

## **Is Christianity good? Isn't it anti-women and pro-slavery? with Abdu Murray**

(September 23, 2022)

Ladies and gentlemen, it seems that fewer people today care whether Christianity is true, then care whether it is actually good. Well, is Christianity good? I mean, some people say it promotes racism. Some people say it promote slavery. Some people say it's anti-woman. Some people say that Christianity is just a white man's religion. Are any of those statements true? We're gonna dive into them today.

My guest is Abdu Murray. Abdu has his law degree from the University of Michigan. As you may know, he's a former Muslim who became a Christian apologist after examining the evidence. He's led dialogues, open forums, debates around the world at universities, churches, business government gatherings. He has a podcast called All Rise. He's written several books. In fact, the book we're going to talk about today is a new book that comes out September 27. It's called *More Than a White Man's Religion: Why the Gospel Has Never Been Merely White, Male-Centered, or Just Another Religion*. So here he is, ladies and gentlemen, the great Abdu Murray. Abdu, how are you?

**Abdu:**

It's great to be on, Frank. Thanks so much. I'm doing well. How are you?

**Frank:**

I'm doing fabulous. And I loved your book. I put an endorsement on it. So, I want to jump right into this because there are some misperceptions that many people have about Christianity. There are several misperceptions they have and compared to what the Bible actually says they are misperceptions. What are some of these misperceptions that people tend to have about Christianity?



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**Abdu:**

Well, I think that the primary one is essentially shifted. You know, back before, I think that the questions were more fact based. And they still are. People are asking questions on a fact based issue. They're still saying things like: Is the Bible True? Was thus and such really Tetrarch of thus and such at the time of someone said that? You know, the accuracy issues. And so, the perceptions used to be, it's all fables, it's all fairy tales, it's not really historical, or it's not really scientific. And those, to some degree are still there. But as you were even saying in the introductory comments, is that the perceptions have shifted away from primarily being about the veracity of the Bible, to the morality of the Bible. Is the Bible actually moral? And I think, as I see the questions shifting, the chief misperceptions now are that Christianity is inherently a religious system that favors white males, and was used, and is being used, by white males in certain power positions to either propagate privilege or subjugate women or people with darker skin.

And it's an interesting thing, because one of the most, I think, pervasive myths about the Christian faith is that people are leaving the Christian faith in droves, especially people who are being so-called persecuted or downtrodden, like women and people of color, when the reality is it's exactly the opposite. Is that when you look at the way in which Christianity is growing globally, what you see statistically is that in the Global South, in Africa, and in Asia, the Gospel, the Christians are multiplying. And they're not multiplying because of colonialism. They're not multiplying because those poor folks don't know that they're actually under a post-colonial mindset. No, they're actually embracing the gospel and living it out in the Global South, and in Africa, and in Asia.

In other words, if anyone's leaving the faith, it's white males. It's not actually non-white males. They're actually embracing this faith because they see it as the faith of liberation, as a faith that actually has as its core, a fundamental statement about equality across the two genders and across ethnicities as well. So, I think this is a huge misperception of Christianity, that it's dying in the world when it's not dying in the world. It's actually growing in the world, in terms of its influence and in terms of its adherence. But if it's dying anywhere, it's among those people who are claiming it should be dying among other people. So, I think it's white folks who are actually leaving it. If anyone's leaving it, it's white folks.

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**Frank:**

Now, some say Christianity is anti-woman and you might ask them the Greg Koukl questions: What do you mean by that? How did you come to that conclusion? Because, as we said so many times on the show friends, when somebody says something that you think is wrong, it is not your responsibility to show them why it's wrong, it's their responsibility to show why what they're saying is true and right. So, I always ask people, if they say something like, Well, Christianity is anti-white, anti-woman, don't go into a dissertation as to why it's not, ask them, Why do they think it is and what evidence do they have for it? But let's, let's assume, Abdu, you're at a university event and you have a bunch of people behind the questioner, and you don't have a lot of time to probe, you can't ask all these clarifying questions. If somebody just said, Christianity is anti-woman, and you just had two or three minutes to respond, how would you respond? What would you say?

**Abdu:**

That's a great question and I think, if I can as an aside, as a lawyer, I can tell you, I want to back up, what you just said, that one of the fundamental tenets of any case you want to make is that the person who makes the claim bears the burden of proof. And the burdens of proof are varying, depending on the kind of case you're trying to make, whether it's criminal, or civil, or a fraud case, or whatever it is. But I think it's really important for the viewers, and for listeners to know, the one who makes the claim bears the burden of proof. So, you're quite right in that, and I can tell you 100%, as a lawyer, you have to stick to that mentality and stick to that actual paradigm, because it's only fair.

Having said that, of course, if I'm on stage, or I'm in an elevator, I'm talking to a friend and they make this kind of statement, and let's say that give me a couple of examples of this kind of a thing, you have to head on and address the actual example. And there are some scriptures that seem to be very thorny ones. For example, where Paul seems to suggest that women shouldn't speak at all in church but remain silent, or women have certain standards in the Bible that are different than other standards, like if a woman is raped, is she forced to marry her rapist? And that seems terribly unfair, and all these things.

Well, my answer is essentially this on the women's issue. A couple of things. First is that it's important - and to borrow from Greg Koukl again - is you never read a Bible verse, you always

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read multiple Bible verses and you read things in their context. That's only fair. So, when you begin to read the corpus of Old Testament law, for example, or even Old Testament stories, what you begin to see is, even the hard case I just mentioned about a woman being forced to marry her rapist, you actually see in the scriptures is that it's not the woman being forced to marry the rapist, it's the rapist being forced to actually care for the woman. He's required to support her for the rest of his life. She has no obligation to live with him. There's nothing in the scripture that suggests she has to be in a relationship with this man in any other way other than he has to financially take care of her. She could live with her father, for example, if she wanted to, or any other kind of manner of support for herself. So, you read the whole thing, and you begin to see a bit of a different picture when it comes to this.

But then you will also see - we could tackle some specific things, maybe in what Paul says - but let's look at the bigger picture here. Look at the New Testament first. First, you see women are heroes of stories all the time. I mean, you read about this in the Exodus. I mean, it's Zipporah who had faith enough to trust God that he would take care of Moses and puts him in that river. It's Miriam who comes by and actually encourages Moses in his office as the leader of the Hebrews. Then you see Deborah, who's appointed as a judge, a high position judge, who speaks on behalf in the authority for God to the nation of Israel. And you see Huldah who's a prophetess, who actually speaks at a time when the book of the law is found by Josiah.

You see women all the time in the Bible as heroes. You see entire books of the Bible who are named after women. You have the book of Ruth you have the book of Esther. And you have these surprising details about women who are actually, not only just paragons of virtue, but actually are brave, upstanding people. Even non-Hebrews. So, example, this is one I love to bring up because people don't always catch this. You read the book of Esther and it opens up with a woman by the name of Vashti. Vashti is a Persian queen, she's beautiful beyond compare, and the king wants to show her off. So, he's got his banquet going on and she's got her banquet going on, and the king says, Bring her into the area here...

**Frank:**

Alright, hold that thought, Abdu. We're gonna come back because we're running up against a hard 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. My guest is Abdu Murray. His brand new book is More

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Than a White Man's Religion: Why the Gospel Has Never Been Merely White, Male-Centered, or Just Another Religion. We'll have a lot more right after the break. Don't go anywhere. Back in two minutes.

If you've always wanted to teach your young person the truth about Christianity, how to actually defend the faith, we've got a 6-8 grade online course that begins September 26. If you're listening to this after September 26, you still have about a week after to join. Go to [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org), click on Online Courses, and you'll see it there. You'll also see the Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist course because I'll be teaching that to high school and adults. Shanda Fulbright will be teaching the Let's Get Real course to 6-8 graders. It's an online course, great for homeschoolers, great for kids if you just want to teach them the truth, even outside of their schooling. It's going to be a fun course and it's going to cover a lot of great information. So, check it out.

You also might see a course there by the great New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg, called The Historicity of the New Testament Documents. That's coming up soon as well. So, we've got some great online courses that you can avail yourselves of. Check those out at [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org), click on online courses and you'll see all those there.

My guest today is Abdu Murray. Abdu, just before the break, we were talking about the book of Esther. Why don't you pick it up and we'll continue with that. Go ahead.

**Abdu:**

Sure, absolutely. Well, I was pointing out that there's this sort of surprising character, historical figure, in the book of Esther, that we often gloss over, and it's Vashti, who is the non-Jewish Queen at the time. And you know, Esther replaces her in the story, but in the beginning of the story of the book of Esther, Vashti is this beautiful woman that the king wants to parade around like his little trophy, and she refuses. She actually refuses the King. That is bold and daring, because she could lose her life for such a thing. And instead of being paraded around like an object to be desired, she actually has the dignity, the bravery, and the wherewithal to actually refuse that.

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Now, this is why this is important. Not only is this a good example of some bravery and some integrity from a woman who is a non-Israelite, by the way, a non-Jew, but the point is that this also has the dual characteristic of providing historical credibility to the actual account. Because a Jew writing this story, who is making up a legend or making up some kind of a story about a woman named Esther and Mordecai, her cousin, would have no reason to make a Persian queen the hero of the beginning of the story, and in fact, parallel Esther's own bravery, Esther's own integrity. In other words, there are two heroines in the story. One is from the Jewish background, and one is not.

And so, with one stone, the Bible kills three birds. It goes into the dignity of women with the story of Vashti. It talks about the non-Hebrew woman, so it breaches the ethnicity and the race barrier in saying that women who aren't Jews can be heroes in the Bible. And it gives you historical credibility because if you were making up a story, you wouldn't use Vashti as a vehicle to make up that story, because the whole point is the rescue of the Jews from the hands of the Persians. Why would you make a Persian a heroine at all? So, you have three things in this one story. It's a beautiful way in which the Bible, I think, proves itself to be a book beyond any other book. And so, this misperception of it being a white male religion, even in this one little nugget of fact, and there's many nuggets I go into the book, is just one thing that gives the lie to this idea that the Bible is anti-women and it's specific in terms of ethnic favor.

**Frank:**

Why did so many women become Christians early on in Christianity in the first century? What was the status of women at the time? What could a man do to a woman if he wanted to in the Roman world? And what was unique about Christianity, particularly the sexual ethic of Christianity, that was revolutionary at the time, and it would attract women?

**Abdu:**

Oh, and you're pointing out something that Michael Bird himself points out. We talked about how the Romans used to make fun of Christianity as a religion for women and children. And they made fun of it that way because women were leaving Roman paganism and flocking to the Christian faith, because of the person and the attractiveness of Jesus and the church that was built upon that in a way that actually would give women an equal status with men and sort of bring them out of the muck of what was, in fact, a terrible system. Women were temple

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prostitutes, or they would be sold into prostitution willy nilly. There'd be slavery for women all the time. Men could easily divorce their women without any kind of real repercussions, but women had to make a case before they could divorce a man and they would be left often times financially destitute.

What happened in the Christian church was that women were actually, not only given leadership positions and positions of respect and honor in the religious community, but they were actually given financial support and widows were taking care of whether they were part of the Christian faith or outside of the Christian faith. And so, they were being attracted to it, because of the way in which Christians wanted to emulate what Jesus did. And he did it over and over again. He would take the vulnerable, and those who were subject to the those in power, and he would empower them and say, This message is for you, and by the way, you can propagate it and you can do for the kingdom what traditionally you've been told only men could do. So, women were leaving paganism.

In fact, I would tell you that even some of the Jewish tradition at the time, the early rabbis spoke of women in very derogatory terms. Some would say it would be better to bury the law in the ground than to teach a woman the law, or it is more dangerous to walk in front of a hungry lion than to walk behind a woman. These are the kinds of things even the contemporary rabbis of Jesus's time would speak of women. Yet, Jesus was the one who would have Mary and Martha talking to them at their house and say that Martha was busy in the kitchen, taking the place a woman would have in those times. He's saying, Martha, you're worried about so many things, but Mary has chosen an education. She has chosen what's better, and it will not be taken from her, not even by you. Come out of the place you've been so used to, this sort of stuck in the kitchen kind of a place, and come and sit at a Rabbi's feet, which was considered a position of honor.

So, in a time, when even the rabbis wouldn't teach a woman the law, or teach a woman the ways of God, Jesus went out of his way to tell women, You have a place here at the table as well. So, it's no wonder that the Romans, with their disdain for women, would often make fun of Christianity as a religion for women and children, because women did not see that Jesus disdained them rather, they saw that women [unintelligible] safe to their dignity, because of the person of Jesus and the church that tried to emulate him.

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**Frank:**

We're talking to Abdu Murray, by the way. His new book is called *More Than a White Man's Religion: Why the Gospel Has Never Been Merely White, Male-Centered, or Just Another Religion*. The sexual ethic in the first century, men could sleep with whoever they wanted to, but of course, women couldn't. How are Paul's teachings and Jesus's teachings revolutionary on this?

**Abdu:**

Well, in a number of ways. One is that when he taught, essentially, that men had to limit their options sexually, is that the promiscuity among men would be curtailed. And he would curtail that because, for example, a leader of the church had to be the husband of but one wife, as but an example. That didn't just have to do with curbing your appetite as a male, but it actually respects women, as well, because he doesn't treat them as commodities. Sex is not commodified; it's actually meant to be sacred. When he speaks about marriage itself as being the binding of one man and one woman for this cause and he reminds them that you leave your father and your mother, and you cleave to your wife and the two shall become one flesh. This revolutionizes, especially in the in the Hellenistic areas, the predominantly Roman areas of the Greek mindset, is that sex is not meant to be common. It's actually meant to be sacred, which means that you share it sacredly with one other person, which also of course means that women have an equal place at the table.

It's interesting, Frank, because I remember I was at a public forum at the University of Miami, and a Muslim woman from Somalia, I believe, said that she really found Jesus to be very attractive. And she said, Could I be a Muslim and follow Jesus at the same time? What a question, right? And she said, The reason why I say that is because in Islam men are allowed four wives and she's, of course, a woman, so she's allowed only one husband. She said, but I love the way the Bible says, Men love your wives as Jesus loves the church. I said, Ah, but you're missing one other aspect to it. Paul says, Men, love your wives as Jesus loved the church and gave his life. So, there is a mutual submission in the sense that a man's life is supposed to be offered in self-sacrifice to the benefit and the beneficence of his wife. And while she has to respect her husband, he has to love his wife in a mutual submission there.

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And you know, she found that to be so attractive in the gospel message. And so, this is not only revolutionary for first century Christianity in the Roman context, but think about it 600 years later, in a hyper-religious context, when another religion comes to the fore, that same idea that somehow there's an imbalance between men and women, the gospel still speaks over those 600 years. And then 1400 years after that, speaks to this Somali woman I happened to have the blessing of speaking in front of at the University of Miami, where she asked this question about the attractiveness of the gospel message and the attractiveness of the life of Jesus. And specifically, as someone from a Muslim background, who rejects the authenticity of what Paul has to say as an apostle, she's actually quoting Paul as what makes Christianity attractive to her. That's the power of the gospel.

**Frank:**

And Jesus said marriage was between a man and a woman, and, of course, affirmed that. But it's interesting, when you look at modern feminism, modern feminism wants women to act more like men. In other words, be less monogamous, be like a man, go out there and play the field. Whereas ancient Christianity, Biblical Christianity, wants men to behave more like women, actually be monogamous, stay with just one person. And if you think about that, what's better for the woman? That she goes out and plays the field or that her husband is urged to actually love her and sacrifice himself for her? Obviously, the Christian way is the right way.

Not only that, for society, if you don't have monogamy, you're going to blow the society up, which is what we're doing now in our society. We don't have monogamy, we have let's play the field. And of course, children are hurt the most, society is hurt. And yet, Christianity is the one world religion that says, Husbands, you gotta love your wives to the point of self-sacrifice. That's anything but anti-woman. Now, we're not going to complete this on this side of the break, Abdu, but I want to start it. Let's just talk a little bit about the Paul passage about, women remain silent. What is that about? Is that cultural or is that something for today? What's that about?

**Abdu:**

Well, we can go into some detail about it too, is that there's an interesting way that you can look at the translation of what he's talking about. I think the first thing we have to actually ask ourselves is, in the broader context, you see this in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35, where it seems to

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suggest that women should remain silent. But in the same exact book of the Bible, just a few chapters earlier, Paul is exhorting women who are prophesying and doing other things, and praying, and doing all these things that are speaking roles in the church. So, he can't be contradicting himself by saying remain totally silent. There's got to be more behind that.

**Frank:**

There is and we're going to cover it right 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. My guest is Abdu Murray. His brand new book is More Than a White Man's Religion: Why the Gospel Has Never Been Merely White, Male-Centered, or Just Another Religion. You're not gonna want to miss the rest of this, so don't go anywhere. We are back in only two minutes.

I don't know about you friends, but I'm a little bit tired of dealing with people on the internet. There's a lot of people out there that just want to hurl insults. They don't really want to have a reasonable and team discussion about the issues. That's why we started the CrossExamined Community. It's a behind a very low paywall, but we have to have a paywall to keep the trolls out, and to prevent your employer, or some future employer, from seeking you out on social media to see what you really believe. We don't want you to get doxed, we don't want you to get outed, we want you to have a place where you can interact with people without fear of any of that. And it's the new CrossExamined Community.

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We're talking to my friend Abdu Murray. And Abdu, you were with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries for quite a while. You were friend of Ravi and I want to talk about that a little bit. But I want to complete our discussion on Paul saying, women remained silent. Before the break you

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said well, elsewhere in the same book, 1 Corinthians, Paul was also telling women not to remain silent in the church. So, what might that passage mean about Paul saying remain silent?

**Abdu:**

Yeah, absolutely. I think that it's important for us to realize that Paul cannot be condemning what he just got done condoning, which is that women can, in fact, speak in some kind of a way. So, something more has to be going on here. So, if you read the entire corpus, the first thing I think is the is the broader picture of Paul's attitude towards women, and then going down to the granular level really quickly, in what is going on in these verses.

The first thing is that you see, not only does Paul exhort women to prophesy and pray out loud in churches, but the second thing is that you see the way Paul actually lists women by name multiple times throughout his letters as those who are huge helps and propagators of the gospel. Teachers of men, by the way, in the way they should go. Apollos is a good example of someone who actually learns from Priscilla and Aquila, who [unintelligible] actually learn from women how to live the Christian life. And in fact, when Paul lists Priscilla and Aquila, and he lists them in that order, that's actually an important thing, because normally when you list a woman and a man together, you'd list a man first and then the woman. But Paul actually deliberately lists Priscilla first and that's at least a hint of what he thinks about the contribution women have to the church.

So, let's get into the verse then. 1 Corinthians 14:33b- 35. It says, "...as in all the congregations of the Lord's people. 34 Women[a] should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says." Now, what this could be saying is a couple of things. One is that, obviously, he's not saying be silent all the time, because he just got done saying you can say a bunch of stuff. But what is actually happening here is a couple of things. First, there was, at that particular time in those particular churches, there was a movement, and there were women who were actually involved in a religious movement that sought, I wouldn't say it was a heresy necessarily, but it was something that was a problem where women were taught certain things about speaking roles and authority, but also issues about childbearing, and all these things which were creeping into the church.

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Kathy Keller points this out. I quote her in the book as someone who's pointing out there are issues here that were plaguing the Corinthian church, and other churches in the area, that had to be dealt with in the Christian church's infancy, in its nascency, when it was just being birthed. Now, also, these verses - this one, and also the one in First Timothy 2 - aren't really verses about silencing women so much as they're about authority. And the reality was the nascent early church needed clergy that was trained. Trained clergy needed to lead the people so that they wouldn't fall into these doctrinal errors that were creeping in. And it just so happened to be the fact that men were the ones who were given the educational; opportunities, and so, they were the ones who happened to have that level of educational authority. And so, what Paul is actually talking about is not usurping authority when you don't actually have the training yet to do so. And it's going to be a dangerous thing.

Now, someone might say, Well, hold on a second. Paul says, it's not limited to this Corinthian church. He says, as in all the churches of the saints the women should keep silent. Well, we didn't have the chapter and verse conventions we have now, where you have first Corinthians 14:33b. You didn't have that in Paul's day. What you had is just it all ran together. And there are some very reliable translational philosophies that look at this and say, as in all the churches, doesn't have to be linked to that verse, it could be linked to the verse ahead of that. So, it could read instead of saying, as in all the churches of the saints women should remain silent, it could say this - this is the verse right before that - for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints, period, and then the next verse starts.

So, you could have it be that way. Could it be the other way? Sure. Either one is plausible, but it could easily be that as in all the churches doesn't apply to all the churches, it could apply to this particular church. Sorry, the edict about women in not speaking could apply to that particular church at that particular time. But there were some cultural things going on that we have to be aware of. And I think it was the issue of women taking an opportunity to usurp authority when they hadn't had the proper training yet. But also, there were some religious and cultic practices that were being guarded against at this particular time. So, one thing we can't think is that Paul is not silencing women because he exhorts them to actually speak.

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**Frank:**

So, as you mentioned earlier, there were some Jewish teachings that women should not be educated, that the law should be buried before a woman is educated. And yet, Paul seems to be saying here, well, since women aren't educated, at least not to this point, but the men are, that the men ought to be the leaders and the men ought to be the ones having authority. Is that basically what you're saying here that Paul is communicating?

**Abdu:**

Yeah, I think that's a very, very plausible explanation for what's happening here and a way to interpret this is exactly that. It happens to be the exigencies of the circumstances. Because you got to remember something, the Bible is not just timeless, but it's also timely. It not only applies to today, but it has to apply to the situation at the time. And at the time, when you have an early church - and we can even take this principle and apply it to today - is that people who don't have the proper training, or don't have the proper qualifications, can't take authority. And frankly, that happens a little too often nowadays, regardless of what sex they happen to be. And so, while this specifically applies to the early church, because women didn't happen to have the educational background to have that authority, we could also apply it to today and say that when anyone doesn't have the proper educational background to lead a congregation, or the proper training or credentials, we ought to be very wary about whether or not they should actually be in leadership as well. So, the principle applies universally, but the specifics of this passage, I think, apply culturally and at the particular time.

**Frank:**

Abdu, how are people who criticize Christianity, say, for being anti-woman, even though as you're explaining, it's not, how are people actually using the standard of Christianity that elevates women to say that somehow Christianity degrades women? It seems to me they're stealing the standard from Christianity in order to somehow beat Christianity over the head. Where do they get their standards to say that it's wrong to treat women a certain way?

**Abdu:**

Yeah, absolutely. It's funny because, in one of the chapters of the book I talk about a conversation I had on a race issue. Is the Bible really the slaver's religion? And we started off because a very bright, erudite, African American young man and I were talking - just a very

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insightful guy. But he had left the faith altogether, because he thought Christianity was the slaver's religion of the white male. And we started on this idea of, okay, you have a very strong sense of justice and I appreciate that. And we need more people who have that strong sense of justice, a strong sense of fairness, and morality, and equality. But if there is no God, if the Christian message even beyond just if there's no God, but if the Christian message actually doesn't have the influence it has, where do we get this standard of equality from? And it certainly doesn't seem to come from human opinion, because if you look at human history, we're terrible at this.

I mean, it wasn't so long ago, in the grand scheme of things, that women did not have the right to vote in the United States, for heaven's sake. And I think it was a Christian message, or at least a society informed by a Christian message, that actually got suffrage to be something that was a reality for women. The abolition of slavery happened. Yes, there were secular people who were involved in the movement, but the primary movers of the movement were those who believe in the fundamental equality of all people made in God's image. And they were basing that on the biblical passages, and actually the work of Christ, which said that all people, all people across all ethnicities and both genders are not only equal in terms of their sin and separation from God but are also equal in terms of the image they bear. That they bear God's image, and Christ died for all of them.

**Frank:**

Yeah, you don't get that from Darwinism.

**Abdu:**

You certainly don't.

**Frank:**

You get the opposite from Darwinism.

**Abdu:**

You do. You do. Absolutely. You get this idea of the more powerful, the stronger, the faster, the better adapted, will out compete against the weaker. In fact, Darwin himself pointed out that this was something... I don't know if it bothered him so much, but it was a fact of his theory

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that there is going to be a sense in which the weaker amongst a race, even within the human race, were going to be subjugated by the stronger, the faster, the more intelligent, the more adapted. So, equality is a myth. And Michael Ruse points this out. And you know, well, very well. Michael Ruse points out that morality is an illusion foisted upon us by our genes to get us to become social cooperators. It's not a real thing. So, the very standard that we use to say Christianity is sexist or racist, is actually a standard that, not only can God give, but is so lived out and concretely given to us in the passages of the Bible. That's why I often say that the Bible, properly understood and properly lived out, is the cure for the very things it's often blamed for.

**Frank:**

It's interesting that the Origin of Species, written by Charles Darwin - the full title is On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life - in other words, Darwinism, by Charles Darwin's own admission, was a race racist way of looking at humanity. He thought that certain races, particularly the Caucasian race, was at a higher level than the lower races, and that's what the Origin of Species put forth. And of course, if there is no God, there's no way to say he's right or wrong. It's just his opinion. And yet, the people that come and try and criticize Christianity for what they perceive to be immoral behavior, or immoral doctrine, are using the very standard that Christianity puts out to say that that's wrong. So, they're misunderstanding the Bible and they're trying to say the Bible is wrong by using the standard Christianity affords them.

And we'll talk more right after the break. We'll talk a little bit about the Ravi Zacharias situation with my friend, Abdu Murray, right after the break. His brand new book is More Than a White Man's Religion: Why the Gospel Has Never Been Merely White, Male-Centered, or Just Another Religion. It's a great book. You're gonna want to get it. And we'll talk more in just two minutes, so 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 never going to hear this on NPR. We're talking to my friend, Abdu Murray, about issues like women in the church. We're about to talk a little bit about slavery and racism, so you don't want to go anywhere. But I do want to talk a little bit about, in Abdu's book, Abdu, you wrote the brand new book, More Than a White Man's Religion, which comes out on September 27, you worked for many years at Ravi

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Zacharias's ministry, RZIM. And we all know the terrible behavior that he was accused of and did. And you have in the preface of this brand new book you've just written, kind of a response to what had happened. What do you basically say in the preface? Obviously, you can't go through the entire thing. But what's your general point in the preface?

**Abdu:**

Sure. And thanks for asking, Frank. You know, it's interesting, I wrote this book in sections, and there's a section on race, and there's a section on sexism and Jesus in the Bible and women. And I wrote that section just as the report about Ravi's behavior had come out. And I had just finished it and we were going through all of that while I was writing and researching this book. And it really, I wouldn't say fundamentally changed my views, but it's sharpened my focus on just how incomparable Jesus actually is when you think about his notoriety, think about his power, you think about the way he risked things, and the way he treated the vulnerable so well. Here's the most powerful being. The most powerful human is the one who is also has a divine nature. So, he has the greatest amount of power that could possibly be, and yet, he makes himself incredibly vulnerable. And the way he treated women, over and over again, with such a dignity and such a respect, was amazing. So, by comparison, he just shined so much brighter, because of what we were all experiencing, what we all went through. And there's plenty of people who are watching and listening who were hurt by this. You didn't have to work for the ministry to feel hurt by what had happened.

But one other thing, and I just want to be brief about this, but what's really important is, you know, I say this in the preface. I'm a blemished person writing for blemished people. Oftentimes, you can think that someone who writes a book on a particular topic must be an expert and must live so consistently with what they've written, when the reality is, every author has a period of self-reflection. Whenever they write something, they go through something that gives them that ability to have to self-reflect. And it's a good thing in one sense, but it's a tragic thing because you have to go through it.

And in this particular passage of my life, as I'm writing this book about the way Jesus valued women so purely, in the midst of heinous behavior by someone I greatly admired, I happened to have the privilege, my wife and I, of walking alongside a woman, her name is Tara, she was my assistant at the time - and we're still great friends - who was the victim of terrible abuse

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from an early age and even sex trafficked. And she worked for RZIM at the same time I did and worked for me after and before that. And she's graciously allowed me to share her story in the book numerous places, including in the preface. You walk with someone like that, and you're sensitive to the issues that go through, and the ups and the downs, and the traumas and the travails.

But then something happens and someone you admire and love is accused of something, and you have a hard time believing it. And you may overlook things, not because you want to but because it just happens based on your sort of bias towards their integrity. But you've walked with someone who's gone through trauma who also trusted people. And my point is that we do these things inconsistently. Even those of us who have walked with someone and have been a support to them for years, we have to remain ever vigilant that this kind of thing can lurk around any corner, that keep people can be treated unequally, even when we say how equal we believe them to be. And that's why we have to look over and over again to the example of Christ, who not only said he values all people as equal, but who proved he values them as equal in the three years of his public ministry and culminating in the death on the cross for the sake of all people. The one who gave women the primary privilege of seeing His resurrected body first. What a thing to behold. And so, I've learned so much about this, and much more could be said, but this was an important part of the journey for me, is experiencing what I experienced writing about what I was writing about at the time.

**Frank:**

You know, when the report came out, I did a podcast on it. I think it was February. It's in the archives if you want to go back and look. If it's not, you can get it off our app, the CrossExamined app. And one point that I think comes out of this is the fact that none of what Ravi did would be wrong unless God existed. See, people always forget that. They think, Oh, here's another Christian who's fallen. Yeah, well, he has fallen. He committed heinous acts. Yet none of that would be wrong unless, unless God existed. So, I think too often we put people on a pedestal, and we think they are Christianity. And that's a big problem.

I love what historian John Dixon says about this. He says, When somebody plays Bach poorly, who do you blame? Right? You don't blame Bach; you blame the player. And all of us play Jesus not as well as we should. Some really go off the deep end. We ought not allow people to say,

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Well, Christianity is false now, because this supposed great Christian leader has fallen. No. We have to always keep our eyes on Jesus. Christianity is Jesus. It's not based on the immoral behavior of some Christians, it's based on the truth of Jesus, the beauty of Jesus. Just because I'm not true and beautiful doesn't mean Jesus isn't true and beautiful. So, we always need to keep that in mind.

Now, we're running out of time here, but I do want to talk about one other issue, even if we only get to it briefly. And you cover this much more in the book, *More Than a White Man's Religion*, and that is the issue of slavery. There do seem to be scriptures that support slavery. I mean, slaves obey your masters. That's one of them. How do you respond to something like that?

**Abdu:**

Yeah. So quickly, as you look at the Old Testament and the New Testament, because it's actually raised them both in different contexts. In the Old Testament, when you look at the laws carefully, what you're seeing is that the laws are not actually regulating chattel slavery based on race. We often conflate this idea, because when we think of slavery, we think of the transatlantic slave trade, or we think of the antebellum south. That's not what's happening here. It's actually regulating voluntary servitude, people who voluntarily went into servitude, to pay off debts. And when you look at the way in which the Bible actually regulates this practice, the edicts are written in a way that actually is meant to abolish the actual circumstances that would lead to indentured servitude.

In other words, when someone is an indentured servant, for example, based on being an Israelite, or based on being a non-Israelite, they pay off their debt and then they're to go free. And by the way, even if they don't pay off their debt, every seven years they are to be set free, even if they've been in slavery for just five minutes. In Jubilee, they're always set free after 50 years. But in the seven years, if you don't pay off your debts in seven years, you're set free from your obligations. You can choose to remain with your master if you want to.

But here's an important distinction. The important distinction is that it's not based on race in any way, shape, or form. And it's not based on chattel. In other words, you don't become someone's property. Words like acquire in the Bible should be more properly understood. And

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Paul Copan and Robertson McQuilkin talk about this, is that acquire in the Bible, when it comes to servants, means more like sports. When the Chicago Bulls acquired Dennis Rodman from the San Antonio Spurs, that kind of a thing. It's not really a property issue. It's just acquired rights to their service as opposed to them as property. But what's interesting is that when a servant was set free of his debts, the adhon, or master, was required to actually give of his property, whether it was cattle, or land, or money, so that the servant would never fall back into debt into servitude again. In other words, the Bible was meant to abolish this practice, slowly but surely, in a way that actually does not bring people back to that form of slavery.

Now you look at Paul, you know, slaves obey your masters, or were you a slave when you were called, you know, remain as such, and that seems to be a problem. But the reality is, Paul actually speaks against this when he says, Were you a slave when you were called, don't let it bother you, but if possible, gain your freedom. And then he says, Don't become a slave to anyone. Paul actually condemned slave trading in First Timothy. So, there's numerous places where Paul is actually condemning chattel slavery as the Romans regulated it. But there were also bondservant forms of slavery in Paul's time, as well.

But here's the important thing. People say that Paul and the New Testament don't actually outright condemn slavery. Well, I just gave you some passages where they actually do condemn slavery, where Paul does condemn slavery. But let's give you an example. Were Paul to actually give a treatise on the abolition of slavery, an upstart religion, in a relatively sort of obscure province of the Roman Empire decides it's going to lead the revolt against this practice. Would that have anything of a future beyond simply the Romans coming and stamping it out or was Paul actually more interested in changing hearts and minds so that people wouldn't want to either become slaves or own slaves?

I think of the book of Philemon. Why does this letter where Paul mediates a dispute between two Christians, why does this swell the pages of Scripture? The reason is because Paul is actually talking about a runaway slave, Onesimus, being forgiven of his debt, and Paul himself says, Whatever debt is to him, charge to me. In other words, Christians are supposed to act like we free people from their bondage. And then later on, you see Paul writing to a Christian community and saying, By the way Onesimus, this freed slave, he's returning to you as one of

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you. In other words, slavery has no hold on the dignity of a human being, especially when they're freed from it.

**Frank:**

Now, there's much more in the book, *More Than a White Man's Religion: Why the Gospel Has Never Been Merely White, Male-Centered, or Just Another Religion*, but we're out of time.

Abdu, tell people where they can learn more about you and what you're doing. What's your website and where are you speaking and that kind of thing?

**Abdu:**

Absolutely. Thanks, Frank. If you go to [EmbraceTheTruth.org](http://EmbraceTheTruth.org) you'll learn more about us there. And if you go to [MoreThanAWhiteMansReligion.com](http://MoreThanAWhiteMansReligion.com) you'll learn more about the book.

**Frank:**

Excellent. Thanks for being on the show. I do wish we had more time, but people need to get the book. There are so many great insights in there. So, please do that, friends. Get the book also go to [EmbraceTheTruth.org](http://EmbraceTheTruth.org). Lord willing, I'll be here with you next week. But don't forget about the online courses, *Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* and *Let's Get Real*, the new course for the middle schoolers. Check them out. See you here next week. God bless.

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