

Why Have So Many Christians Left the Faith?

with Dr. Michael L. Brown

(March 3, 2023)

Ladies and gentlemen, why are so many Christians leaving the faith? Apparently, there are only about 63% of Americans claiming to be Christians. That's down more than 10 points over the past decade. And there are high profile people that are leaving the faith. There are Christian leaders that have said, I'm no longer a Christian. What is this all about and what can we do about it if anything? And are they leaving the faith or are they just leaving their faith? These are the questions we're going to deal with today.

Many of you know my friend, Dr. Michael Brown, because you follow him and should. His website, AskDrBrown.org, is a place you can go for answers on virtually any topic. He has his PhD in Semitic languages from NYU and has written a brand new book, his 43rd book. This guy's quite a slacker isn't he? Doesn't do much with his life. The book is out just in a couple of days and it's called Why So Many Christians Have Left the Faith. There are tremendous insights in this book so you're going to want to avail yourself of it. It's always great having Dr. Brown on the program. Mike, how are you doing?

Mike:

Great. And thanks for having me back.

Frank:

It's always great to have you on. And it seems like we have a you have a new book like every 10 minutes because you have so much to say. You write on Stream.org quite a bit and Townhall.com, so you're a wealth of great information for Christians that are concerned about the truth, and we ought to be concerned about the truth. What prompted you to write this? Why have so many Christians have left the faith?



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Mike:

Yeah, there's a crisis that we're facing. I started the first chapter by saying, Hey, look at this person, a prominent Christian author, a well-known Christian pastor, well known Christian music leader, Christian seminarian, and all of them say we no longer believe. And we could debate whether they truly saved or not. That's not even the issue. The issue is, to all appearances according to everything we knew, these were brothers, these were sisters, these were leaders. We read their books, we sang their music, we knew them, we follow them in different ways, and now one after another they're saying, we don't believe this anymore.

And then the younger generation, Gen Z, is the most unchurched generation in our recorded history. Since polling is being done, you know how many are dropping out. You know when you're on the college campuses the things you could have assumed in terms of certain biblical worldview foundations, they're just not there. A lot of people dropping out of church. So, the question is, why? What's actually going on? A lot of Christians just say, This is it. This is the end Jesus said, there'll be a final apostasy and this is the final apostasy. And I don't feel that way. I don't think we just throw our hands up and say it's all over.

The question is, why are they leaving? Let's understand the different reasons and then let's do our best to respond to those so that we can help those struggling, help those with questions, as well as help equip us to be there to say, Hey, no reason for you to struggle. There are answers there are solutions.

Frank:

I read half the book this morning and you point out right in the opening chapter about kids today. "These kids are hearing that the Bible can't be trusted, that God is a fairy tale, that Christians are hateful, that church is just for the older generation, that religion is make believe. In short, it's time we move on from all this, especially if you want to be cool and in." Why are younger people are so adamant now against the church? Has something happened in the past 20 years that allows them to see all these memes flying around? What's going on?

Mike:

Yeah, so there's kind of a perfect storm. We can break it down as I do in the book, chapter by chapter. But let's start with something that you confronted years back the rise of the new

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Atheism around 2006 or 2007, best-selling books by Sam Harris, and Richard Dawkins, and Christopher Hitchens, and things like that. And you and others have summarized the books to say there is no God and I hate him. So, they were best sellers. People were reading them. They were some of them number one in the religion category in New York Times bestseller list for many, many months.

But what happened is that a lot of the thinking of these atheists - and was nothing new, it was just more aggressive, more bombastic - a lot of it trickled its way down to social media. It trickled its way down in memes and little quotes and sayings and it just kind of got in the culture. That along with the idea that the church is on the wrong side of the culture wars, that the church is mean spirited and angry and things like that, and suddenly, you can't quote the Bible as having authority.

My friend, Darrell Bock, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary likes to say that, in the past, we could say it's true because it's in the Bible. Now we have to say it's in the Bible, because it's true, because the foundation has been so eroded. So, I'll commonly hear from people they have no idea of history and archaeology. You'll quote scripture and they'll say, That's just a Bronze Age book and some Bronze Age, misogynistic tribal deity that you follow. Where did they get that from? Have they been researching things? Have they been going through the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, things like that? Can they even date it? No. But they heard this thing. It trickled down.

Another thing that trickled down was the agnostic scholarship of Professor Bart Ehrman and others. So, here he is, well known professor at University of North Carolina. He is a great textual scholar in terms of knowing the Greek text of the New Testament and the background, etc. And he was evangelical. Over a period of years, he became liberal Christian, then became agnostic. It seemed the problem of suffering is what pushed him over. So, he writes a book some years ago, questioning whether we can really rely on what the New Testament says. Did Jesus really say these things? And those in apologetics, those in New Testament scholarship, nothing new here. We have answers to all these things, no new questions. But suddenly, to everyone's shock, his included, he told me that firsthand, the book took off and became a national bestseller and that's what happened with the other books he's written.

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So, suddenly this skepticism, this questioning can we take the Bible seriously, it's trickled its way down to a general audience. And rather than the academics dealing with it and having answers, or even kids that are in college, at least they can research and date, now kids that are 10 and 12 are hit with this. Josh McDowell has told us that the objections he used to run into on college campuses, he now runs into with kids who are 12 or 13 and they don't have the same ability to process, to think things through to gather information. So, the catchy meme, the little slogan, the little saying, the big question mark is just kind of in this younger generation as a presupposition.

Frank:

You know, Mike, you also write in the first chapter, or maybe this is the second chapter, and I found this to be true. You have it in your book so I assume you think it's true as well. You say, as theologian RC Sproul wrote, "The New Testament maintains that unbelief is generated not so much by intellectual causes as by moral and psychological ones. The problem is not that there is insufficient evidence to convince rational beings that there is a God, but that rational beings have a natural hostility to the being of God." Comment on that.

Mike:

Yeah, so let's just say that human beings are heading in one direction by nature. There's the old Martin Luther saying that a stone, if you pick it up, goes up. If you let it go, it drops. So, that's human nature. So, our propensity is to want to gratify the flesh. You know, just think in the natural. It's easier to oversleep than to get up early. You have a sweet tooth for chocolate, not a sweet tooth for broccoli, or celery, or apples or something like that. It's easier to lie than to tell the truth. It's easier to give way to lust than to be disciplined.

So, human beings just by nature are going in a certain direction and we don't want a God over us. We don't want a ruler over us. We want to do what we want to do and we don't want there to be consequences, especially in some kind of world to come. So, anything that feeds and fuels our fires of hostility towards God, of being able to plausibly deny his existence, and plausibly deny the accuracy or authority or relevance of Scripture, we're gonna go with that. So, all these intellectual things now feed into it. And then when you have an emotional reaction as well, that the Bible is against my friend, or Christians are against my friend, now you have yet another reason to reject this book and to reject the author of the book.

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Frank:

In fact, I've found that people don't want Christianity to be true more than they say, I just don't have enough evidence. And we'll talk more about that after the break. And what about Christianity being against my friends? That has something to do with the sexual practices we're going to talk about here in just a few minutes. 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 Dr. Michael Brown. His website is AskDrBrown.org. back in two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Next weekend, March 12. I'll be at Godspeed Church in Thousand Oaks, California with my friend, Pastor Rob McCoy. We'll be doing the morning services and then in the evening we'll continue with I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist and take questions. I hope to see you out there.

My guest today is Dr. Michael Brown, who has written over 40 books. His latest is *Why So Many Christians Have Left the Faith* and it comes out March 7. It is a wealth of information. It's not just saying, Well, look, here's why all these people have left the faith, but where do we go from here? There are some solutions and maybe we'll touch on those a little bit later in the program.

Before the break, Dr. Brown was just talking about the fact that some people don't want Christianity to be true. In fact, I found that many people don't want Christianity to be true. And one of the reasons I know they don't want Christianity to be true is because they may personally have sexual preferences that the scripture disagrees with. Or they may just know friends that they want to support in their sexual behavior and the Bible disagrees with that. Comment on that, would you?

Mike:

I have a whole chapter called *If Gay is Good, Christianity is Bad*. And what's happened is, there's a whole generation of young people that has grown up in a society now where same-sex "marriage" is the law of the land. Just about every TV show you put on there's gonna be a gay couple and they've got a friend or family member who identifies as gay or they themselves do. And it's become so pervasive and they've grown up with this feeling. Especially Gen Z is strong on empathy and wanting to stand with the perceived underdog. And it may be a good intent, but often comes out with the wrong result. But they feel they have to protect their trans friend

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who gets picked on, they have to protect their gay brother who gets picked on, and they've grown up with this deep sense of solidarity.

Frank, I had something remarkable happen to me recently. I was teaching probably about 600 students who were in a school preparing to go on the mission field. So, these are on fire Christians who want to serve at least part-time in the future on the mission field. And I was asked to come in and for three days to teach about the cultural issues and the biblical response, etc. And you know, I'm going to do it with compassion, with grace. In fact, as I was sharing some stories, I literally broke down crying because of the pain of what some have been through or some of these kids who were trying to detransition now. They had, you know, full mastectomies, they were on hormones, realize That made a terrible mistake, and trying to go back and all the pain of it. So, I spoke with compassion.

And yet, when I shared about how far things have gone, I went through this long list of preferred gender pronouns and most all the students were just laughing out loud. It's so absurd. Well, we found out that there were some students who took offense at this, because they felt that the other students were laughing at their friend, their brother, their sister. And let me tell you how far it went. There was a real satanic song on the Grammys a few weeks ago. It's called unholy. The singer, Sam Smith, identifies as non-binary and was wearing a hat with satanic horns. The other singer, Kim Petras, identifies as transgender. There were drag queens performing in it, there were flames coming up from the ground. It could not have been more satanic if it tried and it tried very hard.

There's a woman named Beckah Shae, a messianic gospel artist, and she did this incredible version of Unholy; what would it sound like if it was written by a Christian. And it was a call to holiness and a warning that hell is hot. I mean, it's brilliantly done. So, I played it for the students knowing how much they'd appreciate it. Of course, they loved it. I found out later that there was one student, she talked to her leader then talked to me, who was offended because she felt like it was an attack on Sam Smith. And all her life she grew up feeling she had to defend trans people. This is a sympathy was something that was actually blatantly Satanic verses a Christian song. It didn't even mention Sam Smith. That's how deep it goes.

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My generation, baby boomers, you're close to that, less than 3% of our generation today identifies as someone on the LGBTQ scale. According to Gallup in 2021, 21% of Gen Z's identifies on that scale. According to Barna, 40%. So, there is this whole perception of standing with the gay lesbian trans community and the Bible is against it. The Bible is mean, the Bible is homophobic and God is homophobic. And that's the gut level reaction. No, I won't listen to your gospel because you hate gays and I'm gay. That's how deep it is.

Frank:

What you just said there about a baby boomers and the present generation, 3% to 20% or 40%, is another reason why the whole born that way argument can't be true, because if you were born that way it would seem to be consistent. No, this is more encouraged by social media and the culture. And as you point out in the book, as well, you get different numbers, but Gen Z born between 1997 and 2003, 20% or so identify with LGBTQ, but far fewer than that actually engage in the behavior.

Mike:

Exactly.

Frank:

It's just, I identify even though I'm not doing it, correct.

Mike:

Yeah, especially bi. That's the big thing to identify, kind of like safe ground there. So, it's solidarity. The percentage of those actively engaging in same-sex activity, or exclusive same-sex activity, remains as small as it's ever remained. So, it's the sense of identity and solidarity.

Frank:

Two questions. What did you say to that girl who felt she had to defend a someone who claimed to be trans even though that person was blatantly advocating Satanism? What did you say to her and how did she respond?

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Mike:

I didn't speak with her directly. I spoke with someone else who said to me, Look, I was lesbian, and I love you, I honor you, I respect you. I'm not lesbian anymore, she said, but it's because of people like you I left the church in the first place. That's what she said to me before class one day. And I said to her, Listen, did I speak with compassion? Yes. Did I speak with tears? Yes. Was what I said, biblical? Yes. And I said, the same God who called me to reach out to the gay trans community with compassion is the same God who called me to warn against the agenda with courage. And I must do that because millions of lives are being destroyed. So, your compassion is commendable. Your viewpoint is commendable, but you've been blinded. And I said, you just have to trust me here. I am watching a whole generation be destroyed. We've been warning for years.

So, the challenge for me now, just like when you're on the campuses and you say, Okay, there's a stronghold here, how can I get people? So, I'm really going to try to start, when I present to a younger generation, in particular, to start even more with the solidarity, to start with how you feel. Say, Hey, look, I know you feel like this, but look at the results. Look at what God intended. Look at his plan. Look at the beauty of that. And now look at the distortion, look at the destruction, look at the trajectory to help wake them up to spiritual reality.

Frank:

Yeah, there's a difference between true compassion and false compassion. False compassion is just identifying with somebody because you want to support them, even though you're supporting them going down a road that's going to hurt them. True compassion is, I love you so much I'm going to stand in the way of evil. As Paul says, Love always protects. Love rejoices in the truth. Love always perseveres. Love doesn't approve.

Dr. Michael Brown and I had a little debate with a couple of LGBTQ activists on that, about three or four years ago at Southern Evangelical Seminary. I think people can find that on the internet. I think the title of it was something like Does Love Require Affirmation. And we had an exchange with these people and they were trying to say, Oh, yeah, if you love me you have to approve of what I do. And we of course were saying, No, you don't have to approve of what we do to love us. In fact, at one point, we even asked the other side, Do you love us? And they said, Yes. And then we said, Do you agree with our position? And they said, No. And we both said,

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You just lost the debate. That's the whole point. We're saying you can love people and not agree with what they do. In fact, if you do love them, you won't agree with everything that they want to do if it's evil, obviously.

So, let me ask you another question based on the title of the chapter If Gay is Good, the Church is Bad. Have you ever seen anyone from the LGBTQ plus community define what their standard is for good?

Mike:

Yeah, it really doesn't get there normally because it's just based on the emotional idea you have to be nice to people and you're not being nice to me. You hurt my feelings, therefore, that's something bad. You know the famous line that the God of the younger generation is basically a moral therapeutic deistic being and the gospel is just being nice to people. So, obviously you want to be nice to people, but like you say, nice doesn't mean affirmation or agreement.

Frank:

No. We have to write a book, Jesus Wasn't Nice, because there's so many times he wasn't in order to wake people up and to tell them, you're going down the wrong road. He wasn't nice to the Pharisees, certainly. He wasn't nice to the people in the temple when He overturned the tables. He wasn't nice to people who were teaching false doctrine. And that's because you have to call sin out when you see it in order to protect people. So, Mike, what do you recommend if you know people who are well meaning, and they're Christians, yet they're kind of torn? They know what the Bible says about LGBTQ practice, but they want to support their friends who identify that way. What do you recommend they do or say?

Mike:

Right, so by all means, ask God for his full heart of love. We all should. Now we start there, asking for a baptism of love for those who identify as different than us. So, we affirm having that real heart of love but then we go back to, Look at our beautiful creator, look at his wisdom, look at how we made us, look at how he put us together, look at his intent, look at the beauty of a man and woman coming together, and children, and reproduction and all of that. And now once you deviate from that look at drag queens shaking their hips as they read for toddlers in schools. Look at 13 year old girls who've had a full mastectomy because they were confused

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about their gender identity. Look at the persecution of Christians, look at where things go, look at the trajectory. And when you do say, No, I didn't sign up for that.

You know, I sat on a Tyra Banks Show probably 13 years ago. The first time ever on national TV. They brought out little kids, Oh, this is Johnny. Johnny used to be Jane. Now Johnny is a boy. And I said on the panel, you're experimenting with children. You're experimenting with children. I sat next to Dr. Marci Bowers, who became super famous during the sex change surgery for that poor teen Jazz who is the most influential teen in America according to some. And now Dr. Bowers has been forced to say we shouldn't have done this with children. We made a mistake. Dr. Bower said sometimes you zig and zag, Oh, we went a little too far. It's a little too late to admit that. Look at the damage. Look at where it goes. Love stands in the way and says turn back.

Frank:

We're talking to Dr. Michael Brown about why so many Christians have left the faith. You can check out his website, AskDrBrown.org, and his radio program called Line of Fire. We have a lot more to cover so don't go anywhere. Back in two minutes.

Why have so many Christians left the faith? And by the way, what is the faith? Have they left the faith or just their faith? Did they even know what Christianity really was? What is the faith? Well, actually, I'll be teaching a course on that called Life's Compass: Jesus, You, and the Essentials of the Faith. It starts later in March but if you go to CrossExamined.org and click on Online Courses there's an early bird discount that ends March 5. We're going to cover a lot of great subjects in this; What is the Bible all about? How do faith and works relate? What does it mean to be made the image God? Who is Jesus? What are the essentials of salvation? How do faith and reason relate? What is God like? Why is the resurrection so important? What is faith and why does God want it? So many others. We're going to do six live zoom Q&A sessions if you're part of the premium course.

Let me go back to my guest, Dr. Michael Brown. Mike, it is difficult for some people to stay in the faith when you see high profile leaders walk away. And you have a chapter in here in the new book, Can Christian Leaders Be Trusted? Let's just start with Ravi Zacharias, because, you know, we're apologists here and people don't want to talk about Ravi Zacharias anymore

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because obviously he engaged in immoral sexual behavior. And people try and sweep that under the rug. Should that shake our faith?

Mike:

It will shake many people's faith. It shouldn't but it's understandable. And it's not to throw stones at our brother that's not here now, but look, the reality is if you, or I, or Ravi, an apologist, or someone else, God used us in an instrumental way to bring someone to the Lord - it's the Lord who saves, it's the Lord who does it all. We can't save a fly. But Frank, I heard you speak and it was so brilliant, and then I went to your website and you had all the answers, right. Well, that's influence. I've been a leader in Messianic Jewish apologetics. What if suddenly I question everything I believe? So, we're human beings and one of the things about someone like Ravi, he was a great example. He seemed to be a great statesman. So, suddenly someone like that falls and then it's across the board, the charismatic scandals, you know. They seem to be a dime a dozen in our circles.

I said, you know, as a charismatic myself failed Trump prophecies, that puts egg on our face. The scandal with Jerry Falwell. The scandal with Carl Lentz. Again, I don't say this to throw stones. And historic scandals with the Catholic Church. I reference a study where the Catholic Church of France recently released their own records, their own documents, saying from the 1950s, until now, we have documented over 330,000 examples of sexual abuse. It could be priests with someone else in clergy, nuns, et cetera. I mean, it's mind boggling. So, it's very natural to [say], they're all corrupt. None of them can be trusted. None of it is real. I thought these people were reliable because like to be leaders, we are called to live by a certain standard. The New Testament is clear on that. We are ambassadors for Jesus and we can make him look bad.

I'll mention something really tiny. A few years back, during the Trump presidency, I was invited with some Southern Baptist leaders to visit the White House and to meet with certain folks. Not with Trump, but to meet and have some discussions, raise some concerns. And they said, Hey, you can get a special rate at the Trump hotel there. Well, even though Donald Trump does not actually know what is in every single room in that hotel, I remember thinking, Wow, his name is associated with this, so they really do it up nicely. And if the thing was run down, even just a hotel, it would make you feel, what's with Trump. He's not on top of things.

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So, if we can do that, just it's psychological, it's natural, how much more when our hero turns out to be duplicitous? Did they know better? Were they just in this for money? I thought Jesus changed us morally. So, it's only fair and understandable that people are going to be hurt. Especially if they're not believers yet, they're not even going to want to hear the message like, Oh, you're one of those guys. So, it's a real obstacle to overcome.

Frank:

It is. And I did a whole podcast on this in February when it came out. I want to say it was 2021. I actually think when things like a fall such as Ravi happens, it actually gives more evidence that God does exist, because none of that would be wrong unless God existed. Right? What he did would not be immoral unless there's a standard of morality. I love what John Dickson says. I don't know if you know John Dickson. He wrote the book, *Bullies and Saints*. I think he's at Wheaton. He has a great thought experiment where he says, "When somebody plays Beethoven poorly, who do you blame? You don't blame Beethoven." Okay.

And so, when someone plays Jesus poorly, you don't blame Jesus, you blame the player. And all of us are fallen. All of us have done wrong. All of us are evil. That's why we need a Savior. And so, if we were all perfect, we wouldn't need Jesus. And when we do fall, we should repent and realize that his sacrifice covers our sin. It does, as you say, Dr. Brown, it does lead people to say, Well, is everybody corrupt in the church? And you point out that, and it's just makes common sense, what are you going to hear in the media about Christians? You're never going to hear about all the good they're doing. Right? All you're going to hear is two things, I think. When a prominent Christian falls or how they vote. Those are the two things you're going to hear about.

Mike:

Or if they don't believe in hell anymore.

Frank:

Yeah, that's right. Or they've left the faith. That's what you're gonna hear about. You're never gonna hear, and you have in the book that for every one Christian leader that has fallen there's got to be hundreds that haven't, right. But you're never gonna hear about them all you.

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Mike:

Yeah. Look, I've worked with people side by side for a decade, some key team members in our ministry we've known now, this year makes 40 years that we've known them. Faithful, godly people. All the couples that have been part of my leadership team and our expanded ministry solid, godly couples. No scandals among them. People I've traveled with, people that I know well. I've worked with fine pastors all around America and in many, many different nations. I've been outside the US about 200 times. Fine godly people, no scandal associated with them. And all the decades, no financial scandal, no sexual scandal, not even an accusation of it. And your average pastor is not getting rich on the faith. In fact, they're overworked in many cases. And in the great majority of cases, you'll sit down, they've got good marriages. When you meet the kids, so many of the kids are godly kids and have been raised in a good environment.

And when it comes to Roman Catholicism, neither of us are Catholic, you do have to raise the question of whether the enforced celibacy policy opens the door for all kinds of sexual abuse. You'll have heterosexual men who obviously want an outlet, need an outlet. They don't have the same gift and grace that Paul did. And therefore, it's almost an accident waiting to happen, especially with confession. You add in people coming and confessing every kind of lurid thing that they've done and then you have the men that, Hey, I have no interest in marriage because they're gay. And this has been a historic problem. So, there's an open door now for kind of a gay subculture, which has been exposed and talked about. So, yes, I'm sure there are devoted Catholic priests who are celibate, and devoted nuns who are celibate, and are really seeking to live in discipline, but this is an accident waiting to happen, because it's unnatural. And it's a requirement that Paul actually speaks against as a last days deception forbidding people to marry.

Frank:

Yeah, and that has led, at least, it's not a cause but it's a condition that leads to a sex scandal, or these numerous sex scandals, as you pointed out. And it's interesting that the French church would actually publish that, but that's good for them to admit what's been going on. And I know there has always been talk about if the Roman Catholic church is going to lift the rule of celibacy for their priests. It's interesting, if you're, say, a man that has been married, or is married, and you decide to become a Roman Catholic priest, you can stay in your marriage. And

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so, it's not a hard and fast rule, right? It's only if you go in as a single person, then you have to stay single. And you write about that in the book.

I want to go back to Ravi for a second because you say, "Think about it for a moment. It was tragic to hear about the failings of one of the world's best known Christian apologists." But he had a whole network of co-workers. How many of them were indicted with similar charges? None to my knowledge. It is true that they had - I don't know how many speakers Ravi had. 40, maybe up to 100 at the time, and nobody in that organization has been brought up on similar charges. But what has happened, and this is what happens with sin, sin blows everything up, doesn't it?

Mike:

Yeah. I mean, I remember being overseas and running into people from his ministry. And the old days was if they said, Oh, we're with his ministry, that was like gold.

Frank:

Yeah, right,

Mike:

Good. It means you're solid. That means you're educated and these things. That means you're on the front lines, etc. Now, the same people, and they have to use a different name for the ministry because it brings reproach. And again, as you say, it does prove the gospel. Once you can establish, hey, the great majority of Christian leaders are not doing this, the great majority of Christians that you're going to meet that are sincere people, they're not living like this. Once you can start to rebuild trust on a personal level, then you can say, But look, doesn't the Bible say that we're corrupt in our nature? Doesn't the Bible say that we're capable of doing things, very ugly things? Doesn't the Bible say that when we judge others we're guilty of doing the same thing? So, it does level us all out in need of a Savior and that can be a way to help someone recognize their own sin. You're throwing stones, but what about your life? And then they come to Jesus? All right, I need help. God have mercy on me, a sinner.

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to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek

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Frank:

Mike, you've been a Christian leader for over 40 years. Give some advice to our listeners, with about a minute to go before the break, about how they should comport themselves to stay pure.

Mike:

You have to live as if you could be next. I don't mean in fear like oh no, oh, no. But just like a recovering alcoholic stays away from liquor, you flee from the things that could be destructive. You don't give them an open door. Jesus didn't say cut back the things that are destructive but cut them off. When you separate yourself from them, when you don't even open the door, when you live by certain ethical principles that keep you away from the temptation and the possibility, it's a safe place. And you're not going to stand before God on that day and he'll say, Oh, you're a little too extreme. You're a little too careful. No, I'd rather hear that than hear God say, you fool, you blew it all. So, you put up certain parameters, walls, you make yourself accountable, you live with openness and honesty, and you trust yourself to God's keeping power. And none of us have to be scandal ridden in our own lives.

Frank:

Yeah, we try in our ministry to live by the Modesto Manifesto that came out of the Billy Graham organization. And for those of you that don't know what that is, I'm running out of time here, you can just Google Modesto Manifesto. But someone who has lived the Modesto Manifesto and has taken a lot of heat for it prominently, has been Mike Pence, the former Vice President. He would not be in the presence of another woman who is not his wife alone, just to avoid any possible temptation, or even appearance of impropriety. That's a good way to live ladies and gentlemen. I'm Frank Turek. A lot more with Dr. Brown right after this. Why have so many Christians left the faith? What can we do about it, right after the break?

You're back listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, which is not only a radio program, but also a podcast. And we have a mid-week podcast and in the mid-week podcast this week we're going to have Dr. Brown back on because we're going to talk about the political seduction of the church. That's another book Mike has written that we haven't had time to talk about. Has the church gone too far politically or not far enough? And we're going to talk about it in the next podcast. That's mid-week this week. It'll come out on Tuesday. Those of you who

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just listen to this on the radio, this will not be broadcast on the radio. You've got to go to the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast and listen to it there.

Now, Mike, just before the break, we were talking about the Modesto Manifesto and Vice President Pence has taken heat for that. You wanted to make another comment on that. Go ahead.

Mike:

Yeah. You know, after the Harvey Weinstein scandal, and other related scandals in Hollywood, and among famous actors, etc., who had been sexually abusive, I asked a question. I said, you know, a lot of you had issue with the way Mike Pence lives and the standard that he was by, the so-called Billy Graham rule. I said, Dad's, who would you rather have your daughter work for, Mike Pence or Harvey Weinstein? You know, people can criticize, but when the rubber meets the road, let's go with the Billy Graham rule.

Frank:

That's right. Now, Mike in the book, Why So Many Christians Have Left the Faith, there is a question as to whether they left the faith or just their own faith. And you point out that there are at least five different gospels, so to speak, out there. And Paul said, If anyone preaches another gospel to you, let him be accursed. So, these are other gospels. These aren't the true gospels. I'm just going to call them out and if you can just give a word or two about each one of them, what's wrong with them. People will have to get the book to go further. Let's talk about the health and wealth gospel. What's the problem with that?

Mike:

So, Jesus died to make you successful. Jesus died so that you could prosper. The blessing of the gospel is financial riches. And basically, the gospel is, what's in it for me. Jesus dies to make me into a bigger and better me. So, now when the real test comes for the gospel, when you're called to take up the cross, deny yourself, who wants this? Because you just were in it for what's in it for you. So, that's been a deceptive message preached for decades. It's born terrible fruit.

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Frank:

That's right. And yeah, if you're not healthy and wealthy, you don't have enough faith. Well, don't tell me Jesus and the apostles weren't healthy and wealthy. They had plenty of faith and they died as martyrs. The next kind of gospel you have here is called the pep talk gospel in which the preacher sounds more like a life coach here to fulfill you with positivity, good feelings, and success go.

Mike:

Yeah, you never hear the Gospel with these messages. You never hear about human sin. Why did Jesus die on the cross? For what? What was he paying for? What was so bad? What was so terrible? So, it's basically this gospel, the pastor just comes alongside of you to cheer you up and to encourage you. Come on, have a good day and be positive in your attitudes towards others. And then maybe a reference to Jesus or a scripture thrown in, so you think you're actually hearing the gospel, but there's no gospel in it. There's no saving, transforming message in it.

Frank:

Okay, how about this? Gospel number three, which is another false gospel, the celebrity gospel. Which basically says, Look, all these famous, cool people believe in Jesus. Don't you want to be cool, too?

Mike:

Yeah. So, basically, the pastor has to be cool. The worship team has to look cool. The people in the church have this kind of cool vibe about them. And you have a celebrity or two attending. You become known for that, maybe known for association with celebrities. By all means, let's reach celebrities with the gospel. But following Jesus is often the way of humiliation in the eyes of the world. It's often the way of rejection and hatred and scorn. It's the way of the cross, not the way of the big screen. So, God may raise someone up and give them a prominent voice, so be it, but this whole idea that following Jesus is the cool groovy hip thing to do, not only does it not save, but it deeply deceives because you may lose everything following Jesus.

Frank:

So, you're saying that Paul didn't wear skinny jeans and drink lattes? Is that you're saying?

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Mike:

As far as my in depth study has shown, no, he did not.

Frank:

Ok, false gospel number four, the progressive gospel. Presenting Jesus as an enlightened teacher is now in sync with the world.

Mike:

Yeah, well we know better. In the Bible, they said certain things, and prohibited certain sexual behaviors, and talked about people going to hell. We know better now. We are more enlightened and now we have progressive... Now that we're reading the Bible through these enlightened eyes, you see, every everything has changed. Everything has gone different now. And it's a beautiful new message that somehow miraculously ends up in complete harmony with the world.

Frank:

All right, how about the fifth false gospel, and this is big in our culture today. The social justice gospel, which reduces most topics to an issue of race and justice with Jesus coming to write social wrongs rather than reconcile us to God.

Mike:

Right. So, in a nutshell, there is no conviction of my own sin and rebellion against God, rather, everything is weighed through the lens of race, and everything is weighed through where you stand on certain social issues. Of course, the church should be leading the way and standing for justice and true equality that comes through the cross and comes through living out loving our neighbor as ourselves. But this is something that gets very fueled by the latest controversy in the culture. Jesus is now a preacher about race that is basically the subject of the Bible. So, once again, with all of these, the heart and soul of the Gospel, the very thing that confronts us with our sin and saves us and brings us into right relationship with God, that very thing is missing. And all the people who've been influenced by these false gospels, when the testing comes, they're not going to stand.

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Frank:

Last week, ladies and gentlemen, we talked a little bit about the He Gets Us campaign that you saw during the Superbowl. And my friend, Natasha Crain, wrote an article pointing out seven reasons why the He Gets Us campaign really doesn't get Jesus. She took a lot of heat for it. So, I decided to write a blog on it because I only write blogs when I get annoyed. So, I do about two a year. And if you go to our CrossExamined website, and it's also on Stream.org, the title is He Gets Us but Do We Get Him: The Case for Criticizing False Teachers. And what I say in there is a number of reasons that we have to call out false teachers.

But I wanted to point out that Jesus did not come to make sure we use the right pronouns, Jesus came to be a ransom to save us from our sins. That's the primary reason He came. So, go to the CrossExamined.org blog site and you can see that. It's about a 1500 word article. And also tune in next week, because both Natasha Crain and Alisa Childers will be the host of this program. I'm going to be on the road, so they're gonna host it. They'll probably talk about this, so check that out.

If you want to go further into these false gospels and learn more about why they're false, you need to get Mike's new book, Why So Many Christians Have Left the Faith. Now, Mike, we don't want to just point out all the negatives here. We want to point out what we can do about young people, or even older people, who leave the faith. And you have a chapter in the book, Where Do We Go from Here? So, Mike, where do we go from here?

Mike:

So first, in every single chapter, when we lay out the problem, be it atheism, be it gay solidarity, be it questioning whether a good God would send billions of people hell, whether the Bible's even relevant or trustworthy, in each chapter, I spent a substantial portion of that chapter directly responding and saying, here's how we understand him. Here's how we respond. Where do we go from here? We have to start with realism. We have to realize how many young people are unchurched. We have to realize what the general perceptions are in the larger society. And then we have to remember, God's word is always relevant. The cross is always relevant.

And in fact, especially among many young people, they're hurting, they're anxious, they're depressed, they feel that they're in an uncertain world. The harvest is incredibly ripe if we can

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really see through spiritual eyes. And what we have to do, with patience and compassion, is welcome people where they are. Say, come with your doubts, come with your questions. In fact, we even have an ongoing web resource, we have links in the back of the book, we've got the CrossExamined.org website, to say, Hey, you got questions about this, you've got issues, here are safe places where you can go. Here's where you can get information. Here's a free website. Here's a book to read.

So, let's get equipped and let's welcome people. Let's say, Hey, it's fine to have your doubts and questions. I even have a whole chapter, Can Deconstruction Be Healthy?, and saying, If by deconstruction you mean I'm going to come with an arrogant attitude to slam the Bible, no, that's unhealthy. But if you mean, can I really trust these things? Is there really a God? Is the Bible trustworthy? Let's take people on that journey of discovery, bring them into an awareness of their own need for God, but then have solid answers intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, to help people get grounded. Because you and I know that grounded in God's word, nothing can move us. We will withstand any storm.

That's why people around the world will die for Jesus rather than deny him. They are that sure. We can be just as sure and stand our ground. Scripture says the righteous shall never be shaken. So, we know the foundation stands sure. God's word is not going anywhere. There's a reason it remains the most popular book worldwide to this moment and will only grow in popularity in the years ahead.

Frank:

Yeah, God's word can never be shaken. That's why Alisa Childers, Natasha Crain, and myself are participating together in a conference called Unshaken. The next time we're doing it is out at Calvary Chapel Chino Hills in early May. Check out UnshakenConference.com for more.

Mike, it's really tragic that when we see people, and I remember when Marty Sampson left the faith apparently and you have it in your book, that he brought up all these objections as if nobody's ever heard of these objections before and nobody's ever addressed them. You know, if God, why evil? Why hell? All these questions that people have been discussing and writing about for centuries, it seems like these people don't even know that these answers are out there. Does that say something about our Christian education?

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Mike:

Yeah, it absolutely does. Many people don't even know what the word apologetics mean, right. They don't see the need for apologetics. They don't recognize the need for real disciple making, you know, real godly catechizing of our kids. It's a tradition that is so far away from so many of us. But I remember when Marty's article came out, so I wrote an article asking some honest questions and responding honestly. And John Cooper, who's become a friend, the lead singer of the rock band Skillet - in fact, their music introduces my show every day - we've become buddies. That's when I first heard of them, because he wrote this really strong article saying the church has been wrestling with these things for centuries and centuries and centuries and centuries.

So, I'm not faulting someone who doesn't know that the discussion has been taking place and that there are answers. I'm simply saying, there is no excuse now for not knowing the information is out there. And especially, just as ungodly beliefs have circulated and been disseminated, just as false ideologies have been disseminated through the internet, the truth is being disseminated. It's out there.

Frank:

That's right. And There's a lot of truth in *Why So Many Christians Have Left the Faith*, the brand new book by Dr. Michael Brown,. Check him out, check out his website, AskDrBrown.org, check out the book, and check out the next mid-week podcast because he'll be on with me. All right, folks, we'll see you here next week. God bless.

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