

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

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Is it Wrong to Doubt? with Travis Dickinson

(December 2, 2022)

Ladies and gentlemen, do you ever have any doubts about Christianity? Are you certain that Christianity is true? By the way, do you have to be 100% certain in order to be a Christian? And by the way, if there is a God, why isn't he more obvious? Aren't people just out there crying, God, where are you? If you do exist, show yourself to me. And then the heavens appear to be silent. I mean God could just show up and make sure that everyone knows he exists. Why doesn't he do that?

Well, today we're going to talk about it with Dr. Travis Dickinson, as we discuss his brand new book *Wandering Toward God: Finding Faith Amid Doubts and Big Questions*. Travis has his PhD from the University of Iowa, he teaches philosophy at Dallas Baptist University, and the coolest thing about him is he's from New Jersey. How're you doing, Travis?

Travis:

I'm doing well. Thanks for having me on.

Frank:

Oh, absolutely. Right now, we are in Denver, Colorado at the Evangelical Theological Society meeting and it's great to travel here and see people in person. Travis, this book *Wandering Toward God*, why'd you write it? Do you have any doubts? [laughing]

Travis:

Well, I do and I certainly have along the way. And yeah, it really comes out of my own journey. I think part of me thinks that I see kids, and people in my life, and others who are just being beat up by doubts, and I don't like that and I wanted to help sort of help those guys out. But also, some people don't doubt enough, I think, and so I think it's worth approaching these issues and encouraging people to ask the big questions. That's really what I'm after. I'm not after anybody doubting. I think that doubt can be a really valuable experience but I don't want anybody to stay there. So, you know, there are voices out there that are encouraging the deconstruction

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and doubt as if that's the arrival place. And I want to say that doubt is not the destination, but it is a valuable experience. And so, just asking those questions, likely there'll be some intellectual tension as we go. And so, leaning into that really leads us to truth, leads us to knowledge.

Frank:

Now, how do you define doubt?

Travis:

So, there's a lot of manifestations of doubt and we can get sort of bogged down in trying to characterize all of it. So, what I do in the book is I try to get it down to what I call the core of doubt. And I think of doubt in its core, so it can manifest, I think, in emotions and sort of an emotional experience of doubt. But I really think at its core, it's a kind of intellectual tension. So, I'm kind of happy with that as a definition, but the way I put it in the book is to say that it's when one of our beliefs seems like it may be false. Just that experience. And so, that's why I say it's not a choice that we make, typically. If we could not doubt or doubt, most of us are going to choose the not doubt. But doubts sort of happen to us. We just sort of start to be challenged by somebody or some question or just wrestling in our own journey and one of our beliefs starts to seem like it might be false. We're in the place of doubt.

Frank:

Now, you and I grew up relatively close to one another. You were probably, I don't know, 20 miles from where I grew up in kind of central New Jersey near the shore. You grew up in Toms River, I grew up in Neptune. For me, I was brought up in the Catholic Church. That's just where so many people in New Jersey wind up due to what their parents were. How about you? What's your history?

Travis:

Yeah. So, I grew up in a ministry. I was a ministry kid and I always say like my whole life was just dominated by Christianity. So, I was living in a big property and everybody there was Christian, going to Christian school, going to church on Sunday. You know that whole package. It was Evangelical. And I love my heritage though I struggled with it. I haven't always loved it but I really have come to just cherish my background that way. But I just sort of made a lot of

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assumptions, too, about the truth of Christianity because my whole world was Christianity. I didn't even know there were non-Christians for a while, which is noteworthy in New Jersey.

Frank:

Exactly. Well, it was your great, great grandfather that started a ministry there many years ago. What was that?

Travis:

So, it's called America's Keswick and it's an addiction recovery center. When I was growing up was just for men to come. They would come in just brutalized by addiction, just skinny, and you know, just really in dark places. And as a kid I would just watch them be transformed by the gospel. Looking back, of course I didn't realize it at the time, but it was a really powerful apologetic for me to just watch the transformative experiences that they went through.

Frank:

And that recovery ministry is still going.

Travis:

Still going strong.

Frank:

Wow. Now, what were some of your initial doubts that caused you to doubt that Christianity was indeed true?

Travis:

Yeah. So, I went through, again, all of that sort of Christian setting. I did everything, you know, Sunday school, youth group, retreats, mission trips. I've been to about 40 countries doing international mission trips and all of that stuff. And it wasn't until I was sitting in a seminary classroom, like preparing for ministry myself, and as I recall it was kind of a religious studies course that I was taking at Talbot seminary, and it just felt like we were giving Christianity a pass. We were criticizing these other religions and giving them the what for - it was probably just me that was giving Christianity a pass in some ways but it really kind of threw me into this place to say, I've grown up with this. That's the reason why I realized that I wasn't embracing

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Christianity because I saw that it was true, I was embracing Christianity because it's what I grew up with.

Frank:

So, what were you or the people you were studying with giving Christianity a pass on that you thought you weren't giving other religions a pass o?

Travis:

Well, it's kind of that way in which we can look at other views and sort of have a mocking tone and just say, look how ridiculous this belief is that so and so believes. And we all chuckle and pat each other on the back? I think it was that sort of conversation that was coming up a little bit. Then, for whatever reason, I don't think that's the most hard hitting objection to Christianity, but I think what it revealed in my own journey is that I had not really criticized and scrutinized. I'd never really asked why I think Christianity is true.

Frank:

So, it was more kind of an attitude that people have like, how could the Mormons believe what they believe, or Muslims believe what they believe. Right?

Travis:

I think so. Right.

Frank:

Yeah. Or the atheists believe what they believe. I think we do this in politics, too, right.

Travis:

Oh, absolutely.

Frank:

How could the Democrats believe what they believe and some Democrats say how could the Republicans believe that? We just kind of have this dismissiveness and, wow, we know everything and you don't. Yeah, that can affect anybody, actually. So, was there any argument

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you thought that didn't work for Christianity? Were you doubting the existence of God or the resurrection of Jesus? Or what was it?

Travis:

No, at that time, it was just realizing that I didn't have good reasons to believe it was true.

Frank:

Oh, okay.

Travis:

And, you know, Talbot's a pretty great place to doubt your faith in some ways, because there's a lot of great folks around there that will walk you through it, though. I just had to lean in myself. I didn't have people that I necessarily reached out and talked to, but I just had to research it. And I think where I came out was to see that Christianity has always prized truth. It's always been, because it is true, you should believe. And I think First Corinthians 15, where Paul talks about that if the resurrection didn't happen, then our faith is in vain, which implies that we shouldn't believe it if we come to see that it's not true. Whereas, the other religions, especially the more Eastern sorts of religions, like truth doesn't even really come up. It's more what works for you, or does it provide a way of life that you enjoy or something to that effect.

Frank:

When we come back from the break, I'm gonna ask Travis about certainty, because I think a lot of people struggle with certainty. Are you 100% sure Christianity is true and is that really the mark we're aiming for? That it is 100%. Do you have to be 100% certain? Do you have that kind of knowledge? Are you 100% certain about almost anything is the question. So, we're going to cover that when we come back. We're talking to Travis Dickinson, and his brand new book is *Wandering Toward God: Finding Faith Amid Doubts and Big Questions*. We're coming to you from Denver, Colorado, where the Evangelical Theological Society is meeting. We're back in just two minutes, so don't go anywhere.

Welcome back 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 talking to Dr. Travis Dickinson, and his brand new book, *Wandering Toward God*, it has to do with doubts and

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certainty. And where is God in the midst of pain and suffering? And why isn't He more obvious? Questions like That. We're going to get to some of these questions as we move forward. Let's start with certainty, Travis. Where should we set the bar with regard to Christianity? Do we have to be 100% certain that Christianity is true to be a Christian?

Travis:

I hope not because I've got questions. And I would bet your audience has a lot of questions, as we all do. And so, if we have to have absolute 100% certainty then I think we're probably all in trouble, in a way.

Frank:

No matter what worldview you have.

Travis:

Right. Absolutely.

Frank:

Whether you're an atheist, you don't have all the answers either. Right.

Travis:

That's right.

Frank:

And is there a distinction between having a doubt and having a question? Because we're never gonna run out of questions. That's for sure.

Travis:

Right. I think so. Like I said, I want people to be asking the questions, so I don't necessarily want them to be doubting. I just think having some doubts as you go is very, very normal. And whenever I get the opportunity, I want to tell people that are out there that if they are in that place of doubt, they're very, very normal. And we haven't made our churches, oftentimes, a safe place for them to doubt their faith and that sort of thing. So, I want them to know they're

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very normal. But yeah, I do think there's a distinction, right. So, just asking questions may not create doubts, but to be unsure of what to say, then you don't have absolute certainty.

And so, I think when we tell our kids especially - I've got four kids, my oldest is 16. And, you know, if we tell our kids that you have to have absolute 100% certainty, and then they find themselves on a college campus somewhere or someplace where they're being challenged on their faith, and they realize they don't have absolute certainty, then the whole thing comes crashing down, like a house of cards. And so, what I say instead is, What we should aim at is just confidence, rational confidence, because confidence can handle our questions. Confidence can sort of tolerate a season and period of doubt. And that's, that's really what we can get to, this is where the philosopher comes out in me a little bit in the book, is that this idea of certainty, we just realized we can't have that for almost anything we believe, right? So long as there's the possibility of being wrong, you don't have certainty. So long as you have a question or two, you don't have certainty. And so, I think we just don't find ourselves there.

And I think it's reflected in well in First Corinthians 13:12, where Paul talks about seeing through a glass dimly. So, it's a really strong sort of epistemological statement, that our knowledge of the world is like a dim reflection. And so, of course, we're limited. That's the way the Bible sees us. So, how in the world are we ever going to get to a place where we're 100% absolutely certain, And who needs it anyway?

Frank:

We don't live our lives that way.

Travis:

That's right.

Frank:

You're driving down the street, you're coming over a hill, one lane each way, you're not absolutely certain there's not a car in the wrong lane coming toward you about to collide with you head on. But you drive as if, no, there's not going to be a car coming on the wrong side of the road colliding with me as I come over this crest. You just live life as if you have enough

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information to make decisions about life, even life and death decisions, even though you're not 100% completely certain.

Travis:

Absolutely.

Frank:

I'm not 100% completely certain this hotel in which we are sitting right now is not going to fall down in the next 10 seconds. It might, but we live life as if we have enough evidence to suggest it hasn't fallen down in the past 20 year. It probably is not going to do it.

Travis:

That's right. We can be confident it's not gonna fall down.

Frank:

Yeah. We're always going to have questions. We're never going to become infinite in our knowledge, so certainty isn't the standard. Dr. William Lane Craig, who we saw here at ETS, makes a distinction between showing your faith is true and knowing your faith is true. And of course, knowing, for him, doesn't mean absolute certainty, either. Do you buy into that distinction that there might be the witness of the Holy Spirit that can help you know it's true, even if you can't show that to other people?

Travis:

Yeah, so probably a more technical discussion than you want to have right now, but I am critical of that approach because he ends up embracing a sort of externalism and saying that we don't have to have necessarily evidence. So, I end up being an evidentialist about everything. So, I think we have to have good reasons and good evidence to be rational, and ultimately being rational, if our beliefs are true, is knowledge. So, I do think there's a distinction, of course, between knowing something's true and showing. There's a lot of evidence that I think we have that is private. So, many times our religious experience would be a private experience. It's not something that's going to be evidence. If I have a religious experience, it won't be evidence for you necessarily. Maybe my testimony about it, but sometimes it's hard to even put those things into words. And so, that would be figure into my knowing it's true, but it wouldn't necessarily

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be very helpful for me showing that it's true. So, I think the more formal arguments, and maybe scientific evidence, and some of those things are just more useful for showing people that Christianity is true.

Frank:

Now, in your experience, you're dealing with students all the time. What are the areas that cause them to doubt Christianity is true?

Travis:

That's a good question. Because I think it's, I think it's not always where a lot of us are putting our efforts. I think a lot of it is lifestyle, and sort of social issues, sexual ethics, I think those are the things they're struggling with. I think it's really difficult because it's become so normalized. I mean, our kids go to school, even in Fort Worth, Texas, they go to school with kids who are identifying as homosexual and transgender and things like that. It was just kind of a "normal" experience for them in a way. And so, then they have to be able to say that if they're going to have their Christian convictions that those people are doing things that are wrong. And I think that's really difficult for them to sort of get there and that's where I think a lot of kids are struggling.

Frank:

So, it's not so much evidence against the Christian faith, for many, it's that they don't like some of the implications of that.

Travis:

It really could be. Yeah, it really could be.

Frank:

I like to ask people, If Christianity were true, would you become a Christian? And many atheists will say no, because it's not a matter of the evidence, it's a matter of, I really don't like what Christianity is asking me to do or asking me to believe. In fact, how many of the objections that you come across, if they were true, would be fatal to Christianity?

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Travis:

Not many. That's why I say when you when you really weigh out, are there arguments that might be plausible? Yeah. But it's really That cumulative force of the case for Christianity that I think that's where we have to live. And so often, we just kind of get tunnel vision on one argument and one response to it but it's the cumulative force. So, I do think that there are some that would be devastating. Something like the problem of evil, that could be devastating, for sure.

Frank:

Is it devastating to the truth of Christianity, or the plausibility for a person to think Christianity is true? Because does Christianity say there won't be evil? Does Christianity promise, there won't be evil? It seems to me that it is the answer to the problem of evil.

Travis:

Right, right. No, I think that too but I guess maybe a little more careful way to say is an argument from evil, if that ends up being a sound argument, then the conclusion is that God doesn't exist. So, of course, that's devastating, that's fatal to a Christian view.

Frank:

Well, you have a chapter on suffering and evil. Does that argument hold water to say that if evil exists, God can't exist?

Travis:

I think that's way too strong and so often called the logical problem of evil. And most atheists today will recognize that that's just too strong. So, it typically is put that there is this category of evil that we call gratuitous evil, or senseless evil, evil for which God couldn't somehow have a justifying reason for allowing. And if that category of evil exists - and you might think of just like the really, really awful stuff that we see on the evening news or wherever. But again, so it's put in [unintelligible] called the evidential argument from evil. And I do think there are really good responses to it. And I think where I would come out is to say that to claim that God couldn't have a reason... Now, I'm going to recognize that I don't know, and if somebody comes to me and says, look at all these things that have happened, my first thing I'm going to say to them is, I don't know why. But it doesn't follow from not knowing why that there isn't a why. And so, I

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think there is good reason to believe that God has justifying reasons for the even the most heinous of evil actions and events in our world.

Frank:

How can an atheist even complain about evil if there is no standard of good, which is what we mean by God's nature?

Travis:

Yeah, it kind of just depends if they do hold to a standard of good. So, I think that's a big problem for the naturalist that's going to rule out all sorts of things that are non-natural. And so, if morality, a moral standard is non-natural, then they've got a big problem on their hands for the moral sorts of questions. But there are atheists that are sort of Platonists or some view like that that would hold to a moral standard. And for them, I think they can raise that sort of objection.

Frank:

Yeah, if Platonism is plausible.

Travis:

Yeah. It's not.

Frank:

Why would it be plausible? I mean, as Craig has put it, I think he's right about this. If there are, say, these floating virtues up there such as love, why would that make me obligated to obey it rather than hate? If this is not a personal command from a personal righteous being who has created us and has authority over us, why are any of us under any obligation to align our lives to these platonic floating virtues, if there could be such a thing?

Travis:

Yeah. If there are. And that's the big pill that one has to swallow. But honestly, if I was an atheist, that's probably the direction I would go because I don't think it's plausible at all to think that there's no such thing as moral facts. But when I think about that view, to me, it's just ad hoc, we're just helping ourselves to moral standards. Now you can do it. And so, that it's not

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quite so simple to just say, Hey, if you're an atheist, you can't believe in morality. That's too simple. But you just have to help yourself to it and posit it, but I think that's problematic.

Frank:

Well, they can certainly believe in morality, and of course, many of them do. They've just go to justify it without reference to an external standard. A lot more with Dr. Travis Dickinson and his book *Wandering Toward God: Finding Faith Amid Doubts and Big Questions*. When we come back, we're going to talk a little bit about the hiddenness of God, why if God exists and he all wants us to be saved, doesn't he just show up explicitly and say, here I am, believe in me. We're back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

As we're entering this Christmas season, there is a lot to be thankful for, a lot to be grateful for. We do live in a great country, despite some of the things that are going on. And we live in a country that at least has freedom, freedom of religion. We have to work to keep that. And I want to thank you for all you've done for us this past year. You know, we're 100% donor supported. When we go to a college campus, we don't charge students a dime, because you are providing the resources for us to go there. And we have a group of donors that have come together this year, and they've pulled their resources to give us a \$100,000 Matching Gift, which means any donations you give between now and the end of 2022 will be matched 100%. In other words, doubled. So, it's a great way to double your impact through us. Thank you for doing that.

And I want to point out that all of the donations you give to [CrossExamined.org](https://www.CrossExamined.org) go 100% toward ministry and 0% toward buildings. We are completely virtual. You don't come to us, we come to you. We go where the young people are and we try to provide them evidence, as you know. And you can see all of this streamed on our YouTube channel. Every event we do on a college campus is streamed on our YouTube channel, on our Facebook page, on our Instagram page, our website, and on other platforms that we have. So, you can see it and we can reach 1000s more beyond those who are just in the room.

Alright, back to my friend Travis Dickinson, to discuss his brand new book *Wandering Toward God: Finding Faith Amid Doubts and Big Questions*. And Travis, let's talk a little bit about the hiddenness of God. That is a perennial question. In fact, I think when atheists bring up

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arguments against God, typically that's one of the big two. The other big one is evil, which we just mentioned. But why isn't God more obvious? You have a chapter in here about this. Why isn't he?

Travis:

Yeah, well, I think what we don't often ask is, What would happen if he was more obvious? Could he be more obvious? Absolutely. And we should probably be a little terrified about it.

Frank:

Well, if the scriptures are true, he has been more obvious at certain time and in certain places, right.

Travis:

But also, the Bible says that his full obviousness is lethal, so we don't want that. Like, it could be bad if he was more obvious, or at least bad in our experience. But I think that's really a way to get at this subject, is to ask, What would happen if God was more obvious? Would it create more belief? Maybe. I think that's probably right. But is that really what God is after? Is God really just after people believing intellectually that he exists? And I think the answer in scripture is clearly no. I always think a really clear picture of this, and what I'm trying to get at, is the way in which people were quick to follow Jesus, right. They love seeing the miracles, they love seeing the healings. It's like, let's go, this is awesome. And the minute he starts talking about discipleship, it's like, where did they all go? Right.

And so, if God is after, not mere believers, or people that are just wanting to see a show - which I think a lot of the folks in the first century there with Jesus were just after the show, like they just that's all they were kind of in it for - what is he after then? Well, he's after faith. And he's after discipleship. He wants followers, genuine followers, that will commit their lives to making Jesus Lord of their lives. That's not accomplished well by fantastic displays, I think. I think that's just what we see in Scripture. It was really striking for me looking at the growth of the church in Scripture when I was wrestling with this issue. You don't see growth until Acts really. It's sort of like you get all the miracles, and there are some miracles in Acts 2, but those don't typically cause the church to grow. It was the preaching of the word. It was calling people to conviction and that's where you have 1000s of people in single moments and single events coming to

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Christ and becoming followers. And so, if God was more obvious, it might create more believers, but it wouldn't necessarily create more followers.

Frank:

I always think of the Exodus when that question comes up, because how many times did the people coming out of Egypt see all these fantastic displays?

Travis:

If anybody should have faith, they should have.

Frank:

And then Moses spends a couple of extra nights on the mountain and suddenly they're worshipping the golden calf as if they didn't see anything? Are we that fickle?

Travis:

We are that fickle. I know my heart is that fickle at times. Again, what really causes life change, is not being wowed by some show. It just really isn't. Now that can be helpful and you see some fantastic displays, you know, something like the road to Damascus experience with Paul. But that was like Paul was just ready to go. He thought he was following God by persecuting Christians, and then having this experience of Jesus there, his eyes are blind, all this sort of supernatural experience, flips him 180 degrees, And he was just ready to go. And many people give their testimony, and there's some sort of crazy experience they had that God really showed up, but those are the exception. It has to be for a heart that's ready to go, ready to follow.

Frank:

It's a good point you make that Paul thought he was following God persecuting the church, then once he had that experience, he's still following God, just in a different direction. Now, as James says, even the demons believe that God exists, but they tremble. So, they intellectually know that God exists, but they don't trust in him. I often try and make that distinction between belief THAT and belief IN.

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Travis:

Yes.

Frank:

You need maybe some evidence for belief THAT obviously, but that doesn't get you to belief IN. That doesn't get you to trust IN. And when we're talking about faith here, we're talking about trust IN not just intellectual assent, because even the demons have that. And What would happen if God was more like a stalker, where wherever you turned, you had some sort of miraculous display of his power yet your heart was turned against him? What would that do to us, Travis?

Travis:

Yeah, I think the point is again, God could be more obvious, but that should maybe terrify us. Because, you know, if the cosmic presence of God was just always there, every time we're sort of going like, unless we're made right with Him, unless we're reconciled to Him, then we should be very terrified of that possibility. And so, again, that passage in James has just always sort of blown my mind that even the demons believe. And I always add, and so do a lot of Southern Baptists. And so, they believe, and they show up to church on Christmas and Easter. I don't see him like getting upset about the fact that we're talking about a virgin birth or somebody rising from the dead. But here's what they lack. They've never given their lives. There are many Southern Baptists that have - need to make fun of my own tradition - but there are many people that go to church, that believe, but they've never placed their faith in Christ.

Frank:

Hmm, that's certainly true. Now, what's your view on modern day miracles? I don't know if you get into this in the book, *Wandering Toward God*. I know Craig Keener has done some work on this. What's your view on modern day miracles?

Travis:

Yeah, I think we have to take them case by case. I think there certainly can be evidence sufficient enough to believe that a miracle has occurred but I think that it can't just be a blanket sort of principle that, if somebody claims it, then I believe it, that settles that, kind of thing. I think we have to look at the credibility of that person and so on. But absolutely. I don't see how

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someone can discount the value of miraculous claims, since that's at the heart of our Christian beliefs.

Frank:

Now, miracles, as you know, have to be rare if they're going to get our attention. If they happened all the time, they wouldn't be miracles. So, we're not suggesting these things are ubiquitous if they were, say the resurrection of Jesus would mean nothing. I mean, if people rose from the dead all the time we'd go, who cares if Jesus rose from the dead? That happens all the time. It's got to be a rare event if it's gonna say, this is a special event that's indicating God really intervening in this world to tell us something very important. So, the hiddenness of God has always been a fascinating subject for me but I think you're right. Although some skeptics will say, Well, that's just a cop out, Travis. I've been asking Him to show Himself to me, and I'm not resistant, Travis. You know, they say that. What do they say? It's non-resistant non-belief? In other words, I'm not resisting, I'm open, I keep asking for a sign, I don't have it. How do you respond?

Travis:

Well, I think again, you know, God is not in the business of just sort of being the genie in the bottle and if we just say we want our three wishes then he's going to come through for us. God, and this is very consistent in the Christian tradition and throughout Scripture, is that God shows up when God shows up. You think of the book of Job. This is something I deal with in the book quite a bit. I think the book of Job is just so extraordinary in so many ways and if anybody wanted God to show up, Job did. And God does show up at the end, and He sort of shows up in a way I think Job wasn't necessarily bargaining for. But God does show up and say, Look, I'm here. I'm in charge, and I'm good, and you can trust in me, even though You're going through the horrific conditions that he [Job] is. But again, I think you have to come to God on God's terms, not the other way.

Frank:

His timing. He knows the end from the beginning. You have a chapter in here called The Virtue of Faith. What's that about?

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Travis:

Well, the book is definitely a book on doubt but it's not a book only about doubt. Because again, I don't want to overvalue doubt. And so, what I think is really helpful to see is, what is faith like? We talked about this, but I don't think people have always a good definition of faith in their back pocket. Oftentimes, it's this mysterious thing that just we get zapped with, apparently, for some people. My rough and ready definition is that faith is ventured trust. It's where we've ventured our life on someone or something. We're venturing our life a little bit on our chairs right now in this in this building. I got on an airplane to get here and I ventured my life on the airplane to get here. I put my faith in it. And I think that what Christian faith is, ultimately at its core, is that we have ventured our trust, our loyalty, our reliance, on God.

Frank:

You know, it's often, I think, mistaken when people say, Well, I lost my faith. You know, they had faith or something. And I almost want to say to them, So, are you telling me because your psychology changed that God has somehow popped out of existence? Or because your psychology has changed, Jesus hasn't risen from the dead. And you just brought up the airplane because I use that quite a bit on college campuses. I'll say to people, you know, there are people who can't get on an airplane because they're scared to death. Yet the evidence shows it's the safest way to travel. So, here they are allowing their psychology to overpower the evidence. We tend to do that when it comes to Christianity. We often allow our psychology, even psychology that has come to us through our culture, to get us to say that Christianity can't be true. Yet our psychology is not going to necessarily tell us the truth or falsity of Christianity. The evidence will, so we need to concentrate on the evidence, because the evidence will let us know whether or not Christianity is true, not our psychology

And when we come back we're going to talk more with Dr. Travis Dickinson about doubt and faith and how do you wander toward God so you can actually find him. So, don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist on the American Family Radio Network. Back in two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, right out of the gate in the new year, I will be in New Orleans, Louisiana at an apologetics conference called Defend. All the details are on our website. And my guest, Dr. Travis Dickinson will be there as well. Travis, you're going to be in New Orleans, right?

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Travis:

That's right.

Frank:

What are you gonna be doing?

Travis:

I'll be speaking at some and bringing a group from my school, DBU, as part of a course, actually.

Frank:

Oh, all right. Excellent. So, anyone down near in the southeast anywhere near New Orleans, Louisiana, I'll be there that weekend and Travis will be there as well. I'm speaking also speaking at First Baptist Church in Covington, Louisiana on Sunday morning. You can find more details on our website at CrossExamined.org. Click on Events and you will see the Frank Turek calendar there.

Right now, we're talking to Travis Dickinson about his brand new book, *Wandering Toward God*. Travis, you have a chapter in here called *Asking the Big Questions*. You have a couple of quotes that I love at the top of the chapter. One is from Socrates. "The unexamined life is not worth living". And then from Peter Abelard, he says this, "Constant and frequent questioning is the first key to wisdom. For through doubting we are led to inquiry, and by inquiry we perceive truth." That's so profound and true, and yet, many Christians don't ask questions. Don't ask questions. Unpack that a little bit more for us.

Travis:

So, again, the goal here, the destination, is not doubt. But I do think that we all, as a part of our Christian discipleship, as followers of Jesus, should be asking questions. I take very seriously Jesus in Matthew 22, where he's asked, What's the most important command? And if you know anything about the Old Testament, you know there are a lot of commands. So, he's asked to boil it all down. And it's a challenge. If he emphasizes one and neglects something else, they're gonna press him for that. But what he says is seemingly without skipping anything, he just says, Love the Lord your God with all of your hearts, souls, and minds.

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And what's always been sort of funny to me is, I memorized that verse as a high school student and never noticed that part of that formula is that we are to love God with our minds. And so, I think that's a really rich statement that whole books have been written about that, and we can talk more about it. But I think at least part of what it is to love God with our minds is to ask questions, to approach God with a kind of intellectual curiosity. But I always say this, and this is actually one of the things I think I've thought the most about since writing the book that I just find to be really a crucial piece is that we're going to ask questions, but we shouldn't ask questions, I think as skeptics. Because even in Matthew 22 you've got religious leaders asking Jesus questions, but it's not like they really wanted the answers.

Frank:

Right. They're almost cynics. Yeah. They're trying to trap them.

Travis:

That's right. And so, I always give the story of my daughter when she was young. Kids just don't like to go to sleep for some reason. I love to go to sleep now. But she just doesn't want to go to sleep. And so, you know, we come in and we say, okay, time for bed. And she says, why? And that's a question. And then I, as a philosopher Dad, I always tried to give an answer to the why questions. And so, I would say, Well, you need to rest, and it makes tomorrow more fun, and you know this kind of thing? And she says, why? And then she says why again? And then whatever I say she's gonna say why again. She doesn't want the truth. I've already given her good answer. I think the first one was probably knockdown, drag out kind of thing. She just doesn't want to go to bed.

And I think that really characterizes a lot of people who are supposedly seeking answers but it's kind of a smokescreen. They're asking questions, but they're never going to be satisfied with any answer you could possibly give them. And so, if we approach that way, of course, we're never going to find the truth. And so, the way I think God wants us to approach him is with intellectual curiosity, but not as a skeptic. But notice with Matthew 22 again, in the posture of love, of lover of God, a seeker of God, that we'd be pursuing God in love.

And so, the best example I've got of this, teaching at DBU, I mean, it's every year like, these little couples form with the freshman class and they can't bear to be apart for like five seconds,

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and they just want to sit there and talk about everything. And they're super curious about each other. That should characterize they're loving each other with their minds in a way. And I think that's what should characterize us in our faith. Because, even a marriage, I think, that doesn't have any intellectual curiosity, that's a marriage in trouble, I think. And a faith that has no intellectual curiosity is a faith in trouble as well.

Frank:

Yeah, there is something about the chase too, going back to the hiddenness of rights issue, right. I mean, there has to be some intrigue and some curiosity in order for us to as fickle human beings to be interested.

Travis:

Right.

Frank:

If God were to reveal himself - well, you've already mentioned this - reveal himself completely, we'd be burnt to a crisp. But if he revealed himself too much, it might take away some of the intrigue. And I don't know who said this, but I think it's brilliant. It would be strange if an infinite God wasn't strange to us. There are some things that we don't understand about God, quite obviously, but we shouldn't expect to understand everything. Right?

Travis:

Right.

Frank:

I mean, we're finite creatures. The fact that we're an effect, and the universe is an effect, and the moral law is an effect, and design is an effect, and creation is an effect should get us to realize there has to be some kind of uncomposed cause. A self-existing cause that brought all this stuff into existence and keeps it going. So, we have all these effects, we're reasoning back to a cause. The question is, What is the nature of this being, particularly when it comes to the issue of love? Does he love us? Does he care for us? And that's where Christianity, of course, soars. Yes, that's what Christianity is all about. He does love us and he comes to save us.

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Travis:

And the question to me is, will we trust? Will we place our faith in Him? We're fickle enough that if it's all spelled out for us, if it's all just sort of there obviously, then we don't tend to trust in that situation. It's when it's sort of like, I don't know, I'm a little nervous here. That's one reason why I put the title of the book as Wandering Toward God, because I think it's not an aimless kind of wandering, it's an intentional wandering. But it's not straight, it's not easy, we don't always have the point really clear to us. We kind of have to go in the Securitas way and make our way through and just ask the deep and difficult questions. And it gets a little messy, honestly, sometimes. We have those doubts, but as we lean in, the hope is - and again, it's just my own testimony - as we lean in and find truth, find answers, my goodness, we just grow in our faith. So, the very thing that we're worried about often with doubt, is that we're going to lose our faith, but what we see is that when we lean into it, we come to a place of greater faith.

Frank:

What are some of the questions that we ought to be asking as Christians? Or even someone seeking to become a Christian, open to it.

Travis:

Yeah, that's right. Ultimately, I think the question has to be, Is it true and is there reasons to believe that it's true? I think that we're all so different, that there's no 10 questions you got to ask. We probably could come up with a pretty good list if we tried to. But I find that people are just in so many different places, oftentimes depending on where their background is, if they're coming from a different religious tradition, or a very secular tradition. But I think the big questions are reasons to believe that God exists, reasons to believe that Jesus rose from the dead, since it really comes down to First Corinthians 15, reasons to think that Scripture is trustworthy and reliable, how to address the concern about there's so much evil and suffering in the world. A lot of things we've already sort of touched on a bit. I think those are the big questions. And then again, Is Christianity good? We tend to talk most in apologetics about if whether or not it's true but talk about whether or not it's good.

Frank:

Well, how do we define good? Is it good?

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Travis:

Yeah, I think it's good. Like I said, I think this was my experience growing up in this ministry of seeing these men come in broken by sin and addiction, and in the goodness, the sort of flourishing that occurred, where these guys would like gain weight, they would be happy to be laughing, they would just brighten up. I mean, it was just this change in their humanity in a way. And I think that's the power of the gospel.

Frank:

Oh, absolutely. You have a quote from CS Lewis, which I love. He says, "Now that I'm a Christian, I do have moods in which the whole thing looks very improbable. But when I was an atheist, I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable." We always think that, well we're just the ones that have this measure of trust, this measure of faith, and say the atheist doesn't. It seems to me, in light of the evidence - that's why I wrote the book *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* - there's so much evidence for Christianity that it would take more trust to disbelieve it than to believe it.

Travis:

Absolutely.

Frank:

When you really take a step back and you look at... And I think you hit on the two main questions, Travis. And that is, Does God exist and did Jesus rise from the dead? If those two things are true, Christianity is true, right. Now there are details to fill in, as I mentioned, and there are objections, like evil, and hiddenness of God, and all this. But evil does not disprove God, it can't disprove God. We wouldn't even know what evil was unless God did exist because he's the standard. And we already talked a little bit about the hiddenness. And I think you're right, so many of the objections that people have about Christianity, even if they were right about them, they don't mean Christianity is false do they?

Travis:

That's right. And that's where I think the journey of the Christian life is continuing to ask those questions too. I think that all of us should be pressing in and continuing to ask, in order to know God better. I mean, love Him with our minds. I think that's the picture that we never stop this

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because we're never gonna get it all figured out. And that's part of the journey, that we would continue to love him, we would continue to sort of fall in love with him, by having intellectual curiosity and pressing in and as we find those answers we know him better, we have knowledge, we have truth.

Frank:

Travis, what's your website so people can learn more about you?

Travis:

TravisDickinson.com. And I blog there from time to time. I call the blog The Benefit of the Doubt.

Frank:

Oh, beautiful. Okay, good. Well, thanks so much for this book, *Wandering Toward God: Finding Faith Amid Doubts and Big Questions*. Get the book ladies and gentlemen. Thanks so much, Travis.

Travis:

Yeah, you bet. Frank. I appreciate it and I appreciate your ministry.

Frank:

Oh, thank you. Don't forget as we come up to the end of the year, we have a \$100,000 Matching Gift. Any money you give up to \$100,000 will be matched. Also, we have some new online courses coming on after the first of the year. Scott Klusendorf, with regard to the issue of life and abortion. And a new one from Stephen C. Meyer, *Return to the God Hypothesis*. You want to be a part of it. Go to CrossExamined.org, check out online courses, and we'll see you here next week.

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