspective, so that he could even be open, I think, to evidence. Now, that's obviously the extreme end of the spectrum that I'm talking about there, but I think you do see that kind of attitude sometimes when you see someone who just says, if God would just meet this level of evidence, then I might give it a thought. Well, again, God might not be that interested in simply meeting your particular burden of proof, or whatever. God might be more interested in you changing your whole perspective, your mind, the way you engage, you know, God in the first place. So yeah, I do see that kind of attitude quite often, though.

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Frank:

I want to talk more about this, and particularly naturalism. But we just got a minute or so before the break. I want to point out to our audience...and you can help us with this, Justin...that in a couple of weeks, you're going to have a conference that's going to be virtual. So, it's going to be in the UK, but people here in the US can actually be a part of it. Tell us about that conference, and who's going to be there, what's going to be said.

Justin:

Well, I'm really looking forward to this. It's all online, so you can participate from anywhere in the world. It's Unbelievable, the Conference 2021. And our theme is, How to Tell the Greatest Story Ever Told. We've mentioned him already in the show, but N.T. Wright is going to be one of our guest speakers. He will be talking about how we make the message relevant to today's generation, especially in this, sort of, post-COVID world that we're now entering. He's going to be alongside another great contributor, Tom Holland. If you haven't heard of him, he's a British historian. But he published the most extraordinary book recently, Dominion. And as a secular historian, he has kind of laid the case for why all of our values in Western culture really derived from the Christian revolution. And he's gone on a really interesting journey himself from being a secular historian to really taking Christianity seriously. So, he's going to be part of the conversation on the day.

We've got Sean and Josh McDowell joining us. Clare Williams, from here in the UK, who runs a wonderful youth apologetics ministry. It's going to be hosted by myself and my colleague, Ruth Jackson, and you can join from anywhere in the world Saturday, the 15th of May. And the place, as I say, to register is Unbelievable.live. I'm also really excited, if I can have one more moment, about a curtain raiser to this whole thing, where I'm getting N.T. Wright to sit down with a very popular social commentator, Douglas Murray, for a livestream conversation just two days ahead of that. So, it's just going to be a really exciting few days.

Frank:

All right, we're going to tell you more about that right after the break. And we're also going to highlight the fatal flaw with naturalism and materialism. And it's one of the fatal flaws that CS Lewis discovered that helped bring Justin to the faith. We're gonna be back in just a minute. Don't go anywhere. I'm Frank Turek.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. I'm Frank Turek. My guest today is Justin Brierley of the amazing program called Unbelievable. There's also a book that goes with it called, *Unbelievable*, by Justin Brierley. Justin hails from the UK, not far outside of London. And

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we were just talking before the break about this great conference coming up on May 15 with N.T. Wright, with Josh and Sean McDowell, with Justin, with several other speakers that you can, actually, be a part of, right from the comfort of your own laptop computer or desktop computer, because it's all going to be aired live. It's going to be livestreamed. Justin, give us a website for that, again, if people want to sign up for that. Where do they go?

Justin:

Yeah, it's Unbelievable.live. And we've even got a, kind of, pay what you want option this year. So, we want to make this accessible for anyone. We've got, kind of like, the premium ticket where you get lots of stuff bundled in. But if you just want to come at whatever price suits you, you can do that and you can follow along. And yeah, it's wonderful to see how many people are booking in from across the US and all over the world, actually, for this year's conference. So, even though we're not in person, it will be our biggest ever conference just because of the numbers that we can now have joining us livestreamed from all over the world. So, Unbelievable.live is the place for that.

As I mentioned just before the break, we've got this, kind of, curtain raiser conversation between N.T. Wright and Douglas Murray. Now I don't know if you've come across Douglas Murray before, Frank...

Frank:

Yes, I have.

Justin:

...but he's a British journalist. He's a British journalist here in the UK. He's associate editor of the Spectator. He wrote a very influential book recently called, *The Madness of Crowds*, which is critiquing identity politics and that kind of thing. And what's interesting about Douglas is, I've had him on the show before and he describes himself as a Christian atheist, okay? So, he's not a believer. He kind of lost his faith, what faith he had, kind of in his late teens, early 20s. And he became very much, sort of, a friend of the new atheist, Richard Dawkins. He, you know, went out for lunch regularly with Christopher Hitchens. But it's so interesting, he's gone on an interesting journey himself, which you kind of read about as you read his articles and things, where he sees the way that secularism isn't offering the answers for this age, and the way that, kind of, a narrative gap has been left in the wake of, you know, Christianity. So, where people used to understand meaning and purpose from the story that Christianity gave them in their lives and the way that it shaped the whole of our culture, we're now left with this kind of post-

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modern crisis of meaning, really, because supposedly, we're all supposed to make up our own meaning and find our own identity. And the problem is, no one knows what to do anymore.

And so, it'll be really interesting having this conversation with Douglas Murray and N.T. Wright because, I think, Douglas Murray is on a very interesting journey where he really wants Christianity to be true. And I think he's got some intellectual objections, some issues around the reliability of the Scriptures, but he sees the force, he sees the beauty of it, and I think he's part of a growing movement, actually, where the, kind of, the new atheist approach of religion is evil, and the sooner we're [unintelligible] of it, the better. That's kind of gone out of favor, somewhat. I think people have realized that simply getting rid of God does not answer the problems of society. People still need something because, frankly, they just make religions out of other things, like politics or...

Frank:

Yeah.

Justin:

...social issues. You know, we are naturally religious people. The question is, what religion are we following? And, in that sense, I am fascinated to see how this conversation will pan out and whether it might even impact Douglas's own journey as he seeks to, you know, ask himself that big question about what it's all about, you know.

Frank:

The other interesting thing about Douglas, and correct me if I'm wrong, Justin, I don't follow that closely. But doesn't he self-identify as a homosexual? Does he?

Justin:

Yeah, yeah. So, he is gay. And that's the interesting thing is, even, you know, as someone who is same-sex attracted, he has, kind of, interestingly, been on the side, in a way, of many Christians and conservative Christians, in his criticism, actually, of certain aspects of the LGBT movement. Because, I think, even though he, you know, would identify as gay himself, he has a big concern, actually, over, for instance, the transgender movement and things like that, where he sees, in a way, the kind of the ideology, as almost being as fundamentalist as any, you know, Christian would be, if you like. And so, he's an interesting bedfellow, in that sense, if you'll forgive the pun, because he's one among a number of people, I think, who are coming from the secular world, who wouldn't claim particularly to have any particular Christian dimension to their life, but nevertheless, are worried alongside plenty of Christians about the direction culture is going

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in. And I think, in his case, quite interestingly, open to whether Christianity might actually have answers to it as well.

I mean, I mentioned earlier this other public thinker, Tom Holland, who, again, has come from a, sort of, secular background, but in the course of just looking at history, and asking, do my secular and atheist friends and humanist friends have the answers, he's decided, no, they don't. All they're doing is parroting what they've been handed by their Judeo Christian past. You know, the fact we believe in the dignity of individuals, equality, human rights, none of that is a given on an atheistic framework. He's recognized that. He sees how completely that is a product of our Judeo Christian past. And so, for him, and many others, I think there's this interesting intellectual journey they're going on, where they're saying, you know, it's no accident that we believe these things about humanity because the Christian revolution, we're all children of it, whether we call ourselves Christians or not. And I think there's just a fascinating conversation to be had there, of people waking up to the fact that you can't just dispense with Christianity. You know, the new atheists claimed we could, but what we've discovered is, everyone just gets into a huge [unintelligible] because no one can agree what to do once you've got rid of God. And I think there's an amazing opportunity here for the Christian church to step up with some answers again and show people is that what they're looking for is Jesus ultimately.

Frank:

Yeah, and they are stealing a standard from God when they say they have certain rights. They're trying to say, on one hand, that there is no God and we're just collections of atoms and molecules with no purpose, yet on the other hand, they're claiming they have say, a right to same sex marriage, or they have a right to abortion, or they have a right to government healthcare. Whatever it is, if you're going to claim you have a right, you've got to have a standard by which you can judge where that right comes from. And without God, there is no such standard. And you point in your book, *Unbelievable*.

Frank: And, Justin, I want to want to ask you a little bit about that. First of all, how do you keep yourself composed to be the moderator when people are offering standards implicitly in what they're saying yet they're atheists? You know, an atheist will say, well, there's too much evil in the world. And of course, in order to know there's evil you have to know there's good and in order to know there's good there has to be a standard outside yourself, which would be God. How do you just sit by and just let that go as the moderator?

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Justin:

I mean, to be honest, this is the one area where, if you do hear me actually breaking in on a conversation and giving my own opinion, I will frequently do that. Because, personally, I love the moral argument, because I think so much depends on it, you know. The fact that people can talk about, so passionately, justice and equality and everything, and yet claim that no such actual standard exists outside of their own preferences. Just seems to me completely contradictory. So, I've always felt that's a really important thing to point out to people and ask: How are you even justifying all this talk of justice and equality and truth and so on if you really do hold to an atheistic worldview? So yeah, I sometimes overstep the mark, if I'm honest, sometimes in the debates where I'll kind of grill the atheist a bit, if I feel that they're kind of making claims that they can't support.

But you know, in the end, inevitably, you could make every conversation boil down to that. Sometimes you just have to, sort of, move it into the area that they want to talk about, you know. Well, why is there so much evil in the world if there is a good God? You kind of have to make the assumption, well, what if there were a God, would there be a reason to allow it? But for me, it is a key one, you know. And I think, you know, the penny dropped, I think, maybe when I first read, *The God Delusion*, and, you know, for pages and pages and pages Dawkins, sort of, you know, claims that all of these arguments for God are terrible, there's no evidence for God, and he finishes it by this rallying call to everyone reading, let's make a fairer just society somewhere where we can all live in peace. And I'm like, you can't say all that. You can't make all these metaphysical claims about how reality should be when you've just claimed that there is no ultimate metaphysical foundation to any of reality. So, I see it all the time and it is frustrating. But you know, you can only remind people every so often about it. And yeah, that that's just the way it is, very often, in life as well.

Frank:

Let me let me ask you this, because in your book, *Unbelievable...* I'm looking at here, page 77...you talk about how the penny dropped for you when CS Lewis pointed out that even our ability to think is compromised if we're just molecules in motion. If there's no metaphysical reality, if there is no ultimate mind, if we're just a collection of molecules, we're just moist robots, I like to say, then why should we even trust anything we think? Yet atheist come to these debates that you host, that you moderate, Justin, and they're claiming they have evidence for X, Y, or Z, whether it's a multiverse, whether it's macro-evolution, whether it's a quantum vacuum that can bring forth the universe, whatever it is. Why should they be able to trust their thinking? And have you ever heard an atheist explain why they should be able to trust their thinking if we're just molecules in motion?

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Justin:

Yeah, I mean, it is one of the key arguments that I think often don't get understood properly. And I, in a sense, because it's kind of a meta argument; it's about, okay, you're making all these claims, but can you even justify the fact that you can make claims, that you can do logic, that you can, you know, do reactive reasoning? And I think many skeptics and atheists have just never thought about that. They've always just assumed they've made a huge assumption that, well, of course, you know, the arguments I make are valid and the thoughts I think are true. But when you actually dig down into that, this is the genius of what Lewis did in his book, *Miracles*, which I recently read, and was just stunned all over again by how relevant it was 50-60 years after it was written, to what's going on today again.

But he simply pointed out the fact that, if you believe that ultimately your mind can be boiled down to a set of physical interactions between chemicals, atoms, electrical processes, or whatever, well, there's nothing true or false about that. It's a rational, if you like. And the point is, it gives you no grounding for believing that the thoughts you are then having are, in fact, reasonable. They are true in the sense there's something else that goes on in order to warrant that kind of assumption about your thinking. And it really can only be grounded if there is a God, if you like, who grounds the idea of reason itself. And it's gone on to be developed by others, as you'll know, like Alvin Plantinga, and others, who have applied it to the idea of evolution itself and whether you can actually trust in your own brain if it's actually been developed for an evolutionary purpose of reproduction rather than truth seeking. It's a fascinating area. It's a big one, though, and that's why it doesn't get tackled very often.

Frank:

We're talking to Justin Brierley. His fabulous program is called Unbelievable. You need to listen to it. You also need to, on May 15, to sign up for the Unbelievable Conference. And we have another segment with Justin in just a minute. I'm Frank Turek. Don't go anywhere.

If you would like to improve your ability to, not only present the truth of Christianity, but also answer questions, you need to join us for our 14th annual CIA, the CrossExamined Instructor Academy. It'll be myself, Greg Koukl, Sean McDowell, J. Warner Wallace, Alisa Childers, Richard Howe, Brett Kunkle. Who am I leaving out? Natasha Crane. We've got a bunch of folks who are going to help you improve your ability to present an answer questions. It's at Calvary Chapel Chino Hills, August 12 to 14th this year, but you need to sign up soon. We only take about 60 people because, not only will we present to you, you will present to us, and so, we can only take a very small group of people through the CrossExamined Instructor Academy. So, go to our

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website, CrossExamined.org, click on events, you'll see it there. The CrossExamined Instructor Academy.

Now if you really want to dive into the evidence, you ought to really enroll at Southern Evangelical Seminary. That's where I went (ses.edu). Check out all their programs there. And if you also want to get something very up to date, you want to be a part of the Unbelievable Conference May 15. It's run by my guest, Justin Brierley. The website again for that, Justin, is...

Justin:

Unbelievable.live is where you need to go for that.

Frank:

N.T. Wright, Justin Brierley, Sean and Josh McDowell, several others. You're going to want to be a part of that conference as well. Now Justin, you've done so many great programs over the past 15 years it would probably be difficult to zero in on your top three or four favorites. But let me just ask you: If somebody wanted to really learn the differences, or how a Christian and a Muslim might discuss their individual face, is there one show you'd point them to that they could, you know, from the beginning go to, and I want to hear this show between a Muslim and a Christian?

Justin:

Yeah, it's hard to choose between them, as you say. But I mean, on Islam, one we did, actually, quite recently, though it wasn't specifically with a Muslim...it was, actually, two Christians debating different perspectives on it...but we did a show on: Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God? And that was great. Andy Bannister has written a book by that title and Andy's a wonderful apologist here in the UK. And I had him in conversation with, actually, Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon from Nigeria, and they just take different positions on that question. And he says, ultimately, they don't worship the same God because the conception of God in Islam is so very different.

Frank:

Yes.

Justin:

Josiah says, even though he takes a very, you know, he obviously is a Christian, he still believes ultimately Christians and Muslims are worshipping the same God. And so, I thought that that conversation, though, really helped to elucidate some of the key differences between Islam and

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Christianity. So, that might be a good starting place for someone who's interested in that kind of discussion.

Frank:

I was gonna say, you've had so many shows with atheists and Christians, is there one or two that stick out to you that somebody who went to the Unbelievable website, or the Unbelievable app could say, hey, I want to listen to that one. What would you send them?

Justin:

Yeah, I mean, there's so many to choose from. But one of my favorite, recently on the show, was the start of our latest Big Conversation series and it aired around Easter. And it's Bishop Robert Barron, who you might be familiar with.

Frank:

He's excellent. Yes.

Justin:

He's a Christian thinker, Catholic bishop, out in Los Angeles. And I had him on with, well, someone that you came on my show for a few years ago, Alex O'Connor, who's a very well-known now, YouTube skeptic and atheist. But they just had a really good, and very kind of gracious, conversation between the two of them on atheism and Christianity. And I thought both sides did a really good job, actually, of representing each side. So, that's a great balanced conversation. They covered some of the key issues around philosophical arguments for God. We talked about the problem of suffering, which is another key issue. So, that would be a great one to go for. And TheBigConversation.show is a good place to access that, where we've got the video for that.

But you know, one of my favorites was, actually, out in California, Frank. It was out when we did our last Big Conversation live show in 2019. And I had John Lennox and Dave Rubin sitting down with me on the stage. And that was one of those ones, which I'll always remember, because it wasn't so much an intellectual fistfight, as sometimes these conversations are. It was actually Dave Rubin, who is, as you probably know, a well-known talk show host on YouTube and, kind of, comes from the kind of secular Jewish kind of background, and has been great friends with lots of the new atheist, Sam Harris, and so on, but has undergone quite a significant change. The kind of change I was talking about earlier, where he said in that conversation with John Lennox, I don't call myself an atheist anymore. Because he's come to realize that just doesn't fulfill him. It doesn't make sense of him. And again, it was just one of those wonderful

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conversations where there was a real opening, a meeting of minds and hearts, and you just got the sense that Dave Rubin is going on a journey and John Lennox was just able, in the way he does with that winsome kind of grandfatherly almost approach, with all the intellectual side of it as well, to just draw that out. And so, that's one of my favorite conversations I've ever done for sure.

Frank:

I always tell John Lennox, that if everyone was like John Lennox, the world would be completely Christianized by now. Because you can't not love John Lennox? I mean...

Justin:

Exactly. You just want him to be a dad or your granddad, don't you?

Frank:

That's right.

Justin:

I mean, everyone wants a John Lennox, for their uncle, or something.

Frank:

Someone reviewed the debate he had with Richard Dawkins this way. He said, "watching John Lennox debate Richard Dawkins was like watching Santa Claus debate the devil". You just can't not like John Lennox. He was amazing. Going back to the talk you did have between Robert Barron and Alex O'Connor, I listened to that one. And that was one of the ones I was going, if I was Justin, I don't know how I could restrain myself by saying, Alex, you're having all these moral complaints, by what standard are you judging these problems with pain and suffering and evil? And that was a very interesting conversation. But you show such grace and restraint. I don't know how you do it, Justin, because...

Justin:

Well, I guess, I've learned over the years to try and, you know, kind of, keep myself out of the debate if I can. As I said, I don't always manage it, and in a way, trying to let the guests that I've brought on to do the debating. And you know, it's always going to be different. Everyone comes with a different perspective, a different way of approaching the issues, and frankly, you know, not all the Christians who come on make the arguments in the way that I would prefer to make them, but that's okay, because this is a very long running series. You know, we've been doing this for 15 years. And, for me, it's about the long game and it's not about whether in one

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individual episode, you know, the Christian one or the atheist one. What I find is that, as skeptics especially, listen to the show over a course of years, they will, at the very least, be subjected to the fact that Christianity has this strong intellectual tradition. And they'll hear that from a variety of different perspectives.

And I think a lot of them end up being pleasantly surprised, even if they're not won over by one episode, they are nevertheless surprised at the, if you like, the legs that Christianity has, and that it's not all stuff and nonsense and fairytales, as they were led to believe. And of course, they will hear, you know, cogent, robust responses as well. But my hope is that, in the course of hearing that, they will simply discover that Christianity can stand on its own two legs intellectually. And for me, that's kind of the long term ambition of the show, is to just get people thinking, get people to take Christianity seriously again. And I mean that for both the Christians and non-Christians who listen to the show. It's not just about winning a specific debate. It's, kind of, the journey that some of those listeners have gone on over the course of over a decade following the show, you know.

Frank:

What's on the horizon for you and Unbelievable? Are there new directions you're going in? I know you started The Big Conversation, which of course, is a new direction. Do you have any other thoughts or a different vision for the future? What are you looking at right now, Justin?

Justin:

Yeah, well, obviously, the world has changed hugely in the last year, and the fact we're doing the conference all online this year, which is one way in which I think suddenly the world has opened up digitally, and people have been forced to, kind of, go digital. Now, that's not to say we won't do in person events. Of course, we will. But I think from now on, we're going to try and make things as global as possible in the way we present things like that. Equally, you know, we're all aware of the tragedy that has happened in RZIM and the implosion of that ministry, effectively, in the last year or so. And it's awakened me to the fact that as that is, it has left a sad gap in the provision of apologetics training, you know, and resourcing to many Christians and churches. And we're hoping that, in some way, we might be able to help with that.

Unbelievable does what it does, you know. We have other shows, like the N.T. Wright show, and so on. But we're hoping to actually develop something a little bit more comprehensive from here in the UK that will help with apologetics, and with training generally. That's very much in the formative stages so I've got not a lot to tell you about that, Frank. But all I will say is that we want to make that collaborative effort. We want to bring in the best established people

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who are doing apologetics and give them the platform. We want to use people who are up and coming, you know, and talking to different areas, and to youth ,and to different cultures. So, we've got hopes that we can do something significant and try to, you know, just do what we believe we've been called to do, which is to make Christ known and to show that we can use you know, our heart, our soul and our mind in the process of doing that.

Frank:

Well, you're definitely doing that. And if you're just tuning in friends, the program is called Unbelievable. It is available anywhere you can get a podcast, and Justin Brierley, my guest today, is the host of the program. He has people on the program that you might not be aware of, but are thought leaders both in the Christian world, the atheistic world, the Muslim world, across the board. And it's a program that goes back almost 15 years now. If you get their app...Justin, I assume you could probably go back 10 years and listen to some of these shows, can't you? I mean, many of these shows are evergreen.

Justin:

Yeah. That's the joy of it. I get people emailing me about shows that I did 10 years ago, you know, right. Because essentially, you know, if you get subscribed on the podcast, you can go back years and years really on the show, by the app, on the YouTube channel as well, these days. There is one more project I should have told you about as well, actually, Frank, which is another book, which I'm working on at the moment. And so, I'm looking forward to that, hopefully being released in 2022. But it's very much along the lines of that conversation we were talking about earlier, which is that, you know, how was the conversation moved on from the new atheism. And just looking at the influence of some of these significant new intellectual thinkers and how the church can respond to that.

Frank:

Well, great. When that comes out, we'll definitely have you back on, Justin. My guest has been Justin Brierley. Again, Unbelievable, the podcast and also Unbelievable, the conference, May 15. Sign up for that online and you can be a part of it. It's been great being with you. Thanks, Justin. And I'll see you guys here, Lord willing, next week. God bless.

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