

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

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Darkroom Faith with Mary Jo Sharp

(July 29, 2022)

Ladies and gentlemen, I just came across a study in the Journal of Molecular Psychiatry - that's where this comes from, but it was actually an article that I saw - and the title of this article that's popularizing this journal of molecular psychiatry study says this, Depression is Not Caused by A Chemical Imbalance in the Brain, say scientists. And I'll put a link to this article in the show notes here. But the highlight of it says there is no clear evidence that depression is caused by low serotonin levels, research suggests. The new review, which analyze existing studies, suggest that condition is not likely caused by a chemical imbalance, and calls into question what anti-depressants do...

And the researchers say these findings are very important, because studies show as many as 85%-90% of the public believes that depression is caused by some kind of chemical imbalance. And if this is true, and I don't know about you but it's really hard for me sometimes to figure out what is true in the medical world now. I think, unfortunately, the whole vaccine thing has caused so many people to question what's going on in medicine. But if this is really true, that most depression is not caused by a chemical imbalance, what do you think could be the cause of depression? Why do we have rising suicide rates? Why do we have rising rates of drug use? Why do we have rising rates of divorce and so many other indicators of unhappiness?

Could it be that instead of a chemical imbalance, we have a worldview imbalance. That we don't know what the right worldview is. That if we're going to believe in materialism, if we're going to believe that there is no God, if we're going to believe that there is no afterlife, if we're going to believe that life has no meaning, that everything's hopeless, ultimately, might that cause us to be a bit depressed?

Well, I have a guest with me today to talk about one small solution to this problem that may be very helpful. Maybe it's a big solution, it's just come out. My guest is Mary Jo Sharp and Mary Jo, you may know, is an apologist and an apologetics Professor at Houston Baptist University. Mary Jo has written several books, including her latest, Why I Still Believe: A Former Atheist's

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Reckoning with the Bad Reputation Christians Give a Good God. She's written some great curriculums as well. She's in a Ph. D. program as well. And she is behind a brand new free curriculum that might be an answer to some of the depression, to some of the waywardness, to some of the deconstruction that we're now seeing among the young around our culture today. So, it's always great to have Mary Jo on the show, she's been on before. Mary Jo, how are you?

Mary Jo:

Hey, I'm doing great. Thanks for having me, Frank.

Frank:

Hey, tell me about this new project. The project is called Darkroom. Tell us what it's about and how people can access it.

Mary Jo:

Yeah, thank you. It's a 14 part apologetics video series that is Gen Z narrative driven, which means that all of the stories in the series are actual stories from students that we interviewed in preparing for this project. And so, you've got not just the Gen Z narratives, but then you have experts engaging with their questions. Experts such as Sean McDowell, and Rebecca McLaughlin, and many more. And so, it has these videos and the videos you can watch online and then you can use them in your youth groups or wherever you're going to be discussing this. But then it comes with this full curriculum as well. It's great like full curriculum leader, resources, Leader Guide Student Guide, but then it has all the social media stuff as well, and PowerPoint, and I mean, this is a full package. So, if you go to DarkroomFaith.com you can sign up. You just put your email in there, you sign up to get access to all of it, and then you have access to all of the materials.

Frank:

Well, let's take a look at the trailer. There's a one minute trailer. Now, obviously on radio or podcasts, you're not going to see it, but you'll hear it. You're going to hear young people talking about the struggles that they're having. So, it's just one minute. Let's play it right now.

[trailer includes multiple different people talking throughout]

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"It's probably a year ago when I saw that video. It was called My Deconversion from Christianity. Before I can fully process what that even meant, it started auto-play. There was one girl, she doesn't share the same views as me. And she tells me, I really don't like Christians. Lately, I've been asking myself what makes Christianity different? Why do I identify as a Christian? I have a secret. All my life I've had questions about my faith, about God, and about religion. But now I'm going to tell you my questions, my struggles, my doubts. I hope you can handle the truth."

That's the trailer from the new free video curriculum that comes with written material as well. It's called Darkroom. Go to DarkroomFaith.com. And Mary Jo sharp, a professor of apologetics at Houston Baptist University has been sort of the leader of this whole thing. Mary Jo, what are some of the topics that you're covering in the series?

Mary Jo:

Oh, yeah. So again, these come directly from our interviews with Gen Z students, and they're talking about: What's the purpose of church? So, church is a big topic. The topic of sin. It's gotten sort of a bad rap, right? Even CS Lewis talked about that long time ago. We're talking about love. What is love and the line that our culture tends to draw from love to sexuality too closely. And so, exploring that conversation. And doubt, and deconversion, deconstruction, science and faith, there's so many things, suffering, the Bible. What is the Bible? What is our purpose? The afterlife. All sorts of good topics.

Frank:

And you say that these are actually videos that are re-enacted true stories or based on true stories, correct?

Mary Jo:

Yeah, they're based on true stories, so the language that you'll hear is actually from those stories. Obviously we had a screenwriter make it into a script. But yeah, these are real student stories.

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Frank:

And I was watching one of them today. And folks, you can just go to DarkroomFaith.com and you can see these videos. And they've not all been released yet. They're going to be released, what is it, once a week, or once a month? There's 14 of them and I'm seeing several of them, but not all of them on the on the screen. When are they coming out, Mary Jo?

Mary Jo:

It's once about every two weeks, so twice a month.

Frank:

Twice a month. I saw one of them, where this young man is considering suicide because I guess he just felt hopeless. I imagine this young man didn't commit suicide, but this is based on a true story. So, what happened there?

Mary Jo:

Yeah, so the young man is dealing with the problem of evil, the problem of pain and suffering in this world, and does God care about us. Does he care about our suffering? And so, one of the things that his particular story highlights is that God loves you and he cares for you and that even though you've experienced pain and suffering, which we do handle theoretically, a little bit from the expert side of things like: Why might God allow evil in the world? So, we handle that a little bit. But then we also handle the side of, you know, you can still be a vessel for good and love and caring for other people who have suffered as well. And so, he finds his purpose in photography, which I'm actually glad you brought this one up, because you see him in the darkroom, developing his pictures, and that's where we get the inspiration for the whole series is that sometimes our belief develops in those dark places where we struggle with things.

Frank:

I'm talking to Mary Jo Sharp, who has overseen a brand new curriculum that's free ladies and gentlemen. Anyone can use it go to DarkroomFaith.com. We have a lot more with Mary Jo after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. Our website is CrossExamined.org. We're back in just two minutes.

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Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. I want to mention that I will be at Center Pointe Christian Church in Liberty Township, Ohio, near Cincinnati on Sunday, July 31. That's the great church that's hosting us for CIA this year. I'll be speaking in the morning services doing the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist presentation. Then I'll be at Calvary Fellowship, in Miramar, Florida on Sunday, August 7. I'll be at both services that morning. We'll be talking about Should You Follow Your Heart? That's down not far from Miami ladies and gentlemen. It's always great to go to Miami in August.

Anyway, everything's hot right now, including the brand new curriculum called Darkroom at DarkroomFaith.com. I'm talking to Mary Jo Sharp, who really oversaw the project. And Mary Jo, this project is beautifully done, because I think you guys spent more than a million dollars putting all this production together. You've got first rate photography, cinematography, script writing, and all that. All this money was raised in order to create this Darkroom Faith project, DarkroomFaith.com. What do you hope people are going to do with this particular curriculum? Who's going to use it? Who is it really for?

Mary Jo:

Yeah, it's really for student ministries. You know, like, that was our target. That's our goal is for youth ministers and people who do collegiate ministries. So, that's like sort of the target. Of course, families can use it with their kids, and you know, homeschoolers, things like that. But I really hope that people show it to their kids, because that's one of the things you were mentioning that we spent the money on was to bring the aesthetic quality up to the current temperature of aesthetic quality for film and production. We use this amazing film production company called Ox Creates, and they're the ones that are responsible for all the great look and the aesthetic of it. So, we hope that when kids see this, that they'll want to continue watching, it'll be something that grabs their attention.

And that's actually what we're hearing is that students saying yeah, I never looked away during the video. So, I was like, great, that is perfect. And then we hope that as youth groups use this it's very Invitational towards the kids to think through these issues and work through them in an environment that's safer, you know, for them to explore these ideas. An environment like

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their church youth group where they can bring these kinds of subjects up and explore them with experts, and with their youth minister, and with all this material that we have for them.

Frank:

You know, I've had several people say to me - I've been on the road a lot lately - and they've said to me things like, I was brought up in a church where I was told not to ask questions. I just can't believe any church would say, You ought not ask questions. I mean, it boggles the mind to think that there were pastors out there, or elders out there, or Sunday school teachers out there, or small group teachers out there, who would say something so stupid as, just have faith, don't ask any questions. But that's where we are in some places and that's where this curriculum can really help people because you're diving into the real existential questions young people are having. Now, you know about this Mary Jo because you were an atheist at one point. Why were you an atheist at one point and why did you think God didn't exist?

Mary Jo:

Yeah. I grew up in a culture that was less religiously active, and they still are. I'm still looking at the censuses and we have a lot of people that are non-affiliated in my area of the country.

Frank:

You're in Portland, Oregon, so yeah. You're one of like seven Christians up there. You, Tim MacKay, John Collins, and a few other people apparently. But anyway, go ahead.

Mary Jo:

I mean, not quite that bad, but yeah. So yeah, that's an area of the country I grew up in. And also, the culture I grew up in, religion was considered kind of a private conversation. And I'm seeing that because I spent a lot of time in the south where it wasn't considered private. So, I didn't grow up in church, my parents didn't take me to church, and so, I didn't have a Christian upbringing. My exposure to Christianity was really what I saw on TV in the movies. And a lot of what I saw, Frank, was not good. It was very shallow. And I remember seeing like the Jim and Tammy Faye Baker scandal and things like that. So, I had a very skeptical view of what religion was for and what it was doing. So, that's my background is that I didn't really know what religion was for or why people believed in it, and it seems sort of scammy. [laughing]

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Frank:

You're right. Yeah. Unfortunately, the stuff you see on most Christian TV, it's not really pray TV, it's pay TV, right. You know, it's really all about you send us the money and you'll be blessed, which of course, is total nonsense. But that's what people are teaching there. So, I can understand if you're not a Christian, and you turn on some Christian program and you go, this is nuts, this is crazy. But were you an adamant atheist or were you just someone who said, Well, I don't see any evidence for God so why should I be... Were you kind of indifferent, I guess, is my question?

Mary Jo:

Yeah, so that's the thing. I would actually almost label myself as a non-theist rather than an atheist because of the connotation that both of those have. I was raised without God, so I didn't see the need for God, I didn't know anything about God. I wasn't seriously studying, like Nietzsche, or anything, or Bertrand Russell. So, my atheism was more cultural atheism. It was just the environment in which I was raised. I wasn't hostile towards Christians. I was actually taught to respect people of all different backgrounds but I kind of thought it was a crutch and I didn't need that. You know, I'm smart, I can do things, I don't need Christianity. I don't know what it's for anyway.

But there were some sticky points for me that caused me to start to question my thoughts about God. And those sticky points were a lot of the beauty that I saw in nature seemed extravagant. My dad was a huge nature-phile if that's a thing. He loved to go out and take us camping all the way up and down the Pacific Northwest coastline and into the mountains. And he always wondered at outer space, and the cosmos, and taught me that wonder. And he was a musician, like me. And so, I was always active in creating great works of art and beauty. And so, that sort of stuck with me, like, what is all this for? Is this all for nothing? Does it all come to nothing in the end and the universe just dies its heat death and that's it, and nothing really mattered?

So, as I became an older teenager, I had really hard questions that I was exploring. And my band director, who I greatly respected was a Christian. And he hadn't shared his faith, not like this, not publicly, not with a public school student. And he was actually kind of worried that if he did share his faith, he might lose his job. But he was very burdened for me, and so, he did it

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anyway. He gave me a Bible my senior year in high school, and he said, When you go off to college, you're gonna have hard questions. I hope you'll turn to this. And he just, like hit me at the right time in my life. I didn't respond to him well, apparently. He tells me that now. We stay in contact. I made him uncomfortable, apparently. Unintentionally, though, folks, unintentionally.

But yeah, I just hadn't been exposed to that. But he hit me at the right time, and I started reading that Bible and really reading the Bible piqued my curiosity. It started to make sense of things like my sense of morality, my sense of right and wrong that I had, my sense of, wow, there's a lot of beauty in the world and where's this all coming from and what is this for? So, those kinds of questions, it made sense of those things to me. So, when I went off to college, I actually went off to explore faith.

Frank:

Where did you go to school?

Mary Jo:

I went to University of Oklahoma. I was following a music educator from Oregon.

Frank:

Oh, so you were a Sooner. So, how did you go from what you might describe as apathy-ism, like, you don't really care, to actually becoming a Christian, and then a Christian apologist, no less? How did that happen?

Mary Jo:

Oh, yeah. So, I started exploring churches. I went to hear churches. What do they have to say? What are they saying about Jesus? What is this all about? And I did eventually end up at a church where I heard a very clear presentation of my need for a Savior. And it made sense of my sense of right and wrong, and that people keep doing wrong even though they try to do right. Even when they try to do right, it ends up wrong. So, I was like, wow, this really makes sense and it really spoke to me, so I became a Christian at that college university town church. But then, as I got involved in the church and I started to see Christians, I noted a lot of hypocrisy, a lot of inattention to live like they are trying to become Christlike. I saw them ignore

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parts of the Bible, like not even hold themselves accountable to it. And this difference between what drew me to God; this beauty, his morality, the justice I saw there, like making sense of everything, and then this sort of hypocrisy and anti-intellectualism that I encountered in the church - and it wasn't just one or two times Frank, it was like a consistent pattern with Christians.

So, that was what caused me to say, Hey, wait a minute, what did what did I believe in and why did I believe it? Is there any merit to things like; Did Jesus rise from the dead? Can I trust the Bible? So, I actually started looking for answers to my own questions, because I realized that the behaviors of Christians couldn't be the litmus test for the truth of Christianity. And so, I started looking into: Are their answers to this? And that's why it actually drew me into apologetics, which I didn't know was the thing at the time, and then back towards God. Because the answers I found from both sides, like from my former atheism versus Christianity, the answers were stronger for Christianity.

Frank:

Now at Houston Baptist right now you're teaching what?

Mary Jo:

Oh, so many things. But generally, apologetics. Also, like problem of evil, philosophical classes, logic, things like that.

Frank:

Well, you were correct, obviously, to say that the behavior of Christians doesn't affect the truth of Christianity. As I've mentioned before, on this program, ladies, gentlemen, John Dixon has a great little book called Bullies and Saints where he goes through the church history, a chapter per century. And in there he says, If somebody plays Bach poorly, who do you blame? You don't blame Bach, right? You blame the player. And the same thing is true when it comes to Christianity. If somebody plays Christ poorly, you don't blame Jesus. Jesus is still true and beautiful, even if his followers often are not. And if we were always true and beautiful, we wouldn't need him anyway, we wouldn't need a savior.

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But in any event, let's go back to Darkroom for just a second, Mary Jo. This curriculum, which you helped oversee, has some great people that you have brought to the curriculum to try and bring forth the best answers to young people. I notice you had Rebecca McLaughlin in there. That name might not be familiar to people, but she wrote a book recently, and I'm trying to think of a name that had something to do with like challenging Christianity. What was the name of her book?

Mary Jo:

Confronting Christianity.

Frank:

Confronting Christianity, which she went through some of the most difficult questions of Christianity. She's from the UK. What is her contribution to this?

Mary Jo:

Oh, so what she contributed to is, she was what we call an expert writer. So, when we would have a script with a narrative from Gen Z, she'd come in and she would answer what the questions were and then the screenwriters would turn it into part of the script. So, she would contribute on our science episode. I'm trying to remember all the ones she contributed on. She did about four of our episodes that she worked on. So, she did a lot of contributions.

Frank:

So, there are 14 episodes in Darkroom ladies and gentlemen. It's a free curriculum with both video and written. You want to go to DarkroomFaith.com and just download whatever you can. Also, you want to make sure that you keep checking back because every two weeks there's a new video coming out. I also want to send you to Mary Jo's website, MaryJoSharp.com. How can people get in touch with you, Mary Jo?

Mary Jo:

Yeah, they can get in touch with me through confidentchristianity@gmail.com or through my website, MaryJoSharp.com. Just click that contact link and you can get in touch with me there.

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Frank:

Mary Jo, thanks so much. Thanks for being on the show. Thanks for doing this curriculum, too. It's fabulous. DarkroomFaith.com. It's free and it's over a million dollars you're getting for free. Check it out. Alright back with your questions right after the break. Don't go anywhere.

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 listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. Let's go to some of your questions you've been emailing. Sorry I haven't been able to get to many of these. I think we had some Q&A last week. Let me try and finish up. By the way, if you have a question you want to send into us just send it to Hello@CrossExamined.org.

Let me start with Peter who writes, "My question is this. If humans inherited a perfect world, and all evil that we observe is the result of man's rebellion against God, then why did animal suffering exist before Adam and Eve had even existed?" And so, he said, "I would love if you would respond to in one of your upcoming podcasts. I've been grappling with this question for quite some time. Thank you."

Okay, good question, Peter. First of all, notice this is a moral question, that it's saying that if God has done this, somehow he is immoral for doing it. And of course, that's assuming a standard. So, the question is, what is that standard to say that God is somehow immoral if he causes animal suffering to exist prior to Adam and Eve? But I think the actual answer to this question is that it doesn't say in the Bible that animal suffering comes from the fall of Adam and Eve. A lot of people point to Romans 5:12, and they ask, Well, how could there be suffering before Adam and Eve? Or how could there be death before Adam and Eve? This must prove some sort of young earth, they say,.

Well, if you look at Romans 5:12, it doesn't say that death came to all creation because of Adam and Eve. It says that death came to all MEN because of what Adam and Eve had done. And sometimes a word in Scripture can be the all the difference in the world. So, the Scripture does not say that the animal suffering and animal death was caused by the fall of man. That's not what Romans 5:12 says. It says death came to all men.

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And another thing we need to remember is, there was a fall before the fall. What was the fall before the fall? Well, Satan fell. Now there's not much in the Bible about this. Some try and say, Well, there are passages in Ezekiel, or passages in Isaiah which seem to be talking about the king of Babylon, but maybe it refers to satanists. Well, some theologians say you say that's possible. Yeah, maybe that's possible. I don't know what's true there or not. Regardless of the fact though, we do know there was a fall before the fall. Maybe that affected creation prior to Adam falling.

And look, if the whole world was unfallen, prior to the fall of Adam and Eve, why would you need to create a garden? Why would there need to be a Garden of Eden if the whole world was a paradise? It seems that maybe there was death before the fall because there was a fall before the fall. Bill Dembski wrote a book a number of years ago, I have it on my shelf over here, called *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*. And Dembski, the famous Intelligent Design proponent said that, basically if the fall before the fall did not cause the death to come to animals. That if it literally was that the fall of Adam and Eve caused the death to animals, he said the fall could have been retroactive. In other words, it had an impact before it took place, just like Christ's sacrifice had an impact before it took place.

People in the Old Testament were saved by Christ's sacrifice, even though chronologically in our time, it hadn't happened yet. In God's eyes, since he's outside the time, it already had happened. Everything is done because he can see it all, he's outside of time, but it hadn't happened chronologically in our space time continuum. Yet, the effect of Christ's sacrifice reached back into time prior to his sacrifice. So, just like Christ's sacrifice was retroactive to save people, it could have been the fall of Adam and Eve was retroactive in the sense that it caused death to come to animals, and pain and suffering came prior to Adam and Eve falling. That's another possibility. Now, obviously, we're speculating here. But as I said earlier, Romans 5:12 does not teach that death came to all creation, it teaches that death came to all men. Alright, good question, Peter.

Let me go to JP who writes, "On your July 2 program, you said that our rights come from the God of the Bible. Can you show me which verse in the Bible mentions inalienable human rights and what they are? Otherwise, how do you know what they are or even if they come from God?".

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Well, before we get to the Bible, let's just point out that there are no rights to anything unless God exists. Everything is just a matter of opinion, unless God exists, as we've said several times on this program. It's just your opinion against say Hitler's opinion. Or your opinion against the murderer's opinion. If there is no God, every moral claim, every claim to a particular right is simply a preference claim. And Thomas Jefferson, of course, knew this. This is why he wrote in the Declaration of Independence; we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men were created and endowed by their government. No, he doesn't say government, he says endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Notice he lists life first. Why? Well, life is the ultimate right. The right to life is the right to all other rights. If you don't have life, you don't have anything. So, life is supremely important. You take away somebody's right to life, all these other rights they have; speech, religion, assembly, all these other things, they don't matter because they're dead. Right? So, life is the essential and number one right we have, the right to life. But notice Jefferson said, it's grounded in our Creator. And then the declaration goes on to say that governments are instituted among men to secure these rights. And if the government doesn't secure these rights, then Jefferson and his colleagues said, then the people have the right to a new government. And of course, that's what the Declaration of Independence is all about. The declaration just basically says, Here are all the ways King George is ruling on us immorally. He's violating the rights that come from God.

So, if someone says they have a right to something you want to ask, number one: What do you mean by right? And number two: How did you come to that conclusion? Why do you think you have this right? Where does it come from? If it doesn't come from God it's just a preference. You say, Well, the government gives me my rights. No, the government is just supposed to secure your rights. If you're gonna say that a government gives you your rights, does that mean if you get a new government that comes in and decides you no longer have that right, does that mean you no longer have that right? No, of course not. If the government comes in and says, All Jews must die, does that mean Jews don't have a right to life? Of course not. So, rights don't come from government.

But specifically, to JP's question: Where does the Bible mention inalienable human rights? Well, first of all, the Bible mentions that we're made in God's image, and that we have the image of

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God upon us. And of course, theologians debate exactly what that is and what that entails. But it means that we are at least God's representatives here on Earth. And when Moses is given the 10 commandments, do not murder implies a right to life. Do not steal implies a right to property. Of course, one of the first commandments, even prior to the 10 commandments is, cleave to your wife and procreate. That implies a right to natural marriage.

So, while the Bible isn't going to use this philosophical language of inalienable human rights, it is going to be saying that people are made in the image of God, and you ought not kill them, you ought not steal from them, they ought to have the ability and they're being commanded to take a mate and procreate. That is the way the Bible says that you have certain rights. It's not going to use the philosophical language of the Declaration of Independence, but it is going to use commands. And those commands imply certain rights. So, you have a right to life, you have a right to property, you have a right to marriage, someone of the opposite sex, because it's has to do with procreation.

By the way, there's a great book that deals with so many of these issues. I don't know if I've mentioned it before. I think I probably had Dr. Wayne Grudem when this book came out. It came out several years ago. The book is called *Politics - According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture*. Years ago, Dr. Geisler and I wrote a book called *Legislating Morality*. I've mentioned that on recent programs here. But a much more comprehensive book than that is this Wayne Grudem book, again called *Politics - According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of*. So, if you want to go further, JP, I highly recommend you check that out.

But JP has another question, and he says this. "How do you reconcile our freedom of religion supposedly coming from God, with God prohibiting freedom of religion in the Bible? Worshiping other gods was punishable by death throughout all the Old Testament. That's the opposite of freedom of religion."

Another great question from JP. What we need to understand here is that the Old Testament was a covenant theocracy, that no longer applies. The old covenant was just for Israel, where God literally was their king, and often visibly through miracles. In fact, here is what Wayne

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Grudem says in his book on politics. In fact, I may have to save this for after the break, because it's a pretty lengthy quote, so I'll save it for after the break. But let me point out that it is true you can't force people to worship and if it's forced, then it's not worship. And by the way, worship is for our benefit, not God's benefit. God doesn't improve himself by us worshipping him and we don't take anything away from God by cursing him. And some atheists will say, Well, God is this cosmic ego. He's telling us to worship him. No, he's not a cosmic ego, he knows what's best for us.

Look, there's only two things you can worship, either the creator or some aspect of the creation. Those are the only two religions in the world when you really think about it. You're either worshipping the Creator, or some aspect of the creation. If you're going to worship some aspect of the creation, that's not going to work out long term. So, God knows for our benefit, worship is something that we ought to do. Now obviously, God deserves it, but he doesn't need it. We benefit, not God. We don't add to God through our worship, we don't take away from God when we don't worship Him. And right after the break we're gonna come back and answer this question more directly, so don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. We're back in just two minutes.

You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. We're answering, at least trying to answer, some of your good questions that you're emailing in to [Hello@CrossExamined.org](mailto>Hello@CrossExamined.org). Let me restate the question from JP who says, "How do you reconcile our freedom of religion supposedly coming from God with God prohibiting freedom of religion in the Bible? Worshiping other gods was punishable by death throughout the Old Testament, that's the opposite of freedom of religion."

And so far we've mentioned, Well, the Old Testament had to do with a theocracy where God was present. God was literally their king, often visibly through miracles. And you can't force people to worship but you can penalize people who overtly commit blasphemy, and that's what happened in ancient Israel. Israel was a vehicle to bless the entire world with the New Covenant. Now, the New Covenant has no such laws - the New Testament - the New Covenant has no such laws for blasphemy, and it tells believers to make disciples of all nations by

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teaching them. Now that obviously respects your freedom of religion. It doesn't say use force to overcome them, it says teach them.

Now here's what Wayne Grudem says about this in his book, *Politics - According to the Bible*. He says, "The first biblical argument against the compel religion view..." because he's addressing the question: Should we try and compel religion in the United States? He says, "The first biblical argument against the compel religion view comes from Jesus's teaching in Matthew 22. Jesus's Jewish opponents were trying to trap him with a question: Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" This is in Matthew 22. "To say yes to Roman taxes ran the risk of appearing to support the hated Roman government. To say no to Roman taxes would make Jesus sound like a dangerous revolutionary against Rome's power. Taking his opponents by surprise, Jesus said, Show me the coin for the tax and they brought him a denarius.

After that, here's how he taught them. He said, Whose likeness and inscription is on this? They said Caesar's. Then he said to them, therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." And here's what Grudem says, "This is a remarkable statement, because Jesus shows that there are to be two different spheres of influence, one for the government and one for the religious life of the people of God. Some things such as taxes belong to civil government, that things that are Caesar's, and this implies that the church should not try to control these things."

And let me add something here. It doesn't mean that we can't try and influence the government with regard to what tax rate we think would be best but it's not the church's position to control that, it's the government to who's supposed to control that. Back to Grudem. "On the other hand, some things belong to people's religious life, the things that are God's, and this implies that civil government should not try to control those things." He goes on. "Jesus did not specify any list of things that belonged to each category but the mere distinction of these two categories had monumental significance for the history of the world. It signaled the endorsement of a different system from the laws of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. With regard to the Old Testament Israel, the whole nation was a theocracy..." We already mentioned that. "...in that God was the ruler of the people.

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The laws were directly given to Israel by God...", rather than being decided upon by the people or a human king, "...and the whole nation was considered God's people. Therefore, everyone in the nation was expected to worship God and the laws of Israel covered, not only what we today would consider secular matters such as murder and theft, but also religious matters such as animal sacrifices and punishments for worshipping other gods. In Jesus's statement about God and Caesar, he established the broad outlines of a new order, in which the things that are God's are not to be under the control of the civil government or Caesar. Such a system is far different from the Old Testament theocracy that was used for the people of Israel. Jesus's new teaching implies that all civil governments, even today, should give people freedom regarding their religious faith they follow or choose not to follow. And regarding the religious doctrines they hold and how they worship God, Caesar should not control such things for they are the things that are God's."

Again, that comes from Wayne Grudem's book *Politics - According to the Bible*, a book you ought to get. He covers so many topics in there. Very, very good book. So, let's point out a little bit further with JP here. JP had a third question. He was also wondering how you reconcile the common claim that God is pro-life with the stories in the Bible where he kills little babies and children. JP is probably an atheist. Okay. Well, we covered that all last podcast, so go listen to the last podcast we just did. The one before this one.

The short answer is, God can play God, but we can't. Okay? When God kills somebody, he has the right to do that. When we kill somebody, we don't necessarily have the right to do that unless it's just war, unless it's self-defense, unless we're part of a government that can met out capital punishment. Other than that, we don't have the authority to kill people. God does. And when God kills people, he does it for his reasons. Normally they're for judgment, and he has that authority, and he can resurrect people. Look, if Christianity is true, people don't die, they just change location, and it's up to God when they do that. But God is obviously pro-life. Thou shalt not murder is pretty specific. Okay. And there are other verses we could talk about if you'd like, but I think Thou shalt not murder should cover it.

Let me let me just point out that the New Covenant, as we just pointed out, as Wayne Grudem pointed out, doesn't have laws that say you have to be a Christian. It doesn't have laws that say you have to believe a certain thing. We're supposed to teach people those things, according to

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the Great Commission. So, the New Testament respects freedom of religion, you have the freedom of religion. By the way, you're gonna have the freedom of religion in hell too. You're still going to have freewill in hell and you're gonna have the freedom to practice your religion in hell. And usually what we can say to this is that, as I mentioned earlier, there's only two things you can worship. You can worship the Creator, or you can worship some aspect of the creation. In hell you're going to worship some aspect of the creation...yourself. You're still gonna have freewill, but the freewill will be completed in hell to the point that you're totaled, as we might say. You're irredeemable. You could never accept Christ because you've cemented your free will in rebellion to him.

CS Lewis in Mere Christianity says this regarding hell. He says, "Christianity asserts that we're going to live on forever. Now there are a great many things that wouldn't be worth bothering about if I was only going to live 80 or so years, but I had better bother about if I'm going to live on forever. Perhaps my bad temper or my jealousy are getting worse so gradually the increase in my lifetime will not be very noticeable, but it might be absolute hell in a million years. In fact, if Christianity is true, hell is precisely the correct technical term for it. Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others, but you are still distinct from it. You may even criticize it in yourself and wish you could stop it but there may come a day when you can no longer. There will be no you left to criticize the mood or even enjoy it, but just the grumble itself going on forever and ever like a machine. It is not a question of God sending us to hell. In each of us, there is something growing, which will be hell unless it is nipped in the bud."

Exactly. In hell you're going to be separated from God by your own choice. I mean if you don't want God now you're not going to want him in eternity. In fact, we're doing a two-week summer course, which starts in a couple of weeks here, I think maybe three weeks. It's called Hell? The Truth About Eternity. If you go to CrossExamined.org and click on Online Courses you'll see there. I'll be your instructor. We're going to answer questions like: What about those that have never heard about Jesus? Is there a second chance? Why did God create those he knew would go to hell? Why eternal punishment for temporal sins? Is that overkill? What is hell?

I mean, you seem to have these almost contradictory metaphors going on. On one hand, you have outer darkness. On the other hand, you have fire. How can you have both? And isn't hell

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overkill? And are people tortured in hell? You hear that all the time, particularly from atheists. What kind of good God would torture people in hell? Is that really what goes on? No, but we'll cover it in the course. It's not torture, it's torment. You need to read the Bible to figure out really what it says. Who goes to hell and why and why doesn't God just annihilate sinners?

In fact, there's a movement out there, I think it's called conditionalism, where there are some Christians who are saying hell is temporary. You're in it for a while and you serve your time and then you go out of existence, you're annihilated. Is that true? We cover all that in this course. So, if you're interested in it, just go to CrossExamined.org and click on online courses. You'll see it, it's just a two week course. We'll have one Zoom session, which means I'll be on, and you can ask any question you like, and I can do my best to avoid your question. [laughing] No, I'll try and answer it. But we'll have a Zoom on this. It's just a two-week course and then we're gonna get into, in the fall, some longer courses like, *Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, probably our most popular 12-week course, so you want to be a part of that.

By the way I had a great time up at Cornerstone Chapel in Leesburg, Virginia. My friend Pam Pryor got me to speak there. And it's a wonderful church in Leesburg. If you're up there in Leesburg at all you ought to check that church out. And I spoke at a Monday night and a Wednesday night service. We did *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*. You can all see it on their YouTube channel. Check that out there. And I just had a great conversation on a flight back from DC. My friend, Dr. Stephen Meyer, we were on the same flight, so we sat next to one another. And we're gonna have Steve on shortly because he just had a brand new article in *Newsweek*, believe it or not, on why the evidence is now pointing away from atheism and pointing to God. The scientific evidence, that is, so look out for Steve Meyer here on the program.

Alright, folks, I'm going to be in Cincinnati, Ohio this Sunday. Check out our website CrossExamined.org for the details. I hope to see you there and Lord willing, I'll see you here next week. God bless.

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