

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

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

When Your Opponent Cheats, What Should You Do?

with Dr. John Ferrer

(January 6, 2023)

Wow, ladies and gentlemen, we have a great question all the way from Nigeria. A young man asks a question about whether or not it's okay to cheat if your opponent is cheating, particularly politically, because in Nigeria there is a fight for the country between Islam and Christianity. This young man is asking, "I know the Muslims are cheating. They're trying to get political power. They're trying to put down Christians. Are we allowed to cheat then to even the playing field?"

It could take us the whole program to address this question. We're gonna get to it a little bit later. And somebody who has just joined CrossExamined is gonna help me answer that question. He is Dr. John Ferrer. I don't know if you've heard of John before. He has his PhD in Philosophy of Religion and ethics, and he and I both went to Southern Evangelical Seminary together back about 15 or 20 years ago. And so, he's joined us now as a speaker, as a researcher, as a writer. And since ethics is his forte, I thought it would be a great time to introduce Dr. John to you, because he's going to walk through this question and maybe some other questions today with me. So, it's great having John on. John, how are you?

John:

I'm doing all right. Little cold out there, but I'm okay.

Frank:

Yeah, he's all the way from Iowa right now, where it's like 17 degrees. Now, you may have heard the name Ferrer before, but it might not be because of John. You've probably heard the old adage, behind every great man is a very surprised mother in law. Well, actually, no, it goes like this, behind every great man there's a great woman Well, sometimes it's reversed. Behind every great woman there's a great man. The name Ferrer may be familiar to you because John's wife is the great Hillary Morgan Ferrer who heads Mama Bear Apologetics. And John helped

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research and edit the two books, which are the top two books in apologetics most of the time on Amazon, the Mama Bear Apologetics books.

And we thought it would be great to have John as part of CrossExamined because he is so well trained in everything apologetics and he was supporting what his wife, Hillary, has been doing. He's going to continue to do that but we wanted to give him an opportunity to do this full time, so he's joined us. And John, just so our viewers and listeners can get a little bit of background on where you came from, how did you get from your childhood to where you are now? Give us the kind of the two minute survey.

John:

Well, I was born at a very young age. [laughing]

Frank:

Yeah, I was born in bed with a lady. Sorry, I had to be close to my mom.

John:

I am a southern boy, born and raised. And growing up my older brother was kind of the black sheep of the family, and it turned out over the years that he identified as atheist. And we had a Christian upbringing, Baptist background. The rest of us were Christian. We had a profession of faith and all of that, but he was an atheist. And so, I would have these discussions with him. He was still a good big brother. He looked out for me, he cared about me, so I couldn't quite assume that the waking world was predominantly Christian, because that's where most of my friends were. That's the church I went to. That's the school I went to. I just couldn't assume it's all Christian because sharing a room with me was an atheist, my brother.

And so, I think that set me on a different track, those conversations I had with him, and over the years I came to really value that kind of conversation where we could discuss controversial issues and tough topics. And we had to have reasons for what we believed. We couldn't just say, well, that's what I was taught. We had to understand the why behind it, not just what to say, what to believe.

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Well, long story short, by the time I was graduating high school, I'd felt a call to ministry. Ironically, when you're called to ministry often you're the last one to realize it. Everybody else sees it a mile away. Well, that was my case. I went to college planning to go into local church ministry. I got a bachelor's degree in religion, double majoring in communication, and then went on to seminary, and fortunately the school closest to my home was Southern Evangelical Seminary. And I had kind of a pet interest in apologetics at that time, so I studied under greats like Gary Habermas and Norman Geisler.

So, I got a tremendous experience of apologetics, not just as a separate field, but as a disposition for studying the Bible, as a disposition for conducting local church ministry. It's not just a side note or a field over here to go toy around with, it's more an orientation we have and how we go about everything else that the church does. And that's what I learned through SES. So, it was a great experience. But great experiences have a bad habit of ruining your plans because I thought I was going to go into local church ministry, and I did a little bit during that time, but I didn't become a head pastor, I veered into education, Christian education specifically.

During my PhD work at Southwestern Seminary, I spent about six years teaching apologetics at Pantego Christian Academy, also Texas Wesleyan University, and a little bit at Tarrant County College. I would teach world religions, ethics, logic, but at the high school I also had apologetics classes and worldview classes. So, I was kind of building my resume, doing debates during that time, I started two websites.

And Hillary's ministry was just starting to take off around 2014-2015. And then her book was in 2018. And a lot of that, I think, well, first off, she has to get all the credit for the voice, the tone, the vision, the ambition for it. I was just kind of a sounding board for a lot of the thought she had. So, we'd discuss it but it's not like she's my cover to enter women's ministry and it's really me being the brains behind it. No, she's plenty of a great mind herself. And we just had conversations and I'd give her feedback and stuff like that. But her books have just done tremendously well.

She's also had health issues. I won't go into all of it just now. But I had to make career decisions so that we could make sure we had full time insurance. And we had sufficient pay so that she

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wouldn't rely on her income. Well, those decisions eventually led me into taking a factory job at a local assembly line. If you've heard of Pella windows, I worked at Pella windows and doors for little over three years. And then I took a job in woodworking [unintelligible]. Shout out to Brad And Seth. So, I was doing these things so that I could have insurance and I could have the freedom so she would have the support she needed, the benefits, but also, so I could have the freedom to travel with her. Because as Mama Bear Apologetics was picking up, and the book was starting to sell really well, and she was getting speaking invitations, with her health limitations she couldn't just pack up a bag and go. She needed help to handle all of that, so I had to be able to free up the weekends. So, again, more career choices to be able to move that direction and be a support for her. I don't regret any of it.

Frank:

And I know you decided to be a carpenter - and there was some other famous carpenter way back when - and now you're actually more than a carpenter.

John:

I knew you couldn't pass that up.

Frank:

I couldn't resist that, man. I mean, you were working as a carpenter for several years to try and support Hillary's ministry.

John:

More or less, yeah.

Frank:

You've got a PhD in philosophy, religion, and ethics, you know apologetics, you've been to Southern Evangelical Seminary, you need to be doing this full time. So, because of your donations he can. And I want to thank everybody that helped us reach our matching goal this past month. Because of your support, we're able to hire people like John and reach more people on college campuses, more people on high school campuses, more people online. So, thank you so much. We're going to delve into the ethical question of the day right after the

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break. We're also going to talk a little bit about what happened to Damar Hamlin, so don't go anywhere. We're back in just two minutes. I'm Frank Turek.

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 today about a very difficult ethical question that has a lot of moving pieces to it. We're gonna get into it in just a couple of minutes. We're also introducing Dr. John Ferrer to you all because John has joined CrossExamined as a speaker, researcher, and writer. You're going to hear a lot more from him. He has his PhD in Philosophy of Religion and Ethics, so he's perfect for the question we're going to discuss today.

But John, before we get into that, there was an event that occurred this week that has captivated the nation. Damar Hamlin, of the Buffalo Bills, a safety, as we all know, had some sort of cardiac event on the field during Monday Night Football. CPR was administered, players were obviously very shaken up, the game was canceled. And so much has come out of this, particularly with regard to prayer and God. I mean, on ESPN of all places, you have shocked announcers actually leading prayers on air live. You have coaches and players kneeling on the field to ask for a miracle to heal Damar. I mean, you have people everywhere now talking about prayer and talking about God

I just saw the coach of the Buffalo Bills, Sean McDermott, I don't know if he's a Christian or not, he might be, because he said in this press release just a couple of days ago that he thanked everybody involved and then he thanked God for the miracle. He also said, this is to bring glory to God. I'm pretty sure that Zac Taylor, who is the coach of the Bengals, is a Christian. I know there are several players on the Bengals who are. I'm not sure about the Bills, but it appears that Sean McDermott is speaking the language as if he is a Christian. I think Damar Hamlin himself is. But what do you take away from this now public display of prayer and reliance on God? What did we learn from this, John?

John:

Well, a couple thoughts come to mind. First off, I think a lot of the sports world and what's presented and filtered through mainstream media can have sort of an artificial secularity. Like, there are religious undercurrents that are toned down because it's not politically correct, it

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doesn't address the target audience. But these are still real and powerful influences that helped shape these men and women in professional sports, cultivating their character, informing their work ethic and their team spirit. And there's a lot of, not just religion generally, but Christianity in particular.

And the character question shouldn't be left out when it comes to a deeper understanding of how sports works and what it means for youth coming up and learning to be adults, maturing. But adults too, in the competition and spirit of the game, faith is a real difference maker oftentimes. But we often don't see that reality penetrated until there's a crisis moment, just like the rest of our lives can be. We can go along happily undisturbed till something just forces us to remember, Oh, all of this could be over in a minute. Am I prepared? Am I ready to meet my maker? And that's a jarring reality. These guys are living on the brink of life and death sometimes with the amount of sports. And it's even more so with combat sports, mixed martial arts, because that's a more direct metaphor for warfare where it is life and death.

Frank:

Yeah, this young man had to have his heart shocked back into rhythm or shocked back from being stopped. And yet, we have all been now shocked into realizing that we are mortal, that this could end, as you just mentioned, at any minute. When things are going along smoothly, a lot of times we don't think of God at all. It's only when these events occur that we are reminded that life is fragile. We're hanging by a thread and at any minute any of us could be gone. And so, events like these are not extraordinary - well, they're out of the ordinary, that's true - but they are actually demonstrating to us what life really is, other than the mundane events that go on every day. They tend to lull us, I think, into kind of an anesthetized state that, oh yeah, this is just gonna go on forever. When these events occur, everybody is suddenly awoken.

John:

Yeah, it's a splash of water to the face.

Frank:

Yeah.

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John:

It's jarring. And did you hear what he said? Like he didn't say it, but he wrote it when he was finally coming to. He said, Did we win?

Frank:

Did we win? [laughing]

John:

And, that's so appropriate, right? He's a football player. That's his career. He cares about it. And I thought it was a weird contrast with what a lot of the commentators were saying. They would often say, Well, ultimately, at the end of the day, it's just a game, it doesn't matter. And there's a sense in which they're correct. If a person gives their whole selves to their game, and they sacrifice their family or their faith to do it, then their priorities are out of whack and that's not how to live. But even though we can say that, in a sense, it's all just a game, we don't want to leave it there.

I think we can still agree with the author of Ecclesiastes, who I think was Solomon, who said, meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless. And he's talking about everything under the sun. That includes football. That includes all sorts of relationships. Ultimately, all of that is going to pass away, and in that sense, everything in itself is meaningless. But here's the point. The game isn't just a game. As a game, it's meaningless, but as a sign of greater things, it can be an access point into ultimate reality.

Frank:

What do you mean by that? Explain that. Unpack that.

John:

Okay. So, we'll take football as the key example because that's what's at hand. Ultimately, from a biblical perspective, everything, everything, absolutely everything is to point our attention back to God. It's ultimately to remind us that we've got an infinite void in our hearts and none of this worldly stuff will ever fill it. It will only remind us of how empty we are inside. But ultimately, all of it's supposed to point us back to God in some way, shape, or form, directly or indirectly. And with football, I think we've got a great metaphor for spiritual warfare, or for

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earthly combat, so it's a metaphor for war. Hopefully, it's a safe way for guys to get out their competitive instincts without actually killing each other. It's a metaphor for war.

And then war is a metaphor, earthly wars, a metaphor for spiritual warfare. And spiritual warfare, at least from a Christian perspective, is basically the inauguration campaign of the returning King. It is Christ coming back to reclaim what's his own. And he's going to ward off all enemies who have resisted Him, and reclaim us saying, you are mine. Reclaim all believers. And so, football understood correctly, is going to point us to things, not of no importance, but of ultimate importance, understood correctly. And I think that's a very biblical Christian way to understand reality, to look at everything as a sign to point our attention back to God.

Frank:

Yeah, well said, By the way, you just heard Dr. John say, return of the king. Tolkien got his ideas from the Bible. That's why the Lord of the Rings finale is called Return of the King. And you can see more of that in our book, Hollywood Heroes. But that's all pointing back to reality. And you said earlier well, football itself is meaningless. It's only meaningless if there is no God. Actually, everything matters, right? I mean, everything matters in life. You know, we tell you, it's just a game, but how many people their livelihood is dependent on the game of football being played? It does matter. We wouldn't say to somebody, your job is meaningless, if the guy's an accountant. It's not meaningless. It's meaningful to my family. It's meaningful to people I'm trying to support. It's meaningful to the clients I'm trying to serve. Right. So, football is another vocation that does have meaning to people. I understand what they mean when they say, well, it doesn't really ultimately matter who wins and losses. But in a certain sense, it does, because those lives are changed by the outcome that happens on the field.

John:

And without having to jump automatically to ultimate reality, I think there's still lesser spheres where football, just as with any other sports or games we play, can still be very serious business. I've got a friend who's just an excellent father. He's raising children in a wonderful way. I'll call him out, Joe Hochberg. He's a professional artist, he does great work. Go check them out on Etsy. But he argues, he's of the firm conviction that play is serious business. Play as play, is laughing and imitating and all sorts of different fun modes of learning and interacting with the world. And this is the natural language of childhood and it's part of what can help

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make our human experience more palatable, more interactive, more enjoyable. Because God didn't create a bread and water, black and white world. He created a world with dad jokes, with hot sauce, with sweets, with games, with play. He created a world for his creation to enjoy. All of that is a reminder of God.

Frank:

It's interesting that people, rightfully, always ask the question: If God, why evil? Nobody ever asks the question: If God, why pleasure?

John:

Yeah.

Frank:

Right? I mean, there's so much pleasure in the world too, that we just kind of say, oh, we'll just take that for granted. Why is there pleasure if there is no God? First of all, why is there anything? We can go down that road if we want to. But if you really think about what goes on a football field, it is kind of a metaphor for life and is a metaphor for spiritual warfare. And I also think, you know, people say it's just a waste of time, it's just entertainment. Well, you could say that, but you could also say that we have divisions in our country right now over politics, and religion, and that kind of thing, but notice how everybody comes together over football. Notice that you might be a Christian, your neighbor is an atheist, but if you like the same football team, hey man, come on over.

You have a common bond with people through being a fan of a particular sport or a particular team. And even if they're on the opposite team, at least you have something to talk about. You still come over and watch the game together, so there are things that are redeeming, many things, even about sports. so, I just thought it would be a good thing to talk about.

We're coming up to a break right now. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. And, by the way, continue to pray for Damar Hamlin, the Buffalo Bills, the Cincinnati Bengals, and everybody else on the field, because it is going to be difficult for many of these players to go back and play. We're coming up to playoff time right now. You want good things to come out of this and good things have. Pray for his continued recovery. It's amazing how

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Americans have stepped up. The guy has raised like \$7 million while he's asleep for kids toys. It's just incredible. Anyway, we're gonna come back with Dr. John Ferrer and talk about this amazing ethical question from Nigeria. Don't go anywhere. We're back in two.

My guest today Dr. John Ferrer, who is a graduate of Southern Evangelical Seminary. I am as well. Alisa Childers is going there, Melissa Dougherty is going there, many other people you know in the apologetics world are either are going there or have gone there. And there's a scholarship that's named after me, for some reason. Some guy gave a lot of money and named it after me. I didn't ask for this. But if you want to get some great apologetics knowledge, and even get a degree, go to SES.edu/Frank and you can even get half off due to this scholarship. You want to be a part of that.

I also want to mention that there are a number of events coming up that I'm going to be participating in. I'm going to be out in Menifee, CA. That's kind of south of Ontario on your way to San Diego. That is going to be Sunday, January 22, during the morning services at Revival Christian Fellowship and then an evening two hour I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist event.

Then the following week, I'm going to be with my friends Natasha Crain and Alisa Childers, between Cincinnati and Dayton, OH in a place called Troy, for the first Unshaken conference. You can see all the details on our website at CrossExamined.org. And next week, we're going to have Alisa and Natasha on to talk about what's going on in that conference. How can we be unshaken in the face of a culture that is literally crumbling under our feet? What can we do to stand for Christ in this very difficult culture that keeps getting more and more anti-Christian?

Alright, let's get to the topic now that we want to talk about for the rest of the program. This came from a young person who lives in Nigeria. He writes This. "Imagine that you're in a ring of boxing with an opponent who is breaking all the rules and nobody is calling him to order. Would you keep following the rules? To be more specific, this analogy is to capture the imbalance of political power between the Muslim north and the Christian south of Nigeria. As I'm sure you already know, the survival of Islam is hinged on political power and domination. Our Muslim brothers are extremely political while the Christians are, for the most part, passive. But besides the political docility of the Christians, our Muslims don't really play fair.

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For example, Muslims go as far as registering underage voters. This is one of the major reasons northern votes beat southern votes in federal elections, not that the number of Muslims is above that of Christians, There's a lot more of their shenanigans that I'd rather not name here. The situation is far uglier than I've decided to capture at this present time. So, how do you see this? How do you play fair with an opponent who doesn't play fair?"

And this could even be almost life and death. Is it ever right to lie? Is it ever right to cheat? What do we say about this? Dr. John Ferrer, PhD in Ethics, tell us what we're supposed to think about this.

John:

Oh gosh, that's a big lead in. But I had a few thoughts as I was hearing you read that. Overview, no, I don't think this is a case where it's okay to lie or cheat. That's the simple answer.

Frank:

We will get to instances where it might be okay. We'll get there.

John:

Yeah, there are dilemma cases. We'll get there. I think it's important to do a heart check first. Do you fear God as king and love God as Father more than you fear or love anyone else? I think that's an important heart check here because if we're operating out of fear - oh no, this is gonna go away - we might be doubting God's sovereignty, we might be sacrificing faith, we might not be remembering big picture stuff and long game stuff. As Christians, we need to be anchored in stuff of ultimate reality, not just caught up in the meaningless realm. We're remembering how these things become meaningful because they're reconnecting us to things of ultimate importance.

So, 1Peter 3:15. We quote it a lot as Christian apologists. "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord." King overall. That's the starting point before we're in a good position to trust our deliberations about where to go from here. But that passage, 1Peter 3:15-16, we often jump to that apologetics chunk because that's the one where it says, "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asked you to give the reason for the hope that you have", but we often forget the context there that it is a persecution context.

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Frank:

Right.

John:

It's a context of, you're going to be forced, pressured, challenged in your faith, and potentially you're going to lose jobs, you're going to lose, in today's situation, voting, you're going to lose access, you're going to lose opportunities, because that's kind of how persecution works. So, if we expand on that biblical passage a little bit, we see there's a lot more going on than just, yay apologetics. Starting in verse nine it says, "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult" (1 Peter 3:9). Stopping right there, we've got an answer to the question.

Frank:

That's right.

John:

Don't repay evil with evil or insult with insult. (1 Peter 3:9 continued) ...On the contrary, repay evil with blessing...". We have to have a stronger, more influential blessing than the evil they're dishing out to us. "...repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, 'Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.'" (1 Peter 3:9-10) So, there's your response to lying. "They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." (1 Peter 3:11-14)

From there, it goes into verses 15-16 that apologists love to quote. "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:15-17)

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Frank:

Alright, let's marinate on that for a second. "For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." It's been put this way as well. It's better to suffer evil than to do evil.

John:

Yes.

Frank:

And that's appears to be sort of what Peter is saying right here. Now, as I said a minute ago, there may be instances where lying is okay - we'll get to it - but this does not appear to be one of those instances. And we'll draw a distinction here in just a minute. It would be better to work as diligently as you can, on Muslims in your country, to try and first of all, bring Christ to them and encourage them to play fairly. Obviously, if they do become Christians, they ought to do that.

What is the danger, John, though, if we go down this road, instead of doing what's right and trusting God for the results, if we go down this road of saying, Well, my opponent is cheating, I'm going to cheat too to level the playing field. In fact, there are people in this country that are saying, hey, these elections aren't even fair. You know, one side is cheating, maybe we ought to cheat too. Right? What happens to us if we do that? What's the risk we're taking when we do that? Not just of getting caught but what's the risk to our soul?

John:

Yeah, I think if you win by compromising your character, compromising on your faith, dishonoring God, if that's what it takes to win, then you've lost. Because remember, big picture and long game. Big picture, God's sovereign, God's in control. Long game, we recognize that we're part of a long trail of history where God is doing these incursion efforts to redeem man, to rescue his people, to reconcile people back to him. And when we remember this long game and the big picture, a lot of these worldly challenges, obstacles, competitions that we're set up against, it's not that they don't matter, but they don't matter as much as the greater reality, which is what we're living for and what were rooted in. If you compromised your character and you won the game, at the end of it, have you really won?

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Frank:

CS Lewis talks about this. I want to say it's in Mere Christianity, where he basically says that if you start doing this, then you become even more of a monster than the person you're trying to oppose. He doesn't use those exact words. But you're going down that road of then one lie after another lie, one cheat after another cheat, because it's all for a good cause. It's for a good cause. It just popped into my mind, years ago, there was Bernard Nathanson, who was an abortionist, And you're an expert on this issue.

In fact, pretty soon, ladies and gentlemen, if you go to CrossExamined.org, you'll see a whole page devoted to Dr. John Ferrer here and some of his talks. One of them has to do with abortion, maybe more than one. I remember Bernard Nathanson years ago saying that he was a pro-abortionist and an abortion doctor. And he was putting forth a false stat on how many women were killed in back alley abortions. He would say something like 5,000 a year, when it was revealed that it was a handful. It was less than 10, something like that.

John:

Definitely no more than like, 150 or something. All of those lives matter, we're not denying it, but the number was exaggerated. It was a political foot fall.

Frank:

Right. And he said, It was just a useful figure for the cause. Right? He would just invent it in order to advance the cause, because the ends justify the means in that case. Who is our real enemy here, John? Is it people that we might be fighting against politically here in Nigeria, the Christians are fighting politically? Well, if they're fighting at all, against the Muslims who want to take over the country and impose Sharia law. Who are they really fighting against?

John:

Well, when we remember the big picture, we recognize that the enemies of God are many and often we aren't really siding up to him the way we should. So, recasting it, we're kind of looking at reality in such a way that we can see through it to what God's trying to do, what God's at work doing. And one of the interesting things about this question is, they're basically speaking with all this vigor and energy of yearning for justice, which is a good thing. Yearning for fair

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play, yearning for rights and human dignity to be honored in all of these constitutional and civil and human rights.

There's something noble and responsible about that. But being willing to compromise on it, it's almost like you're forgetting who the real enemy is, that we're waging war against Satan. There's a bigger battle at work here that is bigger than political parties competing with each other over control of the House or Senate, which we in America can relate to the concern of a rigged election. But big picture, of course, the real enemy is Satan. And many of these people who we would otherwise call enemies are captives of bad ideas, they're confused, and they're deluded.

Frank:

Let's talk more about it right after the break. Particularly, when it is appropriate to lie. Really? It's appropriate to lie. We'll talk about it right after the break. Don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Back in two.

Now that Roe v Wade has been overturned, we can actually save lives through the law. The question is, do you know how to do that? We've got a fabulous course that started in just a few days. It's called How to Convince People to Be Pro-Life. It's with the great Scott Klusendorf. The top teacher, in my view, on this issue in the country. Go to [CrossExamined.org](https://www.CrossExamined.org) and check out online courses. It starts January 16. Equip yourself to save lives. What could be more important than that? You want to sign up quickly. Even if you hear this after the 16th of January, you can still sign up.

Then February 1, the great Stephen C. Meyer, of the Discovery Institute; Signature in the Cell, Darwin's Doubt, Return of the God Hypothesis is his brand new online course. And if you sign up for the premium version, you're going to be on several zoom sessions with him to ask him questions. Also, if you want to get your sixth to eighth grader up to speed on apologetics, I think it's the sixth of February, there is a course led by the great Shanda Fulbright, and I'll be assisting her for a zoom or two on there. It is called Let's Get Real: Examining the Evidence for God. She just ran it last semester with great success. More kids are going to want to be a part of his one. Check it out at [CrossExamined.org](https://www.CrossExamined.org) online courses.

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Alright, let's get back to the question: Should you ever lie or cheat if your opponent does? We'll talk about situations where lying in particular, might actually be appropriate. But before we get to that question, I want to ask John, our guest today who has just joined CrossExamined as a speaker, writer, apologist, a question. John, we talk about, okay, let's make sure we don't soil our character. But what does that really mean in real life? How do we actually do that when the other side's cheating?

John:

That's a very important, practical question, because you heard in the way Austin was asking his question that it sounds like the church, in his understanding, is largely passive on these matters. Just tend to avoid politics just stays out of it. And I think many Christians in America can relate. Often the church doesn't know what to do with political matters and just stays out of it entirely. Kind of neutralizes their influence, their power, and just says, turn the other cheek. But I think that's not quite what Jesus was getting at. I think it's more nuanced and it's going to require more activism, more wisdom, and more discernment, so that, even if we are turning the other cheek, it creates a strategic advantage to disarm the opposition. So, there's more going on here. Just being passive isn't really a viable solution, generally speaking. But I think one of the first caveats to cover all of this comes to us from Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and there's a recent book by Rod Dreher by this title. He says, Live Not by Lies.

Frank:

We brought Rod on the program. It's a great book and a podcast you want to listen to. It goes back a couple of years ago. Go ahead.

John:

So, your viewers and your listeners are probably familiar. You can expect oppressors. They will press you. They can hurt your body, but they can't touch your soul unless you let them. And lying, letting yourself be captive to deceit and playing along with that, sinking to that level is one of the ways you involve your soul in that exchange and make yourself even more vulnerable and more compromised. You don't have to be foolhardy, drawing a target on your back or inviting person occasion, but neither should you let them make you into a liar. When you start lying and cheating just to stay competitive in their game, you've let them pull you into

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their game, and you've basically lost already, because it's their game. It's their home turf. They're better at it than you'll be and soon you'll be no better morally, spiritually, than they are.

Instead, we can use the influence we do have. Voting is only one means of influence. You also have a voice, you've got money, you've got labor, you can volunteer, you've got social media, you've got news media, you've got police, you can raise up your young people or yourself, go into a career where you can make a positive difference.

And that reminds me of the second point here. I think the practical question can be answered, get creative with the influence you do have. If folks are stealing the vote, then use other means to positively affect change in society. Obey the law, but also cultivate wisdom and exercise your Christian freedom. There are lots of ways to positively influence culture besides just voting. And I understand where the question is coming from but we need to step back and say, Okay, if that's the game that they're playing, what options are available to us if we're thinking big picture and long game.

And, you know, I think we can also draw a lot of courage from believers who've gone before us and who've known what it's like to see the other guy's not playing fair. The other guys siege warfare, trying to oppress is trying to conquer us. This isn't just an Africa or the US, but if we go back to scripture we find in the Middle East you have the Philistines, you have the Assyrians, you have the Babylonians, you have Persians, and you have, just a little side note, all of church history, where the norm in Christian history has been to be persecuted, to be relegated to the margins. The majority stands for Christianity.

Frank:

That's an important point, John, that a lot of people I don't think recognize, is that Christians, through most of their history have been in exile. They've been in the minority. And it's only in this country, due to the greatness of this country and how it was started, did Christians actually not be persecuted and be in the majority. Now when we see that slipping away we think, Oh, we got to cheat in order to get it back. Right? No, that's not the right way to go. But John, I do want to ask you this. Suppose you're in Nazi Germany during World War Two and you're hiding Jews from the Nazis and you hear a knock at your door. You open the door, there are two Nazi soldiers there. They say [unintelligible German]. What do you do?

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John:

[laughing] First I say, What did you say? I don't speak German. But supposing I did in this scenario, if they're asking me, where am I hiding the Jews, or something equivalent, Hillary brought up a great example of this and I think it speaks to a couple of nuanced, you might say, mature believer type of concepts here, namely Christian freedom. The story is told in The Hiding Place from Corrie Ten Boom and her sister, they had different views on whether it was ethical to lie. Corrie Ten Boom was practicing her lying in case the Nazis were to ask her, Where are you hiding the Jews? And I think there's biblical permission for that, in line with the Hebrew midwives in the early part of Exodus, and Rahab, who hid the two spies.

I think there is legitimate cause if you are forced between two options, where normally one is evil and the other is evil, you have to pick the lesser evil. Or, according to what's called graded absolutism, which I think you and I agree on - this is the ethical system that Norman Geisler and others have popularized. It says, when you're stuck in a dilemma situation, God will never force you to lie. You won't be required to do evil, biblically, because it says in 1 Corinthians 10:13, God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. He's not going to make you do evil. So, how are we to understand that dilemma when we have to pick the lesser of two evils?

Well, in that context, in that situation, you're talking about a moral event that isn't a normal lying scenario. It's not lying as lying. It's not lying for the sake of self-interest or serving some lesser evil. It is lifesaving.

Frank:

Right.

John:

Lifesaving is ethical. In that unique context it's ethical. Now, there are other dilemmas that could be the case, but the famous one that you give illustrates that. So, I think Corrie Ten Boom is exactly right. It can be ethically justified. If you're being forced to help someone murder someone else, or lie, I think you need to lie. But it's not lying as such. This may sound like philosopher speak, but when we step back and look at all the terms we have for deception, we're reminded that there are different moral events that still fall under the broader category of deception. Is it lying and unethical to bluff in a game of poker? Is it lying to fake a pass in

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football? Is it lying to do a magic trick? Or tell a story like fiction? Is it lying to act because you're acting like someone else? It's not you. That's a kind of deception? Well, obviously, that language is there because we're dealing with different morally weighted scenarios. And it's unfortunate that we don't have a different term for when someone is lying to life save, because that would help clarify that we really are talking about two different things that are called by the same word,

Frank:

Right. Yeah, you have a greater obligation to save an innocent life than you do to tell the truth to a guilty murderer. And this is what as you mentioned, Dr. Norman Geisler unpacks in his book, Christian Ethics, which is a great book to get if you want to go further on any of these issues. It has been updated since he originally wrote it. It's got every virtually almost every major ethical issue you can imagine in that book.

John:

Great book.

Frank:

Yeah, it is a great book. We're coming up toward the end of the show here. This show goes so quickly, John, especially when I have you on because we just love talking about these issues. So, the bottom line is that, no, you're not going to cheat to get some sort of advantage, but there are biblical examples of people lying to save lives. Because you have a greater moral duty to save an innocent human being than you do to tell the truth to a guilty murderer.

John:

Can I add? When you say that, and I agree, it's in a dilemma context where you don't have another option. We're not just looking for opportunities to lie to save a life, we're looking for opportunities where you're forced to do one or the other. And I would also suggest that, from The Hiding Place, Corrie Ten Boom's sister had a conviction, a personal conviction, against lying there. And even though, technically, there might be Christian freedom, generally speaking for that person, they may not have freedom. Just like Christians have general liberty to drink alcohol, but an alcoholic doesn't have that personal freedom. And this person might not have that individual freedom to do that. I can respect that.

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Frank: All right. Thank you so much, John. That's Dr. John Ferrer. Sorry, we're coming up to the end of this show. We're gonna continue this conversation on the CrossExamined Community, so if you want to hear it, join on our website at CrossExamined.org. You'll see it there. And I'll see you here next week. God bless.

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